

## DEOMI NEWS LINKS 7 OCTOBER 2021

### HIGHLIGHTS

[Active-Duty Suicide Rate Hit Record High in 2020](#) [Caitlin M. Keeney, *Defense One*, 6 October 2021]

*The suicide rate for active-duty troops rose to 28.7 per 100,000 last year, up from 26.3 the previous year, according to the latest edition of an [annual Defense Department report](#). This is the highest rate since the Pentagon began keeping detailed records in 2008. The rate among soldiers was nearly double that of sailors, DOD's annual suicide report found. Counting deaths by suicide is not an exact science, and official tallies can change as new information emerges. In statistical terms, the figure given as each year's rate represents the midpoint of the 95%-confidence range. That's why Karin Orvis, who leads DOD's Defense Suicide Prevention Office, said the rates in 2019 and 2020 are "statistically comparable." But Orvis also noted that the increase over the past six years is statistically significant, from 20.3 per 100,000 active troops in 2015 to 28.7 last year. The year-over-year change to the suicide count is not "a huge increase" but the increase to the rate over time is "cause for concern and there needs to be renewed focus to specific suicide-prevention initiatives," said Julie Cerel, who leads the Suicide Prevention and Exposure Lab at the University of Kentucky. "What they have been doing hasn't been working and they need to do something different and more sustained."*

[Army launches fusion directorate pilot designed to improve services for sexual assault victims: Six installations and the Army Reserve will participate in the year-long pilot](#) [U.S. Army Public Affairs, 6 October 2021]

*As part of the planned redesign of its Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention program, the Army will launch a one-year pilot establishing a fusion directorate designed to care for, protect and empower victims. The fusion directorate will offer an additional reporting mechanism and coordinated medical, investigative, legal and support services that are independent of a victim's immediate command. This will be done by coordinating care providers, investigators and criminal prosecutors from a single directorate, allowing them to maximize their efforts and keep victims better informed at each step of an emotional and complex process. The fusion directorate and its assigned staff will operate outside of a victim's immediate chain of command, offering an additional mechanism for reporting sexual assault or sexual harassment incidents. The fusion directorate concept is designed so that it can be adjusted to comply with any future changes in federal law or Department of Defense policy. The Army will also study ways to professionalize and incentivize career tracks for sexual assault coordinators and victim advocates, a key recommendation of both the Fort Hood Independent Review Committee (FHIRC) and the Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military.*

[\[SEE ALSO\]](#)

[DOD Now Continuously Monitoring Clearance Holders' Credit and Criminal Records](#) [Aaron Boyd, *Nextgov*, 1 October 2021]

*As part of the broader Trusted Workforce 2.0 program—a joint effort between DOD, the intelligence community, the Office of Personnel Management and the Office of Management and Budget—the Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency, or DCSA, has been working to automate parts of the background investigations process. That work includes shifting from manually reviewing existing clearance holders every five to 10 years to an ongoing process dubbed “continuous vetting.” The continuous vetting process includes automated checks on pertinent records such as financials and credit, arrests and citations by law enforcement, foreign travel, terrorism watch lists and internal investigations by other federal agencies. The program also looks at public social media posts and other online activity. When potentially concerning information is discovered, the system is designed to flag those findings for adjudicators, who investigate further before making a determination. In the past, such issues would only be addressed during the reinvestigation period or if a serious concern was raised through formal channels.*

[SEE ALSO [1](#), [2](#)]

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## CULTURE

[Air Force Touts Best Recruiting Numbers in Five Years as Pandemic Drags On](#) [Stephen Losey, *Military.com*, 1 October 2021]

*The pandemic is still rattling the economy and American workers, but it hasn’t been bad for Air Force recruiting and retention, according to new figures released by the service Friday. For the first time in five years, all three components of the Air Force – active duty, Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve—achieved both their recruiting goals and end strength, Maj. Gen. Ed Thomas, commander of the Air Force Recruiting Service, said in a release about figures for the past fiscal year ending in September. Fiscal 2021 marked the first time in five years the Air Force Reserve met its end-strength goal. Thomas said this shows the Air Force’s shift in recent years to a “total force recruiting” concept—in which recruiters in different service components work more closely together to find the right fit for a potential recruit—is working. The Air Force says the strategy makes it easier for recruiters to refer people to the Guard or Reserve if they wouldn’t be right for active duty—for example, if they needed to stay near a hometown to help ailing family members.*

[Bretman Rock is Playboy’s first openly gay male cover star](#) [Jacqui Palumbo, *CNN*, 5 October 2021]

*Bretman Rock has donned Playboy’s famed bunny ears and become the first out gay man to star on its cover. The 23-year-old Filipino beauty influencer, who rose to fame on YouTube before landing his own MTV show, is one of the few men to ever wear the Playboy ears, joining actors Ezra Miller and Paul Rudd. And he follows in the footsteps of Bad Bunny, who made history last July as the magazine’s first male cover star (besides its late founder, Hugh Hefner). “For Playboy to have a male on the cover is a huge deal for the LGBT community, for my brown people community, and it’s all so surreal,” Rock is quoted as saying on Playboy’s Instagram page. Rock has worked with the brand before, producing clothing with them, but it’s his first time posing in an editorial for the magazine. The shoot is digital-only, as the brand dropped its print*

magazine in March 2020 after 66 years, citing “disruption” in production and supply chains caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

[Bubba Wallace becomes 1st Black driver to win NASCAR Cup Series since 1963](#) [David Close and Theresa Waldrop, CNN, 5 October 2021]

*Bubba Wallace made history Monday, becoming just the second Black driver to win NASCAR’s Cup Series race, the association’s top series. Wallace is the first Black person to win the Cup Series since 1963, when NASCAR Hall of Fame driver Wendell Scott led the race. “Talladega, we’re winners,” Wallace said in a video posted on the Twitter account of Alabama’s Talladega Superspeedway, where the race took place. “What a perfect weekend, or weekday, I should say. I just knew something about it.” Wallace was born in Alabama. And last year at the same track, a noose was found in his garage stall, prompting an FBI hate-crime investigation. Asked on Monday what it meant to become the second Black driver to win the Cup Series race, Wallace became emotional. “I never think about those things, and when you, when you say it like that, honestly it brings a lot of emotion, a lot of joy, to my family, fans, friends. It’s pretty damn cool.”*

[Chinese labor helped fuel Yosemite’s growth—and it’s finally being recognized](#) [Agnes Constantine, NBC News, 5 October 2021]

*In the spring of 1875, about 300 Chinese workers accomplished a monumental feat: They built a 23-mile road in Yosemite National Park in about four and a half months. It’s one of four major roads that lead into one of America’s most best-known national parks. Of the four, Chinese immigrants built two of them. They were among hundreds of Chinese immigrants who contributed to the development of Yosemite National Park. Their history in the park has remained widely unknown, which has prompted advocates over the last several years to launch efforts to raise awareness about their role. One of those efforts is the restoration of a Chinese laundry that opened to the public Friday. The building will be dedicated to telling the story of Chinese immigrant workers in Yosemite National Park, including the stories of those who built park roads.*

