

## DEOMI News Highlights

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DEOMI News Highlights is a weekly compilation of published items and commentary with a focus on equal opportunity, equal employment opportunity, diversity, culture, and human relations issues. DEOMI News Highlights is also a management tool intended to serve the informational needs of equity professionals and senior DOD officials in the continuing assessment of defense policies, programs, and actions. Further reproduction or redistribution for private use or gain is subject to original copyright restrictions.

### **Diversity of “races, religions, backgrounds, and genders” essential to warfighting in the information age, 3-star says [Todd South, *Marine Corps Times*, 30 September 2019]**

- The challenges of the future operating environment are happening now for the intelligence community, the Marine Corps’ top general for information says. And diversity in thinking and in the ranks is essential to meeting the challenge.
- Lt. Gen. Lori Reynolds, deputy commandant of information, shared that observation and other insights to more than 300 intelligence Marines at the 9th Annual Marine Corps Association and Foundation Intelligence Awards Dinner Thursday.
- “I believe that diversity of thought will matter in the future fight,” Reynolds said. “We must talk about diversity as a warfighting necessity and tonight I’m declaring it essential to the information environment.”

[Diversity of “races, religions, backgrounds, and genders” essential to warfighting in the information age, 3-star says](#)

### **Marines must “be comfortable discussing life’s struggles” commandant says to Corps’ 10-year-high suicide rate [Philip Athey, *Marine Corps Times*, 30 September 2019]**

- A total of 77 Marines—58 active-duty Marines and 19 reservists—died by suicide in 2018, Marine Corps Manpower and Reserve Affairs said Thursday. Those approximate numbers initially were released by the Marine Corps in January, showing that 2018 had a 10-year high suicide rate in the Marine Corps. The Marine Corps suicide rate was highlighted again in September as the military’s [2018 Annual Suicide Report](#) was publicly released.
- “We all have a role in suicide prevention: individual service members, unit leaders, families and mental health professionals,” Marine Corps Commandant Gen. David Berger said in a Thursday Marine Corps press release.
- The Marine Corps says it is working to educate Marines on signs of suicide and to create an environment where Marines feel comfortable talking about their mental health.

[Marines must “be comfortable discussing life’s struggles” commandant says to Corps’ 10-year-high suicide rate](#)

### **Supreme Court term to begin with blockbuster question: Is it legal to fire someone for being gay or transgender? [Robert Barnes, *The Washington Post*, 3 October 2019]**

- This is one of the most consequential issues of the term, with more than 70 friend-of-the-court briefs dividing states, religious orders, and members of Congress. More than 200 of the nation’s largest employers are supporting the workers.
- The issue for the court is the reach of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which, besides protecting against workplace discrimination because of race, also prohibits discrimination “because of sex.”
- For 50 years, courts read that to mean only that women could not be treated worse than men, and vice versa, not that discrimination on the basis of sex included LGBTQ individuals. The Trump administration says that is what the Supreme Court should find as well, [which puts it] at odds with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which decided in 2015 that gay and transgender individuals were federally protected.

[Supreme Court term to begin with blockbuster question: Is it legal to fire someone for being gay or transgender?](#)

## CULTURE

### [New Marine Corps Video Aims to Set the Public Straight About What Jarheads Do](#) [Gina Harkins, *Military.com*, 2019-10-02]

*After nearly 20 years of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Marine Corps is on a mission to remind Americans that leathernecks do a whole lot more than fight lengthy ground battles.*

*A new four-minute [video](#) released Wednesday shows Marines leaving ships in MV-22B Ospreys, F-35B Joint Strike Fighters and amphibious vehicles in a push to show the public the Corps is an amphibious force...*

*For too long, Marine Commandant Gen. David Berger told reporters in a roundtable at the Pentagon, the Corps has been seen as a land force that could get onto a ship.*

*“We need to turn that upside down,” said Berger, whose planning guidance to the force is heavily focused on naval missions.*

