

DEOMI NEWS LINKS 24 MARCH 2023

HIGHLIGHTS

[As Ramadan approaches, Muslims discuss things they wish their peers knew about the holy month](#)

[Mirna Alsharif, NBC News, 23 March 2023]

A crescent moon sighting will kick off the holy month of Ramadan on Thursday, sending many of the world's approximately 1.9 billion Muslims into a monthlong fast from sunrise to sunset. Ramadan, the ninth and most sacred month of the Islamic calendar, is when Muslims believe the first verses of the Quran were revealed to Prophet Muhammad. And even though Islam is the world's fastest-growing religion, on track to replace Christianity as the largest religion globally, Ramadan still isn't well understood by many non-Muslims.

[SEE ALSO] [\[WHITE HOUSE STATEMENT\]](#)

[Guard Recognizes Milestones that Brought Positive Change](#) [Air Force Master Sgt. Erich B. Smith, National Guard Bureau News Service, 20 March 2023]

The National Guard will recognize three anniversaries this year that legally established racial integration in the military, opened more opportunities for women to serve and ended the draft. This year marks the 75th anniversary of President Harry S. Truman's Executive Order of the Desegregation of the Armed Forces; the 75th anniversary of the Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948; and the 50th anniversary of the elimination of the draft—creating an all-volunteer military. "The Department of Defense saw profound changes during the 20th century, including eradicating racial segregation, integrating women in our ranks, and establishing an all-volunteer force," said Army Gen. Daniel Hokanson, chief of the National Guard Bureau.

[Military Personnel Subcommittee hearing: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: Impacts to the Department of Defense and the Armed Services](#) [DOD News, 23 March 2023] [VIDEO]

Defense officials testify about the impact policies, procedures and training related to diversity, equity, and inclusion have had on the Defense Department during a hearing of the House Armed Services Committee's military personnel subcommittee.

[Supreme Court hands victory to public school students with disabilities](#) [Nina Totenberg, NPR, 21 March 2023]

A unanimous Supreme Court ruled Tuesday that a deaf student can sue his school for its failure to provide him a public education tailored to his needs. Because the decision allows for the possibility of two separate lawsuits, it could give parents more leverage in negotiating with public schools over assistance for children with disabilities. Miguel Luna Perez enrolled in the Sturgis, Mich., public schools starting when he was 9 years old. Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA, the district was required to give him an appropriate public-school education. But instead of providing Perez with aides able to translate class material into sign language, as promised, the aides were not trained in sign language at all, and often were absent from classes.

CULTURE

[The actor who played young Forrest Gump served in Iraq](#) [Miguel Ortiz, *We Are The Mighty*, 20 March 2023]

Forrest Gump is a modern classic film, depicting the latter half of 20th century American history through the eyes of a slow but kindhearted man. Based on the book of the same name, the titular character has a distinct, deep southern accent. Tom Hanks, who played Gump through his teenage years and into adulthood, based the accent on Michael Conner Humphreys, the actor who played young Gump. Like Gump, Humphreys later joined the Army and served overseas. In November 2004, after graduating from high school and motivated by the 9/11 attacks, Humphreys enlisted in the U.S. Army. “I feel like there was a duty to go do it,” he told CBS. “Because it’s just part of being the citizen of a country. That’s what you gotta do.” He was assigned to 1st Battalion, 36th Infantry Regiment and completed an 18-month-tour in Anbar Province, Iraq.

[Air Force solidifies fitness standards for special warfare trainees](#) [Rachel S. Cohen, *Air Force Times*, 23 March 2023]

Nearly one year after the Air Force graduated its first female special tactics officer amid a firestorm of public criticism, the service says it has used the experience to improve the special warfare training pipeline and rebuild trust between leadership and instructors. The Special Warfare Training Wing, headquartered here, has clarified what an airman must do to pass the rigorous tests that lead to a coveted beret. The wing has also solidified what happens when someone quits or fails to satisfactorily complete a stage in that process. Confusion on those two points raised questions last year about whether a female candidate, who became the first to complete the program last June, benefited from double standards and favoritism.

[Audubon faces a backlash after deciding to keep name that evokes a racist enslaver](#) [Bill Chappell, *NPR*, 18 March 2023]

Famous naturalist John James Audubon “did despicable things” and supported his work by buying and selling enslaved people—and that’s according to the organization that bears his name. But the [National Audubon Society’s board of directors](#) rejected the idea of changing its name this week, setting off resignations amid plans from local groups to rename themselves anyway. The organization cited two main reasons for keeping Audubon’s name: it’s grappling with the critical challenge facing birds and other wildlife due to climate change and other pressures; and it believes the name of the group, founded some 50 years after Audubon’s death, “has come to represent so much more than the work of one person.” Still, it added, “We must reckon with the racist legacy.”