[The Coast Guard Needs a Gender Culture Change](#) [Chief Petty Officer Melissa Mathis, Proceedings, 4 October 2021] [OPINION]

*In recent years, U.S. military policy has changed multiple times concerning transgender service members openly serving their country and expressing their gender, which may not be the one they were assigned at birth. This culture change has been plagued with misinformation and politics, preventing the necessary conversations that leaders need to have on the deckplate level, with all shipmates. Using leadership practices that foster communication and honesty, leaders need to facilitate the difficult conversations surrounding gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation. These conversations begin with leaders, as we educate ourselves and hold one another accountable; to know what gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation are, the differences between them, and to understand that the more we know, the stronger we will be. Expressing oneself as a gender that is different from one’s sex assigned at birth, is not new to the U.S. military—it is a practice that dates to Colonial America.*

[\[REPRINT\]](#)

[During Banned Books Week, Readers Explore What It Means To Challenge Texts](#) [Elizabeth Blair, NPR, 30 September 2021]

*The Catcher in the Rye. A Brave New World. Lolita. Lady Chatterley’s Lover. These are some classics that pop into many minds when considering books that have been banned from home and school libraries over time. But there’s been a “notable shift” in the subject matter of books now being challenged in the U.S. When the American Library Association released its list of the [Top Ten Most Challenged Books of 2020](#) in April, the books that received the most challenges to libraries and schools dealt with “racism, Black American history and diversity in the United States,” says Deborah Caldwell-Stone, director of the ALA’s Office for Intellectual Freedom. And Caldwell-Stone says in 2018 and 2019, the Banned Books list was made up “almost exclusively” of books dealing with LGBTQ concerns. “I think that we’re seeing a response in many ways to some of the conversations, the challenges that we faced as a society since the murder of George Floyd last year,” she says.*

[Female Soldiers Given a Year to Fit into Dress Uniforms After Pregnancy](#) [Steve Beynon, Military.com, 5 October 2021]

*Women in the Army now will be excused from wearing dress uniforms for up to a year after giving birth, according to a new service policy reviewed by Military.com. There had been no specific guidance before on how long female soldiers had after a pregnancy to squeeze into a dress uniform. Now, they can wear Army combat and maternity uniforms in lieu of dress uniforms—and they can’t be penalized for appearing in those uniforms at promotion boards, Army policy says. “This gives a reasonable amount of time to get [Army service uniforms] back on and not have to buy a different uniform,” Sgt. Maj. Ashleigh Sykes, the Army’s G-1 Uniform Policy Branch sergeant major, told Military.com. The move follows a change in March that extended the timeline for new mothers to meet the Army’s strict weight standards from 180 days to a full year, Sykes said.*

[Florida library offering anti-racism kits](#) [The Associated Press, 3 October 2021]

*A Florida library is offering anti-racism kits in hopes of making it easier to broach difficult conversations about race in a meaningful way. The Volusia County Public Library made the kits available for checkout on Friday. Each kit centers a discussion around a book and is geared for different age groups from kindergarten to adults. The library received a \$3,000 grant from Florida Humanities to launch the project. “I think what the staff are hoping to see is civil discourse,” librarian Melissa Reynolds [told The Daytona Beach News-Journal](#).*

[Free entry to museums marks civil rights icon Hamer’s legacy](#) [The Associated Press, 6 October 2021]

*Entry to two Mississippi history museums is free Wednesday to mark the birthday of the late civil rights icon Fannie Lou Hamer, known for saying she was “sick and tired of being sick and tired.” She was born Oct. 6, 1917, in Montgomery County and worked most of her life as a sharecropper. In 1962, Hamer joined the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and worked to register Black people to vote. Hamer was a founder of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, which challenged the seating of the regular party’s all-White delegation at the 1964 Democratic National Convention. Hamer died of cancer March 14, 1977. Pamela D.C.*

*Junior is director of the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum and the Museum of Mississippi History—two entities under a single roof in downtown Jackson. She said Hamer changed Mississippi and the world. “Tenacity, inspiration and ‘never give up’ are words and phrases that Fannie Lou Hamer lived by. Her fortitude and strength brought about change for all mankind,” Junior said in a news release announcing the free admission to the two museums. “May we all live as she did by being and showing examples of good stewardship in our communities.”*

[Google celebrates marine biologist María de los Ángeles Alvariño González with latest Doodle](#)

[Theresa Waldrop, CNN, 3 October 2021]

*Google honored María de los Ángeles Alvariño González with a Doodle on Sunday, the 105th birthday of the marine research biologist “widely regarded as one of the most important Spanish scientists of all time,” Google said. Alvariño who died in 2005, discovered 22 new species of zooplankton and published more than 100 scientific papers, according to Google and biographies of the scientist. The Spanish Institute of Oceanography (IEO) appointed her as a marine biologist in 1952, even though only men were accepted at the institute at the time, because of her impressive work at university, Google said. Born in Serntes on the Spanish coast, Alvariño developed a love for natural history early, encouraged by her parents to read her doctor father’s books on zoology, according to Encyclopedia of World Biography. Her father didn’t support her wish to become a doctor herself, though, and Ángeles Alvariño continued studying natural sciences at the University of Madrid, according to the biography. “Today, Ángeles Alvariño is the only Spanish scientist of 1,000 in the ‘Encyclopedia of World Scientists,’” Google wrote, “and a modern research vessel in IEO’s fleet bears her name.”*

[Project aims to ID voting rights marchers of “Bloody Sunday”](#) [The Associated Press, 3 October 2021]

*The world knows the names of John Lewis and a few more of the voting rights demonstrators who walked across Selma’s Edmund Pettus Bridge in 1965 only to be attacked by Alabama state troopers on a day that came to be called “Bloody Sunday.” A new project aims to identify more of the hundreds of people who were involved in the protest. Auburn University professors Richard Burt and Keith Hebert, working with a group of honors college students, have established a Facebook page where people can look through photographs of March 7, 1965, and identify themselves or others in the black-and-white images. Online since August, the page is titled “Help us identify the Selma Bloody Sunday Foot Soldiers.” It features multiple images of marchers who are labeled with red numerals, and users can add the names of people they recognize in the comments section. The project “highlights the need for additional historical research and documentation for one of the most famous moments in American history,” Hebert said in a statement released by the university announcing the work.*

[U.S. Army Dreadnaughts introduce Female Mentorship Program at DPTA](#) [Staff Sgt. Jennifer Reynolds, U.S. Army News Service, 4 October 2021]

*Approved in May of 2021, 2-34 has started the first Female Mentorship Program within IID and held its first meeting in Poland, on Sept. 1. The 2-34’s Female Mentorship Program guides and inspires Soldiers to establish realistic goals, address issues and gain knowledge of various aspects of their lives. By assisting junior enlisted Soldiers through issues, they will learn to have*