### [Do you remember 9/11? New military recruits don't](#) [Ileana Najarro, *Tampa Bay Times*, 2019-10-03] [Reprint](#)

*Experts say September 11 means different things to the two generations that came of age in its shadow.*

*Millennials, born before 1996, have personal memories of the attacks and their immediate aftermath, said Jason Dorsey, president of the Center for Generational Kinetics in Austin, Tex. He said it later prompted many to enlist.*

*Members of Gen Z, born after 1996, rely on an interpretation of the attacks and their meaning. They've grown up desensitized to global terrorism. Their lives were much more affected by mass shootings across the country, especially in schools.*

*This generational divide has forced recruiters and ROTC leaders to change approaches when discussing deployments and modern-day military service.*

## DISCRIMINATION

### [Federal Judge Upholds Harvard's Race-Conscious Admissions Policy in Trial Over Asian-American Applicants](#) [Katie Reilly, *TIME*, 2019-10-01]

*A federal judge has ruled that Harvard's race-conscious admissions policy is constitutional—a [long-awaited decision](#) that comes nearly a year after the closely-watched trial over the school's use of race in admissions began. It now sets the stage for a continued legal battle over the [future of affirmative action](#) in higher education...*

*A [February report](#) by Pew Research Center found that a majority of Americans (73%) say colleges should not consider race or ethnicity in admissions. But critics of the Harvard suit have warned that ending race-conscious admissions will ultimately harm Black and Hispanic students, who are already underrepresented at top universities...*

*The Harvard decision comes amid heightened scrutiny over the fairness of the [college admissions process](#) at elite schools in the United States...*

#### SEE ALSO:

[This is how White privilege plays out in the Harvard admissions process](#) [Poppy Noor, *The Guardian*, 2019-10-01]

[The Cult of Rich-Kid Sports: A new paper provides stark evidence that Harvard gives preferential treatment to affluent White applicants through legacy preferences and sports recruitment. \[Derek Thompson, \*The Atlantic\*, 2019-10-02\]](#)

### **More concerns over whistleblower protections at VA [Leo Shane III, *Military Times*, 2019-10-04]**

*Several months after [emotional testimony from whistleblowers](#) who say they still face retribution and harassment at work, key congressional leaders said this week they worry not enough has changed at the Veterans Affairs office charged with protecting those individuals.*

*But VA officials are dismissing those concerns as off-base, saying they response they have received from most of the veterans community thus far has been positive and the office's work still progressing on schedule.*

*The issue is one of several sparring sessions between the department and committee in recent months, including implementation of new community care rules and communication between the branches of government.*

### **Supreme Court term to begin with blockbuster question: Is it legal to fire someone for being gay or transgender? [Robert Barnes, *The Washington Post*, 2019-10-03]**

*Aimee Stephens never saw how her colleagues at work would react to her gender transition. The owner of the funeral home where she worked fired her first.*

*Gerald Bostock claims everything was fine in his job as a social worker in Georgia until he joined a gay softball league. Then came the pink slip.*

*For skydiving instructor Donald Zarda, the termination came after the routine way he joked with a woman when the two had been strapped together shoulder-to-shoulder and hip-to-hip for a tandem jump. Something along the lines of, "Don't worry, I'm gay."*

*The three present the Supreme Court with a blockbuster question at the start of its new term: Is it legal to fire someone for being gay or transgender?*

*The cases will be argued Tuesday.*

#### **SEE ALSO:**

[Top cases for the Supreme Court's new term \[The Associated Press, 2019-10-05\]](#)

[Trans woman aims to make history in US Supreme Court \[AFP, 2019-10-01\]](#)

[Transgender woman in Supreme Court case is 'happy being me' \[Mark Sherman, \*The Associated Press\*, 2019-09-30\]](#)

['Sex' at the Supreme Court \[David Cole, \*The New York Review of Books\*, October 24, 2019 Issue\]](#)

### **A teacher says he was fired for refusing to use male pronouns for a transgender student [Gabrielle Sorto, *CNN*, 2019-10-02]**