[Biden designates national monument at former Army range](#) [Jonathan Lehrfeld, *Military Times*, 21 March 2023]

The president designated the Castner Range National Monument in El Paso, Texas, on Tuesday at a White House summit, according to a [White House fact sheet](#). “This action will protect the cultural, scientific and historic objects found within the monument’s boundaries, honor our veterans, service members, and Tribal Nations, and expand access to outdoor recreation on our public lands,” the fact sheet noted. The nearly-7,000 acres of high-desert mountains will become the first national monument directly managed by the U.S. military since national battlefields were transferred to the National Park Service in the 1930s, according to the fact sheet.

[“Like a living scrapbook”: “My Powerful Hair” is a celebration of Native culture](#) [Elizabeth Blair, *NPR*, 22 March 2023]

My Powerful Hair is a new picture book that turns a painful truth about racism into a celebration of Native culture. When Carole Lindstrom was a little girl growing up in Bellevue, Nebraska, she really wanted long hair. She couldn't understand why her mother wouldn't let her. She says her mother didn't seem to have a good explanation. One clue was a black and white photograph that sat on top of the TV set—a picture of her grandmother and two great aunts. “They were wearing these white smocks and their hair was just really chopped short and they had bangs. They just didn't look right,” says Lindstrom. “And I remember asking my mom about that picture...and my mom didn't really know much about it other than to say, ‘Well, that was when grandma and your great aunts were sent to boarding school. Indian boarding school.’”

[Navy Follows Army in Offering Prep Courses to Recruits Who Don't Meet Fitness, Academic Standards](#) [Rebecca Kheel, *Military.com*, 22 March 2023]

The Navy is now offering recruits who do not meet fitness standards a chance to get in shape before boot camp in an effort to expand the pool of young Americans eligible to serve. The Future Sailor Preparatory Course was highlighted by a service official at a congressional hearing Tuesday as one of the “innovative ways” the Navy is approaching recruitment challenges that have hit the military at large. The Navy program mirrors one launched last year by the Army that officials have touted as a success.

[\[SEE ALSO\]](#)

[Purses, Parkas, and Patches—Air Force Uniform Board Unveils New Changes, But No Beards](#) [David Roza, *Air & Space Forces Magazine*, 21 March 2023]

The Air Force Uniform Board unveiled changes to Air Force and Space Force dress and appearance regulations March 21, including updates to cold weather gear, purses and handbags, and “heritage-like” morale patches. One area of appearance regulations that went unchanged was facial hair policy. Over the past several years, there has been a steady stream of calls from Airmen on social media to allow beards without a special waiver. As part of a statement on facial hair policy, an Air Force spokesperson said the branch coordinates with the other services. On the same day the uniform changes were announced, Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force JoAnne S. Bass [released a memo](#) saying that facial hair policy, and the stigma that many shaving waiver holders report facing, is on her mind.

[\[SEE ALSO\]](#)

[Six options considered for renaming Louisiana National Guard facility that honored Confederate general](#) [Faimon A. Roberts, *NOLA.com*, 22 March 2023]

Camp Beauregard, the sprawling Louisiana installation in Pineville that functions as one of two main sites for the Louisiana National Guard, will get a new name later this year as it follows the Army's lead in moving away from bases named for Confederate officers. Louisiana Adjutant General D. Keith Waddell, a gubernatorial appointee, will decide between six names presented to him by a committee made up of national guard and civilian leaders, he said Tuesday. Waddell hopes to have made his decision within the next month with a rededication ceremony to come later this year. An online survey conducted by the Guard showed 71% of respondents in favor of the name change, according to Lt. Col. Noel Collins, a Louisiana National Guard spokesperson.

[This Week, Fort Pickett Will Replace Its Confederate Name, a First for an Army Base Following Renaming Commission](#) [Steve Beynon, *Military.com*, 20 March 2023]

Fort Pickett, Virginia, will be the first Army installation to be renamed as part of a service-wide plan this year to scrub base names that honor Confederate rebels who waged war against the United States. Fort Pickett, an Army National Guard installation 60 miles south of Richmond, will be redesignated Fort Barfoot on Friday, honoring Col. Van T. Barfoot, a World War II Medal of Honor recipient with deep Virginia ties.

[West Texas A&M University president cancels student drag show, saying it degrades women](#) [Kate McGee, *The Texas Tribune* (Austin, Texas), 21 March 2023]

West Texas A&M University President Walter Wendler is drawing ire for canceling a student drag show, arguing that such performances degrade women and are “derisive, divisive and demoralizing misogyny.” Students and First Amendment lawyers reject those assertions, calling his comments a mischaracterization of the art form. They also argue that the cancellation violates students’ constitutional rights and a state law that broadly protects free speech on college campuses, potentially setting the university up for a lawsuit. His comments and decision to cancel the campus drag show come amid surging uproar over the lively entertainment as far-right extremist groups have recruited conservatives to protest the events, claiming that drag performances are sexualizing kids.