*the critical thinking skills necessary for professional and personal growth while in the military. U.S. Army 1st Lt. Lauren Martinez, a tank platoon leader with Alpha Company “Orphans,” 2-34, recently became the president of the Female Mentorship Program while deployed. “The Female Mentorship Program is a space for female leaders to come together and be able to invest in one another,” Martinez said. “Senior NCOs and officers alike can provide guidance and insight into navigating the Army by providing help in finding more opportunities, as well as assist females in their future careers. Females mentoring one another in our profession allows for more opportunities for females to be in leadership roles in the future.”*

## **DISCRIMINATION**

[Henrietta Lacks estate sues company using her “stolen” cells](#) [Michael Kunzelman, *The Associated Press*, 4 October 2021]

*The estate of Henrietta Lacks sued a biotechnology company on Monday, accusing it of selling cells that doctors at Johns Hopkins Hospital took from the Black woman in 1951 without her knowledge or consent as part of “a racially unjust medical system.” Tissue taken from the woman’s tumor before she died of cervical cancer became the first human cells to be successfully cloned. Reproduced infinitely ever since, HeLa cells have become a cornerstone of modern medicine, enabling countless scientific and medical innovations, including the development of the polio vaccine, genetic mapping and even COVID-19 vaccines. Lacks’ cells were harvested and developed long before the advent of consent procedures used in medicine and scientific research today, but lawyers for her family say Thermo Fisher Scientific Inc., of Waltham, Massachusetts, has continued to commercialize the results well after the origins of the HeLa cell line became well known. The lawsuit asks the court to order Thermo Fisher Scientific to “disgorge the full amount of its net profits obtained by commercializing the HeLa cell line to the Estate of Henrietta Lacks.” It also wants Thermo Fisher Scientific to be permanently enjoined from using HeLa cells without the estate’s permission.*

[NJ law scraps ability not to hire, promote workers over 70](#) [*The Associated Press*, 5 October 2021]

*New Jersey eliminated a carve-out Tuesday in its law against discrimination that permitted employers not to hire or promote workers who are 70 or older. Democratic Gov. Phil Murphy signed the legislation into law, saying “discrimination of any kind has no place in New Jersey.” New Jersey’s law bars discrimination or harassment based on disability, gender, national origin, race, religion or age. But the law contained provisions that said the law shouldn’t be construed to block employers “from refusing to accept for employment or to promote any person over 70 years of age.” The new law eliminates that provision. It also does away with a section that permitted colleges and universities to require retirement at age 70. One of the bill’s sponsors said the measure was necessary to update the state’s anti-discrimination statutes. The bill passed without any opposition earlier this year and had the support of advocacy groups like New Jersey Advocates for Aging Well.*

[Notre Dame swim coach resigns 1 week after lawsuit dismissed](#) [*The Associated Press*, 5 October 2021]

*Notre Dame's head swimming coach has resigned one week after a federal judge dismissed a gender discrimination lawsuit that had accused him of degrading and demoting a female assistant because of her pregnancy. The university announced Monday that Michael Litzinger had resigned from the school's swimming program and would retire from the sport. The school said associate head coach Aaron Bell is also "no longer with the team." The federal lawsuit filed in May by former assistant coach April Jensen accused Notre Dame and Litzinger of gender discrimination, Title IX violations and retaliation. She claimed Litzinger criticized, ignored and was generally unsupportive of her when she was pregnant in 2019. Her suit alleged Litzinger told her "nobody cares what you went through" regarding her pregnancy and that her contract was not renewed when she brought her concerns to administrators in the athletic department. A judge dismissed the lawsuit Sept. 27, in a mutual agreement between both parties, according to court documents. Thomas Newkirk, an attorney who represented Jensen in the case, declined to comment.*

[Students protest hiring of nondeaf leader for deaf school](#) [The Associated Press, 4 October 2021] *Both of Georgia's schools for the deaf and hard of hearing are now headed by people who can hear, and the latest hiring has prompted protests by students and resignations by some teachers. The Georgia Department of Education hired a new superintendent last month at the Atlanta Area School for the Deaf in Clarkston, The [Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported](#). The school's former superintendent, who is deaf, left in June for another job. The new superintendent is White, and some former employees say Black employees were overlooked for promotion, according to the report. News outlets for the deaf reported students were concerned about audism—discrimination against and dismissive attitudes toward deaf people. They also raised concerns about discrimination against people of color. A state education department spokeswoman said the agency "stands opposed to audism and other forms of prejudice" and wants to meet with students. The school's top leadership includes no people of color or deaf people. The superintendent and one of two assistant principals are White women who can hear, the agency said. Another assistant principal position is unfilled.*

## **DIVERSITY**

[Face of Defense: Leading the D.C. National Guard](#) [Katie Lange, DOD News, 1 October 2021] *Flying fascinated Air Force Maj. Gen. Sherrie McCandless when she was a child, so it was no big surprise that in 1991 she joined the military after college to pursue her dream of being a pilot. She's one of many female aviators who was already serving in 1993 when the air combat exclusion policy was lifted, giving women the opportunity to fly in combat. McCandless, 52, has been a pioneer for women in several aspects of her career, including in her most recent role as the first female commanding general of the District of Columbia National Guard, a position she assumed in April. But recently she said those "firsts" aren't a big deal to her—it's the responsibility you take on that's important." McCandless's current responsibilities are to the personnel stationed at units based from Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland to Fort Belvoir in Virginia—and of course, the D.C. community. So, what's it like to take the reins at such a unique posting, especially after such a volatile year in the U.S. capital? McCandless answered some of those questions, including what it took for her to get where she is today.*

[How the Coast Guard's 1st Black woman pilot helped give the next one her wings](#) [Eleanor Cassili and Emma Bowman, *NPR*, 2 October 2021]

*Jeanine Menze fell in love with airplanes as a little girl in Jamaica, watching them take off and land at the local airport. At 18, she set out to register for her first flight lesson at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, Fla. But she got discouraged when she saw that the people lining up for aeronautical science classes were mostly White and male. "I panicked," she said in a StoryCorps conversation last month. "I don't see anyone that looks like me, and I felt like I didn't belong." In 2005, Menze was awarded her Wings of Gold, signifying her graduation from advanced flight training and became the first Black woman aviator in the U.S. Coast Guard. But, once again, she felt out of place. Then, two years later, La'Shanda Holmes came along. "It was so long that I'd been in the Coast Guard already being the only Black female," Menze told Holmes. In 2010, Holmes graduated flight school, becoming the first Black woman helicopter pilot for the Coast Guard and the military branch's second Black woman pilot. Traditionally, family or friends pin new Wings of Gold on the student pilots at their graduation ceremony. But when an emotional Menze joined Holmes on stage, she had another idea.*

[The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier was guarded by an all-woman team for the first time ever](#) [Paul Szoldra, *Task & Purpose*, 2 October 2021]