*A Virginia teacher has filed a [lawsuit](#) saying he was wrongfully fired for refusing to use male pronouns for a transgender student...*

*A spokeswoman for West Point Public Schools told *CNN* in a statement that its board denies any wrongdoing... School officials said the educator was insubordinate and failed to follow directives from administrators. And, officials said, the teacher could not be allowed to treat the transgender student differently...*

*The former teacher is now suing the school district officials, saying they breached his contract and discriminated against him, violating his right to speak freely and his religious freedom.*

**SEE ALSO:**

[A Virginia teacher was fired for refusing to use a trans student's pronouns. Now, he's suing his school district. \[Teo Armus, \*The Washington Post\*, 2019-10-01\]](#)

## **DIVERSITY**

### **Coast Guard inks new tattoo regs [Navy Times, 2019-10-03]**

*In an effort to woo new recruits and align regs with the latest tattoo trends, the Coast Guard on Thursday [announced reforms](#) to its ink rules, effective immediately.*

*At [his annual State of the Coast Guard address](#) on March 21, [Adm. Karl Schultz](#) hinted that his sea service would soon ease its tattoo restrictions, along with loosening weight standards and revamping the regs that disqualify single-parent enlistments.*

*All of that is part of a broader effort [to convince more women](#) to enlist and stay in the service.*

**SEE ALSO:**

[Coast Guard Changes Policy to Permit Hand, Finger Tattoos \[Hope Hodge Seck, \*Military.com\*, 2019-10-03\]](#)

### **Diversity of “races, religions, backgrounds and genders” essential to warfighting in the information age, 3-star says [Todd South, *Marine Corps Times*, 2019-09-30]**

*The challenges of the future operating environment are happening now for the intelligence community, the Marine Corps' top general for information says. And diversity in thinking and in the ranks is essential to meeting the challenge.*

*Lt. Gen. Lori Reynolds, deputy commandant of information, shared that observation and other insights to more than 300 intelligence Marines at the 9th Annual Marine Corps Association and Foundation Intelligence Awards Dinner Thursday.*

*The three-star noted how a variety of perspectives, languages and cultures all feed the intelligence understanding of adversaries and of the information environment, an aspect that near-peer competitors such as China and Russia do not hold.*

### **“I Am Fearless Again”: New Veterans’ Group Gives Women a Sense of Belonging [John Ismay, *The New York Times*, 2019-10-02]**

*Tara Galovski is co-founder of [Women Veterans Network](#) (WoVeN)... In her research and clinical work as director of the Women's Health Sciences Division of the National Center for PTSD at the Department of Veterans Affairs, she repeatedly heard from veterans how difficult it was to transition from military service to civilian life, especially for servicewomen. “There are unique challenges,” Galovski says, “like even just finding each other after service, because there are simply fewer women than men who serve...”*

*More than a third of women leaving the military report “loss of income” as a challenge—a higher rate than reported by their male counterparts—and they take an average of three months longer to find civilian employment, [according to research](#) by Syracuse University's Institute for Veterans and Military Families. Transitioning servicewomen are also more likely to be single parents than their male counterparts, and they face the additional complication of finding affordable child care as they return to civilian life or try to attend medical appointments at the V.A...*

*In addition to that lack of public recognition, Galovski says that many women in WoVeN report having suffered sexual trauma while in uniform; some are also dealing with symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. For those women, [WoVeN](#) also offers them a place to process these issues.*

### **[Men in uniform wearing makeup? Soldiers in Britain may soon get the OK in gender-neutral move](#) [J.D. Simkins, *Military Times*, 2019-09-30]**

*Upper echelon leadership in the British Army is reportedly set to institute a policy that would allow men in uniform to wear makeup.*

*The glamorous rule change stems from numerous complaints of military double standards that arose after orders for personnel stationed in Canada mandated — in a section on diversity and equality — that men in uniform not be allowed to use cosmetics, [according to The Sun](#).*

*In 2017, the British military [instructed its personnel to avoid using such gender-focused phrases](#) like “sportsmanship,” “best man for the job,” “delivery man,” and “forefathers.”*