*"History was made" at Arlington National Cemetery, said Col. Patrick Roddy, commander of the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment (Old Guard), the Army's official ceremonial unit and escort to the president, in a post on Twitter. "For the first time in the 84-year vigil, on the 30,770th day of the continuous guard, an all-woman changing of the guard occurred under the direction of the 38th Sergeant of the Guard, SFC Porterfield." Sgt. 1st Class Chelsea Porterfield, who is the first woman to hold the position of sergeant of the guard, completed her final walk of guard duty at the tomb on Wednesday, according to officials. "It wasn't anyone's intent to 'engineer' this event, but we knew an event like this had significant meaning," he added. "So in honor of SFC Porterfield's service, and at her request, the schedules were aligned for the first all-woman changing of the guard as part of her last walk." Roddy said it was a small event at the beginning of the day with little fanfare. "This was really about recognizing SFC Porterfield's service to the Tomb during her tenure there," he said. "We recognized this is important, which is why we've shared it, but at the same time didn't want to make it a spectacle due to the solemn nature of their mission and [the] continual dedicated service of all who walk and have walked the mat continuously for 84 years."*

## **EXTREMISM**

[An Army vet allegedly plotted an assassination and a prison break to ignite a race war](#) [David Roza, *Task & Purpose*, 4 October 2021]

*A former U.S. Army soldier and a former Canadian Armed Forces reservist who allegedly plotted an assassination of a Virginia lawmaker and conspired to break racist mass-murderer Dylann Roof out of prison could face several decades in prison. The two men are awaiting prison sentences after pleading guilty to multiple firearm charges, [according to the Associated Press](#). U.S. Army veteran Brian Mark Lemley Jr., 35, and former Canadian Armed Forces reservist Patrik Jordan Mathews, 29, are due to face a sentencing hearing on Oct. 28, according to the*

*U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Maryland. A third co-defendant, William Garfield Bilbrough IV, 21, was sentenced to five years in prison in December after helping Mathews enter the United States illegally. All three men are members of the violent White supremacist group "The Base," which is attempting to recruit military veterans as foot soldiers for a planned race war that it hopes will result in the collapse of society, Task & Purpose reported in October 2020. The group looks for members with military experience so it will have an army of vigilante soldiers ready to seize power in the anticipated chaos, experts said.*

#### [Confederate flag raised, U.S. and German flags stolen at 2nd Cavalry Regiment headquarters](#)

[Immanuel Johnson, *Stars and Stripes*, 4 October 2021]

*Military police are investigating after a Confederate flag was found flying from a flagpole outside 2nd Cavalry Regiment headquarters Monday and removed upon discovery, Army officials said. An American flag and a German flag also were stolen from inside the headquarters building in Vilseck sometime between Sunday night and Monday morning by an unknown person, regiment spokesman Maj. John Ambelang said. The incident at Rose Barracks, which is home to a regiment of about 4,800 soldiers, comes more than a year after the Defense Department effectively banned the Confederate flags and other symbols deemed divisive from public display on military bases. Neither the theft nor the display of the Confederate battle flag align with the Army's values, Ambelang said. Earlier this year, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin directed the military to conduct training to address extremism in the ranks. Service members gave the training mixed reviews. The regiment is working with military police to review base camera footage, Ambelang said.*

#### [What we know about the retired Green Beret recently arrested over the Jan. 6 Capitol riot](#) [Haley Britzky, *Task & Purpose*, 4 October 2021]

*A retired Special Forces soldier named Jeremy Brown was arrested last week for his alleged involvement in the Jan. 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol building that resulted in the injury of hundreds of police officers. Another person who was charged with involvement in the Capitol riots told authorities that they came to Washington, D.C., with Brown, who "coordinated travel plans and rendezvous points," according to court records. In a message on Signal, an encrypted messaging app, Brown allegedly told others in the chat that they could come to his home any time on Saturday, Jan. 2, before they left early on Sunday morning. He referred to his RV as "GROUND FORCE ONE" in the chat, offering to pick people up as there were "[p]lenty of Gun Ports left to fill." Brown said he wanted to be in D.C. by Jan. 4th in order to take that day and the next to "set up, conduct route recons, CTR (Close Target Reconnaissance) and any link ups needed with DC elements," according to a copy of the message in court records. "I am willing to make adjustments all the way up until we pass your ass headed north," Brown said. "But it is now time to shit or get on someone else's pot. READY? GO!!!" Brown was arrested in Tampa, Florida, on Sept. 30.*

## **HUMAN RELATIONS**

[Can you get ahead at work if you don't "buy in"?](#) [Kathryn Lindsay, *BBC News*, 6 October 2021]

*“Buying in” can mean many things, depending on the organisation. At the most basic level, buy-in is the acceptance, support and participation in a company’s plan, goal or policy. At some places, it may be as simple as wearing a company’s T-shirts, or excitedly posting on LinkedIn about an organisation’s mission. In other cases, it can manifest as pressure to join social events with colleagues, or work above and beyond a job description. According to William Becker, a professor of management at the Pamplin College of Business at Virginia Tech, U.S., buying in can mean workers “consider the organisation part of [themselves]”. In many cases, employees not only get on board with a company’s stated mission, but also the culture, and feel like they share values with the organisation. But while many workers buy in to the companies they work for when they’re first hired, some people find their enthusiasm fades. Several factors can lead to a loss of buy-in, like when workers believe companies fail to live up to their values, or feel there’s an uneven exchange between employee and employer. Although this can be disappointing for workers, and even cause them to leave jobs, not buying in can, in some cases, hamper success and leave workers feeling both professionally and personally isolated.*

[Employers Have Been Offering the Wrong Office Amenities](#) [Joseph Allen, *The Atlantic*, 3 October 2021] [COMMENTARY]

*Before you read any further, take a long, slow, deep breath. Congratulations! If you’re sitting in a typical American home, office building, or school, about 3 percent of the air you breathed in recently came out of the lungs of the people in the room with you right now. We would never drink from the same cup of water that every one of our co-workers had just sipped out of. But something very similar happens all day long in our offices, schools, homes, buses, and even airplanes. All day, every day, we sit around breathing in what other people expel from their lungs. But as companies and their employees ponder what the post-pandemic office will be like, the cool new amenity won’t be a foosball table. It’ll be something we should have had all along—clean air. I oversee the Healthy Buildings program at Harvard’s public-health school. [Our research](#) focuses on how indoor air affects cognition and other aspects of human well-being. (I should note that I also advise businesses, nonprofits, government leaders, and real-estate companies on ventilation and other healthy-building strategies.) In the United States, an engineering guideline known as “acceptable indoor air quality” governs how much air is brought into a building. The problem is right there in the name: I don’t know about you, but I don’t want acceptable air quality; I want good air quality. Instead of being designed to meet a bare-minimum standard, buildings should optimize human health.*

[\[REPRINT\]](#) [\[SEE ALSO\]](#)

[A Profession Is Not a Personality](#) [Arthur C. Brooks, *The Atlantic*, 30 September 2021] [COMMENTARY]

*As an economist, I’ve heard plenty of complex explanations for Karl Marx’s famous opposition to capitalism. Fundamentally, though, Marx’s reasoning comes down to something simple: happiness. He believed that capitalism made people unhappy by treating them as part of a machine in which the person is expunged and only productivity remains. Whether or not you agree with Marx’s assessment of what the capitalist system does to us, many of us indisputably do what he describes to ourselves. Too many people who work hard and strive for success self-objectify as excellent work machines and tools of performance. Strivers seek professional success*

*to deliver satisfaction and happiness. But self-objectification makes both impossible, setting us up for a life of joyless accomplishment and unreachable goals followed by the tragedy of inevitable decline. To be happy, we need to throw off these chains we put on ourselves. When it comes to happiness, Marx was right: Objectification lowers well-being. [Research shows](#), for example, that when people are reduced by others to physical attributes through objectifying stares or harassment, it can lower self-confidence and competence in tasks.*

[\[REPRINT\]](#)

## INTERNATIONAL

[Anti-Semitic graffiti found at Auschwitz, says museum](#) [Sarah Dean, CNN, 5 October 2021]

*Anti-Semitic graffiti has been found at the Auschwitz concentration camp complex, staff from the museum said in a [statement](#) on Tuesday, denouncing the incident as “an outrageous attack” on the memorial site. The vandalism, some of which was anti-Semitic, was sprayed in English and German on nine wooden barracks at the Auschwitz-Birkenau site. It was discovered on Tuesday and has been reported to police. CCTV footage is also being analyzed, the museum said in its statement shared on Twitter. The number of anti-Semitic incidents in Germany has been growing steadily in recent years, Deutsche Welle reported in February. There were at least 2,275 anti-Semitic crimes in the 12 months to the end of January 2021, some 55 of which were violent, it reported. Across Europe, anti-Semitic attacks have been rising for years. Jewish cemeteries from France to Poland are regularly desecrated, and nine out of 10 European Jews believe that anti-Semitism is on the rise, according to a survey by the European Commission.*

[Blood on the bars: Lizzie Deignan’s Paris-Roubaix win & a landmark for women’s cycling](#) [Matt Warwick, BBC Sport, 6 October 2021]

*The clouds had darkened and the light lowered as Lizzie Deignan approached her umpteenth set of mud-caked cobblestones, on her way to victory in the first women’s Paris-Roubaix. On Saturday, 2 October 2021, a 115km (71 miles) women’s race was staged for the first time. First raced in 1896, Paris-Roubaix has long been a legendary day in the cycling calendar. The race was given the nickname “Hell of the North” in 1919 to describe the area after organisers and journalists set off to see how much of the route had survived following four years of heavy shelling and trench warfare in the first World War. The men’s race is dominated by powerful athletes too big to win Grand Tours by challenging in the mountains, but muscular and heavy enough to stay upright on the muddy cobbles and battle it out across 258km. You win through grit and resilience. It’s about suffering. Deignan had previously said: “Never in my wildest dreams did I think I would be able to ride it. We’re making history. It’s no exaggeration to say we’re the first women to prove it was possible, but it doesn’t mean women before weren’t capable of it.”*

[EU unveils strategy to tackle rising antisemitism in Europe](#) [The Associated Press, 5 October 2021]

*The European Union unveiled Tuesday a new strategy to combat growing antisemitism in Europe with plans to better tackle hate speech, raise awareness about Jewish life, protect places of worship and ensure that the Holocaust isn’t forgotten. According to Europe’s Fundamental Rights Agency, nine out of 10 Jews consider that antisemitism has increased in their country and*

*is a serious problem. The EU's executive branch, the European Commission, said it was presenting what amounts to the first strategy of its kind given the "persistence and a significant increase of anti-Semitic incidents" around the 27-country bloc. Under the plan, which will be rolled out over this decade, the commission will use EU funds to support member countries as they develop their own national strategies and complement their actions. The aim is to set up a Europe-wide network of "trusted flaggers" along with Jewish organizations to help remove illegal online hate speech. Brussels will also work with industry and IT companies to prevent the illegal display and sale of Nazi-related symbols, memorabilia and literature online.*

[Ex-SS camp guard, aged 100, on trial for 3,518 deaths](#) [Annegret Hilse, Reuters, 7 October 2021]

*A former SS guard, now 100 years old, hobbled into a German courtroom on a walking frame on Thursday to face charges of helping to send more than 3,000 people to their deaths in a Nazi concentration camp during World War Two. Prosecutors say Josef S., a member of the Nazi party's paramilitary SS, contributed to the deaths of 3,518 people at the Sachsenhausen concentration camp by regularly standing guard in the watchtower between 1942 and 1945. Doctors have said that the man, whose full name was not disclosed due to German trial reporting rules, is only partially fit to stand trial: sessions will be limited to just two and a half hours each day. "It's a lot of emotion... I can't really speak," said Antoine Grumbach, 79, before turning abruptly away as he was overcome by tears. His father, a French resistance fighter, died in the camp. Prosecutors accuse Josef S. of "contributing to cruel and insidious murders" by aiding in "creating and maintaining life-threatening conditions in the camp."*

[Germany: Jewish group condemns singer's treatment at hotel](#) [Kristen Grieshaber, The Associated Press, 5 October 2021]

*A leading Jewish group in Germany said Tuesday it was shocked by a German-Israeli singer's report of being turned away from a hotel in the eastern German city of Leipzig because he was wearing a Star of David pendant. Singer Gil Ofarim, who lives in Germany, shared a video on Instagram Tuesday showing him in front of the Westin hotel in Leipzig and saying a hotel employee asked him to put away his necklace in order to check into the hotel. Ofarim is the son of Israeli singer Abi Ofarim, who performed with his first wife, Esther, during the 1950s and 1960s. The couple were known internationally for their renditions of folksongs and chansons. In his Instagram video, Ofarim says he was standing in line to register at the hotel and noticed that people standing behind him received service well ahead of him. He said when he eventually got to the front of the line and asked why everybody else was getting preferential treatment, a hotel employee told him he, too, could check in if he put away his Star of David necklace first.*

[Joyce Echaquan: Racism played role in death, coroner finds](#) [BBC News, 6 October 2021]

*The death of an indigenous woman, Joyce Echaquan, last year was preventable and an "undeniable" case of racism, a Canadian coroner has said. Ms Echaquan, a mother of seven, died shortly after recording a video of hospital staff insulting her. In her report, coroner Géhane Kamel found that the woman had died of excess fluid in her lungs. Staff at the hospital in Joliette, Quebec had incorrectly assumed she was suffering from a narcotics withdrawal. At a Tuesday press conference to explain the findings of her three-week inquiry, Ms Kamel said Ms Echaquan, who had a history of heart problems, was "infantilized" and labelled as a drug abuser by*