***Articles published by the Observation Post may reflect the author’s personal observations, opinions, or attempts at humor.***

### **[Overseas military naturalization services being consolidated to four military bases](#) [Diana Stancy Correll, *Military Times*, 2019-09-30]**

*Overseas military naturalization services will now be available once a quarter at four military installations overseas—a move that comes as U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services closes multiple international field offices over the next 10 months.*

*Rather than visit one of 23 USCIS international field offices, service members overseas will instead travel to one of the following military installations to complete the [naturalization process](#): Camp Humphreys in South Korea, Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka in Japan, U.S. Army Garrison Stuttgart in Germany, and Naval Support Activity Naples in Italy.*

*These locations were specifically selected based on which international field offices were handling a majority of overseas military [naturalization applications](#), a USCIS official told reporters.*

*A USCIS official told reporters that many of the forms and applications involved in the naturalization process can be done online and doesn’t require an office visit. Ideally, this means that only one visit to one of the hubs is necessary, the official said.*

### **[West Point to honor first female 4-star general](#) [*The Associated Press*, 2019-10-02] [Reprint](#)**

*The first woman to become a four-star general in the U.S. military will be honored with an award at West Point.*

*Retired Army Gen. Ann Dunwoody will receive the Thayer Award on Oct. 10 at a ceremony at the U.S. Military Academy.*

*The award is presented by West Point’s Association of Graduates to those whose service in the national interest reflects the academy’s motto of “Duty, Honor, Country.” Past recipients include Dwight D. Eisenhower, Bob Hope and Tom Brokaw and Robert Mueller. Last year’s recipient was Leon Panetta.*

## MISCELLANEOUS

### **ACFT standards released: Test proponent talks roll-out, addresses soldiers' common concerns** [Kyle Rempfer, *Army Times*, 2019-09-27]

*The Army announced Friday morning that it is officially kicking off the transition from its pilot phase of the [Army Combat Fitness Test](#) to initial operating capacity.*

*The test standards are officially released, and can be viewed [here](#). In order to max out the gender-neutral, six-event test, a soldier would need to lift 340 pounds on the deadlift, hit 12.5 meters on the standing power throw, perform 60 hand-release push-ups, make a time of 1:33 minutes on the sprint-drag-carry, perform 20 leg tucks on a pull-up bar and run two miles in 13:30 minutes.*

*The Army also [released a video](#) showing the modified ACFT for soldiers on permanent profiles that includes three aerobic test events.*

*The test is just for practice this year—unless you're arriving to [basic combat training](#) beginning Oct. 1. All new officers and enlisted soldiers coming into the Army after that date will be training for and required to pass the ACFT before they graduate and report to the operational force, according to [Maj. Gen. Lonnie G. Hibbard](#), commander of the [Center for Initial Military Training](#).*

### **Grizzly Adams begone! Navy ends permanent no-shave chits** [Courtney Mabeus, *Navy Times*, 2019-10-04]

*A hairy problem faced by many sailors is about to become less so, and that could mean a bumpy road in the months ahead for some shipmates.*

*Effective next week, the Navy will scrap the permanent waivers that allowed some sailors who suffer from [Pseudofolliculitis Barbae](#)—a common condition caused by shaving that's often called “razor bumps”—to grow out their scruff through their career.*

*Sailors with permanent no-shave chits have six months to receive a medical reevaluation, including a new treatment regimen, according to the updated Bureau of Naval Personnel instruction.*

### **Here's how the 68,000-soldier recruiting goal broke down by MOS** [Kyle Rempfer, *Army Times*, 2019-09-27]

*The Army reached its goal of recruiting 68,000 active duty soldiers in fiscal year 2019, with roughly half belonging to 10 military occupational specialties and more than 34 percent of the entire recruiting pool destined for combat arms.*

*The other roughly 65 percent of the incoming recruits are headed for non-combat roles.*

*The 2019 recruiting goal was itself a slowdown from the roughly 70,000 recruited last year — when the service was actually aiming to recruit 76,500 but missed the mark.*