*healthcare staff despite there being no evidence to support this. Ms Echaquan's death caused a national outcry and calls for political leaders in Quebec to acknowledge the presence of systemic racism in the province. Quebec Premier François Legault has called the incident "totally unacceptable" but has denied such racism exists in his province.*

[Posthumous victory for S. Korean transgender soldier as court tells army to annul dismissal](#)

[Sangmi Cha, Reuters, 7 October 2021]

*A South Korean soldier who committed suicide earlier this year after being dismissed by the army following gender reassignment surgery won a posthumous victory on Thursday, as a court told the army to recognise her as a woman and annul her dismissal. Staff Sergeant Byun Hui-su had wanted a transfer to the military's female corps after undergoing the surgery, but was dismissed in January 2020 on grounds that gender reassignment rendered her "disabled" and unfit for service. Byun went to court seeking reinstatement, but she took her own life in March before the case was resolved. Regardless of her death, the outcome of the case is expected to hold implications for the military's policy on sexual minorities. The Daejeon District Court said that as Byun's changed gender was already legally recognised, the army should have used standards applied to women to determine her fitness to serve. "When based on standards of women, there are no mental or physical disability grounds for dismissal," the court said, ruling in Byun's favour.*

[Ukraine marks 80th anniversary of mass shootings in Kyiv's Babyn Yar](#) [Reuters, 29 September 2021]

*Ukraine marked the 80th anniversary on Wednesday of the mass shooting of civilians at the wooded ravine of Babyn Yar in Nazi-occupied Kyiv, one of the biggest single massacres of Jews during the Holocaust. Nazi troops at Babyn Yar gunned down nearly 34,000 Jewish men, women and children on Sept. 29-30, 1941. Over the two years that followed, around 150,000 people in total, mostly Jews but also including Ukrainians, Russians, Poles and Roma, were killed there. In silence, Zelenskiy took part in a ceremony near a monument of a Jewish menorah lamp erected to honour victims at the site. Flowers and wreaths were laid by soldiers, children and relatives of the victims. Zelenskiy is Ukraine's first ethnically Jewish president, although he is not publicly religious. Most of his grandfather's family was killed during the war.*

[\[SEE ALSO\]](#)

## MISCELLANEOUS

[Blacks, Latinos and Native Americans disproportionately killed by Covid-19 last year, study says](#)

[Antonio Planas, NBC News, 5 October 2021]

*Covid-19 killed a disproportionate number of the country's Blacks, Latinos and Native Americans during the pandemic last year, while the disease also exacerbated health disparities among those groups, a [new study](#) concludes. An estimated 477,200 more people died, due to Covid-19 and other reasons, between March and December 2020 compared to the same time in 2019, according to a study led by researchers with the National Cancer Institute published Monday in *Annals of Internal Medicine*. Overall deaths of male and female Blacks, Latinos and Native Americans were 2 to 3 times higher compared with White and Asian male and females*

during the 2020 period assessed, when population per 100,000 persons were accounted for, the study said. Of the 477,200 “excess deaths” in 2020, 351,400—or about 74 percent—died from Covid as the underlying cause, researchers said. The study said Black, Latino and Native American Covid related deaths were “at least 2 times higher” than their White counterparts.

[Bronze bust of George Floyd defaced at New York City’s Union Square](#) [Liam Reilly, CNN, 3 October 2021]

A bronze bust of George Floyd, part of Confront Art’s “SEEINJUSTICE” exhibition, was defaced on Sunday morning, according to the New York City Police Department. The bust—one of the three statues at Confront Art’s installation, which debuted on Thursday but opened to the public on Friday evening—was defaced with a grey, water-based paint around 10 a.m. Sunday, NYPD detective Frances Sammon told CNN. “There’s video footage police were able to ascertain,” Sammon said. “They show a male ducking down under one of the statues. He then mixes something together, and, as he skates away, he throws a container of paint at the statue.” Confront Art co-founder Andrew Cohen said that when he arrived a team of volunteers was already on the scene cleaning up the statue. “They went to the hardware and bought supplies out of their own pockets,” he said. “This is inspiring teamwork and support from the community.”

[Changes to federal loan forgiveness program will benefit thousands of troops, vets and DOD workers](#) [Leo Shane III, Military Times, 6 October 2021]

Tens of thousands of troops, veterans and civilian defense workers will see large federal loan debts reduced or erased under changes to the [Public Service Loan Forgiveness](#) program announced Wednesday. While the loan forgiveness program is not solely focused on service members, they make up a significant portion of program recipients. Officials said at least 17,000 current troops will benefit from the new rules, but the number could be much higher as staff combs through various loan accounts to see how many of the estimated 550,000 borrowers expected to benefit had some military service. Under current rules, loan forgiveness recipients must either work full-time at a government job—federal, state, local and military posts are all included—or a not-for-profit, non-partisan organization such as the Peace Corps. It covers individuals who have direct loans or previously consolidated federal student loans and have been paying down the debt for the last 10 years.

[Why States are Expanding Domestic Violence Laws to Include Emotional Abuse](#) [Kate Elizabeth Queram, Route Fifty, 4 October 2021]

Domestic violence victims in Connecticut who have not been subjected to physical abuse can more easily obtain restraining orders under legislation that took effect last week. [The bill](#), approved by state legislators and signed into law by Gov. Ned Lamont earlier this year, broadens Connecticut’s definition of domestic violence to include “[coercive control](#),” a pattern of abusive behavior that seeks to control a victim through emotional and psychological tactics. That can include isolating a victim from family and friends, restricting access to money or threatening harm to a person’s children or pets. More than a third of women and nearly half of men reported experiencing coercive control in a relationship, according to [data](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. But court cases relating to criminal domestic violence usually do not take emotional abuse tactics into consideration, relying instead on an “incident-specific”

*approach that requires proof of physical injury to determine whether abuse, or a pattern of abuse, have taken place, [according to the nonprofit](#) Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence.*

## MISCONDUCT

[Viral Marine who criticized Afghanistan withdrawal charged with 6 violations](#) [Philip Athey, *Military Times*, 6 October 2021]

*Marine Lt. Col. Stuart Scheller has formally been charged with six violations of the Uniform Code of Military Justice and has been referred to a special court-martial, a Marine Corps spokesman said Wednesday. “In the military there are proper forums to raise concerns with the chain of command,” Capt. Sam Stephenson, a spokesman for Training and Education Command, said in a statement emailed to Marine Corps Times Wednesday. “In a general sense not specific to any case, posting to social media criticizing the chain of command is not the proper manner in which to raise concerns with the chain of command and may, depending upon the circumstances, constitute a violation of the Uniform Code of Military Justice.” Scheller has been charged with Article 88 (contempt toward officials), Article 89 (disrespect toward superior commissioned officers), Article 90 (willfully disobeying a superior commissioned officer), Article 92 (dereliction in the performance of duties), Article 92 (failure to obey order or regulation) and Article 133 (conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman), Stephenson said.*

## RACISM

[The myths about slavery that still hold America captive](#) [John Blake, *CNN*, 2 October 2021]

*[Clint] Smith, a journalist and a poet, was visiting the Whitney Plantation in Louisiana as part of his quest to understand the impact of slavery in America. He had spent four years touring monuments and landmarks commemorating slavery across America and in Africa, but his stop at the Whitney, in his home state, stood out. There he encountered no mint juleps or “Gone with the Wind” nostalgia about slavery. Instead, the plantation displayed statuettes of impoverished, emaciated Black children. Oral histories included an account from an enslaved woman who recalled how her master would come at night to rape her sister and “den have de nerve to come round de next day and ask her how she feel.” The plantation’s harrowing centerpiece, though, was what made Smith stop in his tracks. Planted in a garden bed in front of the fence were the heads of 55 Black men impaled on metal rods, their eyes shut and jaws clenched in anguish. The severed heads were ceramic sculptures—a memorial to the largest slave rebellion in U.S. history. In 1811 some 500 slaves, led by a mixed-race slave driver named Charles Deslondes, marched through Louisiana in military formation before federal troops captured them. Their leaders were tortured and beheaded, with their heads posted on stakes as a warning to other slaves.*

[Police Say They’re Powerless to Thwart Neighbor’s Racist Noise Directed at Navy Veterans](#) [Chad Garland, *Stars and Stripes*, 1 October 2021]

*A Black Navy veteran in Virginia who has been subjected to months of racist harassment by a neighbor took to the national airwaves to share her ordeal, which police say they can do little to remedy. Jannique Martinez and her family moved to Jessamine Court in Virginia Beach five*

*years ago, she told CNN's Don Lemon. Soon afterward, the neighbor began blaring recordings to antagonize other residents, and has now stepped it up by playing monkey noises and racial slurs whenever her family steps out of the house. "As appalling and offensive as the neighbors' behaviors are, the city attorney and Virginia magistrates have separately determined that the actions reported thus far did not rise to the level that Virginia law defines as criminal behavior," police said Thursday. A civil court judge was "a little more compassionate" but told her that if the neighbor did not threaten the family or pose bodily harm, the courts could do nothing about it. Several neighborhood residents gathered last week to protest, holding signs that said "love thy neighbor" and "spread love not hate," WAVY reported. Police pledged to help the family "within the limits of the law."*

[Tesla ordered to pay Black former worker who alleged racial abuse nearly \\$137M](#) [Monique Beals, *The Hill*, 5 October 2021]

*A Black former employee of Tesla will receive nearly \$137 million from the company after he was subjected to racially motivated abuse at a California factory. Owen Diaz said in his lawsuit that he was subjected to "daily racist epithets" including the "N-word" before he quit his job, The Associated Press reported. His lawsuit also claimed his supervisors made no effort to stop the abuse despite Diaz's claims that drawings of swastikas and racist graffiti could be found around the plant, according to the AP. "Tesla's progressive image was a façade papering over its regressive, demeaning treatment of African-American employees," the lawsuit said, per the AP. The AP added that Tesla has denied knowing anything about the alleged abuse, noting that it was not clear if the company would appeal the decision.*

## RELIGION

[TikTok-famous: Meet the Army's first Muslim chaplain to reach full colonel](#) [Davis Winkie, *Army Times*, 1 October 2021]

*Against all odds, Army Col. Khallid Shabazz survived—just like he had survived childhood sexual abuse. It wasn't an easy road that Shabazz took to join the Army, which he did in 1992. Now he serves as the command chaplain for U.S. Army Central, the three-star command responsible for land operations in the Middle East. He's the first Muslim chaplain in the U.S. military to reach the rank of colonel, according to Col. Armando Hernandez, an ARCENT spokesperson. Army Times spoke with Shabazz about his unique career as one of the military's handful of Muslim chaplains throughout the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Shabazz, a 6-foot-4-inch former college football player who is built like a brick house, has become a TikTok microcelebrity in recent months. "Initial interactions with commanders and soldiers were tough," Shabazz said. But fellowship on the basketball court and in the gym would always help him integrate with the soldiers and leaders at each new duty station. For young Muslim soldiers, like Shabazz once was, the connection is immediate, and it always extends to Muslim troops in neighboring units who hear about a chaplain who shares their faith.*

## SEXISM

[Congress moves toward requiring women to register for the draft](#) [Mark Satter, *Roll Call*, 5 October 2021]

*For over 100 years, young men have registered for the draft. Now, Congress is poised to make a historic change for gender equality by requiring women, for the first time in American history, to do the same. But if a crisis of monumental proportions were to emerge, the logistics of incorporating women into a much larger military could prove complicated. Would drafted women be expected to serve in combat roles? And if not, what would their roles be? Would they be housed with men? It appears that neither Congress nor the Pentagon has thought that through. Still, included in the House version of the fiscal 2022 National Defense Authorization Act, which that chamber passed last month, was an amendment by Pennsylvania Democrat Chrissy Houlahan and Florida Republican Michael Waltz that would require women to sign up with the Selective Service, a government agency that keeps records of Americans eligible for a potential draft. Proponents of the change see the move as a victory for women's rights. "Equity is important," Houlahan told CQ Roll Call in an interview, "and women have constantly had to fight for a level playing field—and this change is a step in the right direction."*

[\[REPRINT\]](#)

## SEXUAL ASSAULT/HARASSMENT

[Civilian AAFES employee pleads guilty to attempted rape, theft charges on Okinawa](#) [Matthew M. Burke and Mari Higa, *Stars and Stripes*, 7 October 2021]

*A U.S. civilian working for the Army and Air Force Exchange Service on Okinawa pleaded guilty to attempted rape and theft charges in a Japanese court on Wednesday. Rushane Joel McKoy, 25, of Chatan Town, was arrested in July after a local woman accused him of trying to force her to have sex in mid-April. The theft charge stems from a separate incident in August 2020, when he was accused of taking a shoulder bag containing 7,000 yen in cash, or about \$62. McKoy, who works for an exchange store at Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, apologized during his first appearance in Naha District Court on Wednesday, blaming his crimes on depression and substance abuse. He promised to seek counseling if given a second chance. A rape conviction could bring more than five years in prison with hard labor, according to the Japanese penal code. However, it is possible to receive less time for attempted rape, a spokesman from Japan's Ministry of Justice said Wednesday.*

[Coast Guardsman Sues Claiming Retaliation for Filing Sex Assault Report at Academy](#) [Patricia Kime, *Military.com*, 6 October 2021]

*A former Coast Guard Academy cadet has filed a lawsuit over his dismissal from the school, contending his removal just eight days before commissioning was retaliation for reporting an alleged sexual assault. Joshua Roh, now a 3rd class boatswain's mate serving in New Hampshire, filed a motion Oct. 1 in U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C., saying that his rights were violated by his Coast Guard chain of command when they failed to support him after the alleged assault and later sought to discredit him. Moreover, leadership kicked him out of the academy and violated his due process by summarily dismissing his requests for appeal, according to the complaint. The cadet, then in his third year at the school, filed an unrestricted report of the assault—the type of filing that launches a formal investigation. The alleged perpetrator remained*