### **Lawmakers Urge Approval of New Cash Allotment for Low-Income Military Families** [Amy Bushatz, *Military.com*, 2019-09-28]

*A bipartisan group of lawmakers has sent a letter to the heads of the House and Senate committees in charge of passing annual defense legislation, urging them to put in place a proposal that would give extra cash to low-income military families.*

*The proposal, which is included in the House version of the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act legislation, would extend to some troops a new monthly “basic needs” allotment aimed at decreasing the number of families who seek regular support from food pantries.*

*Just who qualifies for the subsidy would be calculated based on the service member’s base [pay](#) plus income of other household members, including their [spouse](#). If that income falls at or below 130 percent of the federal poverty rate, which is based on household size, they would be eligible to receive the difference in the form of a monthly payment.*

### **[Obama defense secretary talks Trump administration, transgender troops and how to lead half the federal government](#) [Meghann Myers, *Military Times*, 2019-09-30]**

*When it came time to write down his account of his nearly 40 years in the Pentagon, [former Defense Secretary Ash Carter](#) decided to focus on the less glamorous parts of the job, which he served in for the last two years of the [Obama administration](#).*

*Divided into specific tranches, the book covers defense acquisitions—Carter’s expertise, as he became the Defense Department’s designated “czar” for that division—and the F-35 joint strike fighter budget fiasco, the operational decisions that came across his desk he presided over wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the manpower decisions he signed off on that quite literally changed the shape of the military and more.*

*His biggest challenge, he said, was trying to balance the demands of running a massive organization with the painful reality of the lives forever changed by the consequences of the department’s decisions.*

### **[Troops, Vets Increasingly Targeted by Russian ‘Troll Factories,’ Report Finds](#) [Richard Sisk, *Military.com*, 2019-09-27]**

*The same Russian “troll factories” that sought to influence the 2016 elections have continued to target service members, veterans and their families online with “hateful and divisive messages,” according to a two-year [investigative report](#) by Vietnam Veterans of America.*

*“They’re incredibly good at branding” and are seeking to “pit us against each other” in the military and veterans community, said Kristofer Goldsmith, VVA chief investigator and author of the 191-page report.*

*Much of the activity on social media pages such as Facebook is benign, he said.*

*But posts by bogus groups posing as legitimate veterans organizations were seeded with messages and false news reports intended to “gin up hatred, anger and discord in the U.S.,” said Goldsmith, a former Army sergeant who served in Iraq.*

## **MISCONDUCT**

### **[Coast Guard lieutenant pleads guilty to gun and drug crimes](#) [Michael Kunzelman, *The Associated Press*, 2019-10-03]**

*A Coast Guard lieutenant accused of stockpiling weapons and targeting Supreme Court justices, prominent Democrats and TV journalists pleaded guilty Thursday to gun and drug charges.*

*Christopher Hasson’s guilty plea to all four of the counts he faced resolves a case in which federal prosecutors called him a self-described White nationalist and domestic terrorist intent on carrying out mass killings.*

Assistant federal public defender Liz Oyer said Hasson “was not plotting a terrorist attack or any of the abhorrent acts that the prosecution has repeatedly speculated about but never actually charged...” Prosecutors have said Hasson appeared to be planning attacks inspired by the manifesto of Anders Behring Breivik, the Norwegian right-wing extremist who killed 77 people in a 2011 bomb-and-shooting rampage.

### **Coke, meth and an AK-47: Feds accuse Nellis master sergeant of trafficking guns, drugs [Stephen Losey, *Air Force Times*, 2019-09-27]**

A master sergeant at Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada was [indicted by a federal grand jury](#) on Tuesday for allegedly trafficking firearms and [illegal drugs](#).

The Justice Department announced Thursday that it charged 39-year-old Master Sgt. Michael Reimers, of Las Vegas, on two counts of distributing a controlled substance, one count of engaging in the business of dealing in firearms without a license, and one count of selling a firearm to a prohibited person.