*in the classes he shared with Roh and later was assigned with Roh to summer cadre, the group of upperclassmen who help instruct the newest students, the incoming 4th class, known at the school as “swabs.” Roh’s complaint argues that his treatment violated the federal Administrative Procedure Act because the disciplinary actions taken against him were “arbitrary and capricious.”*

[NWSL commissioner resigns as league calls off weekend matches after accusations of sexual misconduct by fired coach](#) [Kevin Dotson, David Close and Steve Almasy, CNN, 2 October 2021]

*The commissioner of the National Women’s Soccer League has resigned and the league has called off all matches scheduled for this weekend following a report by The Athletic detailing allegations of sexual coercion and misconduct against Paul Riley, who coached three NWSL franchises over eight seasons. Riley was fired by the North Carolina Courage on Thursday after an investigative report by The Athletic that cites players on the record alleging that for years, Riley used his influence and power to sexually harass players and in one incident, coerce a player into having sex with him. The league released one sentence about Commissioner Lisa Baird, saying she resigned and the league accepted. Earlier, the NWSL said the league’s decision not to play this weekend’s matches was reached in collaboration with the players union and was based on “the gravity of the events of the last week.” A [statement from the players’ union](#) said it was a difficult decision to ask for the matches to be called off. The union recognized that fans made travel plans and spent money to go to the matches. It also recognized that playing is what gives the players joy.*

[SEE ALSO [1](#), [2](#)]

## SUICIDE

[After a harrowing year, the National Guard takes stock of its mental health](#) [Meghann Myers, *Air Force Times*, 4 October 2021]

*The effects of 2020’s months-long deployments to support pandemic relief and aid law enforcement in cities erupting in public demonstrations, as well as the U.S.-Mexico border mission and natural disaster relief the Guard already had on their plates, remain to be seen. But [National] Guard leaders feel confident that, at least so far, the scars of 2020 aren’t reflected in the most stark way: their suicide numbers. The National Guard reported 120 suicides in 2020, spokesman Wayne Hall told *Military Times*. It’s a 32-percent jump from 2019’s 90—a year that saw a precipitous drop from 136 in 2018—but relatively on par with the last half-decade. Because of that sharp up-and-down, it’s difficult to say whether either year was an anomaly, and it’ll take more years to establish a pattern. Cognizant of the demand these deployments would have on their people, the Guard decided to do some research. They picked the New York National Guard as their population, both because the state was hit so hard in the early days of the pandemic, but also because many of their personnel were mobilized to help out. What they found is not altogether surprising. In units with support from leaders, there was lower stress and fewer days feeling unwell. The reverse was also true.*

[Former VA secretaries propose National Warrior Call Day to raise military suicide awareness](#) [Ellen Mitchell, *The Hill*, 5 October 2021]

*In a letter circulated to lawmakers, the former officials refer to the “Warrior Call” amendment—introduced in the House’s version of the National Defense Authorization Act by Reps. Liz Cheney (R-Wyo.) and Elaine Luria (D-Va.)—which would make the day official. Warrior Call seeks to address the problem by urging Americans to reach out to veterans and service members and “let them know they care” via a phone call. “With its simple mission to implore Americans—but especially active-duty service members and veterans—to connect with someone who has worn or is currently wearing the uniform and let them know they care—Warrior Call can foster greater connectivity, compassion, and better outcomes,” according to the letter.*

[Virtual Reality-Enabled Suicide Prevention Training Takes Air Force Staff “Out of Their Comfort Zone”](#) [Brandi Vincent, Nextgov, 4 October 2021]

*Virtual reality technology is helping Florida-based Air Force officials confront and counter suicide, which is reportedly on the rise across the U.S. military. Late last month, the 6th Air Refueling Wing Integrated Resilience Team at MacDill Air Force base implemented new and immersive training for its personnel, via a virtual reality suicide prevention system. “This is the future,” Lisa Williams, the 6th ARW Integrated Resilience Office community support coordinator said Friday. Virtual reality generally involves headsets that depict computer-generated environments with simulated scenes and objects that appear to be real. The military and multiple government entities have increasingly invested in and turned to the technology for educational and other mission-oriented purposes in recent years. Williams noted that, in this instance, it allowed Air Force leadership to offer options that could best fit the needs of staff who have to go through annual training sessions. For the recent VR-enabled iteration, participants found themselves in scenarios where they had to engage with someone in obvious emotional distress—and ultimately convince that person to reach out for help.*

## VETERANS

[Black and Hispanic veterans more likely to get COVID shots than Whites early on, though nearly all benefited](#) [Karin Zeitvogel, Stars and Stripes, 6 October 2021]

*African American and Hispanic veterans were more likely than their White counterparts to get the COVID-19 vaccine at a veterans’ health facility in the first few months that mRNA vaccines were available in the U.S, a study published Wednesday found. Non-Hispanic Black veterans who received care through the Veterans Health Administration made up 21% of those who had at least one dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccine in the three months following the two vaccines’ rollout in December, [according to the study](#) published on the Journal of the American Medical Association’s Network Open website. Among Hispanic veterans, 18% had at least a first dose of one of the two mRNA shots after they were authorized for emergency use by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Black people made up just 17% of the more than 6.6 million veterans whose electronic health records were looked at for the study, and Hispanics represented just 7% of the study population. White veterans, on the other hand, made up two-thirds of the study population but only 22% of those who were inoculated during the study period.*

[For many veterans, finding treatment for mental wounds proves difficult](#) [Steve Walsh, NPR, 4 October 2021] [AUDIO]

*KPBS' Steve Walsh reports on the mental health struggles veterans face and the lack of support they receive from the military.*

[Vietnam Veteran Recalls Camaraderie, Hardships of War Experience](#) [Skip Vaughn, DOD News, 6 October 2021]

*He was born in Sicily and came to the United States when he was 11. In Niagara Falls, New York, he didn't care much for school but became an avid reader. Joe Bongiovanni read a lot about history and World War II. He became fascinated with the Marines in the Pacific. He would stay up late so he could watch the scenes of the Iwo Jima flag raising as the television networks signed off for the night. "I wanted to become a Marine from a very young age," Bongiovanni said. He joined the Marines Feb. 9, 1967, in Niagara Falls as the Vietnam War raged. Bongiovanni spent 12 and a half months with the infantry in Vietnam from 1967-68. He wouldn't become a naturalized U.S. citizen until 1975. Bongiovanni, who received the Combat Action Ribbon, left the Marines as a corporal in 1970. At 72, he resides on Smith Lake in Arley, Ala. with his wife of 40 years, Denice. Bongiovanni shared his thoughts on this nation's commemoration of 50 years since the Vietnam War. "I think it's wonderful," he said. "And I think it's a long time coming."*