The [indictment alleges](#) Reimers sold an unidentified amount of cocaine and more than 50 grams of [methamphetamine](#) from July 2019 to September 2019, the release said. Reimers is also accused of illegally selling an AK-47 7.62mm caliber rifle, a .25 caliber handgun, and a 12 gauge shotgun without a license, the release said. The Justice Department also said Reimers sold the shotgun to an illegal alien.

### **It Was the Biggest Scam in Tricare’s History. Now Troops May Be Going to Jail [Patricia Kime, *Military.com*, 2019-09-30]**

In 2013, a handful of pharmacy companies that make compounded medications -- personalized dosages or formulas normally crafted for patients who can’t tolerate certain ingredients -- discovered they could make treatments such as pain and scar creams, wound ointments and erectile dysfunction drugs, and market them to patients enrolled in Tricare.

Then, they could bill the government a hefty sum, between \$400 and \$10,000 per prescription, making enough to cover the cost of beneficiaries’ co-payments, provide kickbacks to participating physicians and middlemen, and generously pad their own pockets.

As of May 2019, the Justice Department has indicted and sentenced 74 people, with 50 more convicted and awaiting sentencing in the nationwide scheme perpetrated by at least 100 pharmacies.

## **RACISM**

### **Diversity of jury seen as key factor in officer’s conviction [Tammy Webber, *The Associated Press*, 2019-10-04]**

The questioning dragged on all day and into the evening as lawyers queried hundreds of prospective jurors for potential bias in the trial of Amber Guyger, the White Dallas police officer who fatally shot a Black neighbor in his own living room...

On Wednesday, the jury composed largely of people of color and women [sentenced Guyger to 10 years](#) in prison, a day after [convicting her of murder](#) in the September 2018 killing of her upstairs neighbor, Botham Jean, after she said she mistook his apartment for her own...

From the beginning, the jury’s demographics were bound to be closely watched in a case that ignited [debate over race](#) and policing.



## **Naval Academy: Noose ‘unlikely’ but probe inconclusive** [*Navy Times*, 2019-09-28]

*An investigation at the U.S. Naval Academy has found it is “unlikely” a rope and knot found over a door in a construction area was meant to be a noose, but the possibility could not be definitively ruled out.*

*The academy announced Friday that the rope resembled a common construction device used to hoist items, although it was draped over a door “for no readily apparent reason.”*

*The academy says the investigation didn’t discover who placed the rope over the door or identify any existing racial animus on the job site.*

## **RELIGION**

### **Atheist group says Texas judge ‘crossed the line’ when she handed a Bible to Amber Guyger** [Doug Stanglin, *USA TODAY*, 2019-10-04]

*A national atheist group has filed a formal complaint with the state of Texas after a judge in a Dallas court gave a Bible to former police officer Amber Guyger who was convicted of murdering her neighbor.*

*The gesture by Texas District Judge Tammy Kemp, who also suggested the Bible could change Guyger’s life, came at the end of an emotional sentencing hearing this week. Guyger received a 10-year prison sentence for fatally shooting Botham Jean, an unarmed man in a Dallas apartment she had mistaken for her own...*

*The Freedom from Religion Foundation, which includes presidential son Ron Reagan Jr., on its honorary board, filed its complaint Thursday with the Texas State commission on Judicial Conduct, saying Kemp’s “proselytizing actions overstepped judicial authority.”*

## **SEXUAL ASSAULT/HARASSMENT**

### **A Texas university reported 8 rapes on campus in 2016-17, but now admits there were 38. Experts say this problem is happening nationwide.** [Mack DeGeurin, *Insider.com*, 2019-10-01] [Reprint](#)

*Texas State University admitted to severely underreporting the number of sexual assaults on its San Marcos campus for the 2016 and 2017 school years.*

*The school had originally reported just eight cases but now says the real number was 38.*

*While that discrepancy is shocking on its own, some experts think the real number of sexual assaults on campus that go unreported may be much higher, and that the issue extends far beyond Texas State.*

## **SUICIDE**

### **Marines must ‘be comfortable discussing life’s struggles’ commandant says to Corps’ 10-year-high suicide rate** [Philip Athey, *Marine Corps Times*, 2019-09-30]

*A total of 77 Marines—58 active-duty Marines and 19 reservists—died by suicide in 2018, Marine Corps Manpower and Reserve Affairs said Thursday.*

*Those approximate numbers initially were released by the Marine Corps in January, showing that 2018 had a 10-year high suicide rate in the Marine Corps.*

*The Marine Corps suicide rate was highlighted again in September as the military's [2018 Annual Suicide Report](#) was publicly released. The rate of active duty service members who take their own lives has been rising an average of 6 percent per year throughout the past five years, the Pentagon announced Thursday.*

*The Marine Corps says it is working to educate Marines on signs of suicide and to create an environment where Marines feel comfortable talking about their mental health.*

### **[Op-ed: Eradicate the stigma of mental health care](#) [Cmdr. Matthew D.W. Phillips, *Navy Times*, 2019-10-03]**

*...For those of you who are leaders of sailors, this is your charge.*

*For the sustained might of our Navy, for the care and well-being of those sailors entrusted to you, you must remove the stigma of mental health care by fostering a healthy and non-discriminatory work environment where sailors can ask for help and receive it.*

*If you're a sailor who needs help, I urge you to ask for it...*

### **[RAF Mildenhall program seeks to reduce stigma of asking for help for mental health problems](#) [Christopher Dennis, *Stars and Stripes*, 2019-10-04]**

*More than 70 pairs of boots were placed in a central part of RAF Mildenhall to illustrate the high rate of suicide in the service as part of a new airmen-run initiative that aims to change opinions about seeking help for mental health issues.*

*Operation YOU's goal is to have servicemembers take the lead in helping troubled individuals to seek help and ending any stigma felt by those who reach out for assistance*

## **VETERANS**

### **[Lack of legal services to help with claims shouldn't be another hurdle for homeless veterans](#) [Vicky Hartzler, *Military Times*, 2019-10-01] [OPINION]**

*Veteran homelessness is an issue that is often overlooked and should make all of us pause. As our economy continues to boom under this administration, we need to do more to ensure that our veterans share in our collective success. I am unambiguously committed to that cause.*

*There are about 40,000 veterans struggling to put a roof over their head. Most are staying in shelters or transitional housing. A third of these veterans are living in cars, encampments or on the streets.*

*Addressing veteran homelessness goes beyond just talking points about educational and employment opportunities. In addition to these things, an adequate response to this alarming issue requires to look at health, mental status and an overall reintegration into society.*

### **[2,000-plus turn up at funeral of Florida veteran with no kin](#) [Tamara Lush, *The Associated Press*, 2019-10-01]**

*Most of the 2,000-plus people who gathered in the Florida heat Tuesday didn't know Edward Pearson. They knew little, if anything, about the life of the 80-year-old Army veteran.*

*But they knew of his death, and that was reason enough to attend his funeral...*

*Pearson, a resident of Naples, Florida, died Aug. 31. His obituary went viral when the funeral director included this sentence in the service announcement: This veteran has no immediate family and all are welcome to attend...*

*Cemetery officials say it's not uncommon for veterans to die — and be buried — without family. Volunteer groups, such as the Patriot Guard Riders, regularly attend such services.*

### **[More Veterans See Improvements in VA Health Care, VFW Survey Finds](#) [Richard Sisk, *Military.com*, 2019-09-27]**

*More veterans are giving a thumbs up to how they are treated when seeking Department of Veterans Affairs health care, according to the annual “Our Care” survey released Friday by the Veterans of Foreign Wars.*

*And they are feeling positive so far about the new Mission Act, with its private-care options, which went into effect in June, it found.*

*The survey of nearly 7,000 VFW members showed 74% reported seeing improvements at their local VA, compared to 64% in 2018. And 91% said they would recommend VA care to other veterans, compared to 80% in 2018.*