[The Women Behind the Montgomery Bus Boycott](#) [Karen Grigsby Bates, Barrett Golding, Courtney Stein, Diba Mohtasham, and Jess Kung, *NPR*, 22 March 2023] [PODCAST WITH TRANSCRIPT]

The Montgomery bus boycott lasted from December of 1955 through December of 1956. What people often remember of that moment in history is that when Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat, it sparked a bus boycott that was led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. But what that retelling leaves out are all the women who organized for years to make that boycott a reality and who helped sustain it for 13 long months. Here you can meet the women whose voices you hear in the podcast, see their faces and read their stories. Together, these women created a turning point in American history.

DISCRIMINATION

[“Aspect of his heritage.” ACLU blasts school that told Native American boy to cut hair](#) [Simone Jasper, *The Kansas City Star* (Kansas City, Mo.), 23 March 2023]

A North Carolina school fired back after a civil rights group blasted its short hair rule as “discriminatory.” The American Civil Liberties Union of North Carolina in a letter warned Classical Charter Schools of Leland that it may have violated the law when it told a Native American boy to cut his hair. “Logan’s hair is an extension of who he is,” Ashley Lomboy, the child’s mom and a member of the Waccamaw Siouan Tribe, said March 20 in a news release. “Without his hair, he will lose part of himself and a critical aspect of his heritage. Native Americans have been wearing their hair long since time immemorial.”

[Labor leaders urge Biden administration to investigate systemic racial inequity at large federal contractor](#) [Drew Friedman, *Federal News Network*, 22 March 2023]

A large federal contractor employing thousands of call center employees is under fire for alleged racial and gender inequity and barriers to career advancement for lower-level staff members. Labor leaders called on the Biden administration to investigate the workplace practices of Maximus, claiming that the company systemically prevents call center staff, who are predominately Black and Latina women, from

advancing their careers. Black and Latina women make up close to 50% of the contractor's front-line workforce, and just 5% of company executives. In contrast, White men comprise 9% of front-line staff and about half of Maximus' executives, [according to a March 21 joint report](#) from the Communications Workers of America (CWA), the NAACP and the Strategic Organizing Center (SOC). Overall, 76% of front-line employees at Maximus are women and 69% are people of color, the report said.

[Transgender troops warn GOP bill could upend lives, weaken military](#) [Jacob Wendler, *Military Times*, 22 March 2023]

Kora Delta was one of thousands of U.S. troops who helped evacuate more than 100,000 people from Afghanistan in the summer of 2021. The mission came as she was awaiting gender-affirming care, a few months after the Biden administration announced that transgender people could serve openly in the military, reversing a Trump-era policy. Delta is one of the thousands of openly transgender service members who would be prohibited from serving in the military as part of new legislation introduced in Congress. The "Ensuring Military Readiness Act", introduced by Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) and Rep. Jim Banks (R-Ind.), would largely disqualify transgender individuals from serving in the military; companion legislation is being considered in the House this week.

[World Athletics bans transgender women from competing in female world ranking events](#) [Katie Falkingham, *BBC Sport*, 23 March 2023]

World Athletics has banned transgender women from competing in the female category at international events. The governing body's president, Lord Coe, said no transgender athlete who had gone through male puberty would be permitted to compete in female world ranking competitions from 31 March. A working group will be set up to conduct further research into the transgender eligibility guidelines. "We're not saying no forever," he said. He noted that there are currently no transgender athletes competing internationally in the sport. Under previous rules, World Athletics required transgender women to reduce their amount of blood testosterone to a maximum of 5nmol/L, and stay under this threshold continuously for a period of 12 months before competing in the female category.

DIVERSITY

[Agency Director's Career Mirrors Growing Opportunities for Women](#) [Beth Reece, *DOD News*, 21 March 2023]

Navy Vice Adm. Michelle Skubic dodges the limelight as much at 61 as she did at 4. Despite a desire to move past the "distraction" of being the first woman in any military role, Skubic's career has put her in places that summon attention, from a ship that sailed into war before women were allowed to serve in combat to a military plane where she was the only woman 30,000 feet in the clouds—and in labor. Now nearing the end of her time as the Defense Logistics Agency's first female director, Skubic downplays the history she's made. "It's great to break the glass ceiling, but I'm only the agency's 20th director, not the 200th."

[Female Fitment Program drives positive change in Air Force](#) [Kayla Prather, *Air Force News Service*, 20 March 2023]

The Female Fitment Program continues to influence daily life and duty for female Airmen, moving history forward for generations of women. Being the only Female Fitment Program office in the Air and Space Forces, personnel at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base are working to develop uniforms that provide women with proper form, fit and function. The program seeks to ensure that all female Airmen

feel comfortable and confident in what they are wearing and know their uniform is being made with women in mind from start to finish. “The Female Fitment Program is designed to create uniforms that better fit our female population,” said Andrea Lemke, Air Force Life Cycle Management Center Female Fitment Program clothing designer.

[A Florida town, once settled by former slaves, now fights over “sacred land”](#) [Marina Teichner, CBS Sunday Morning, 19 March 2023]

“This is sacred land,” said N.Y. Nathiri, a third-generation resident of Eatonville, Fla. “It’s special for us. It’s who we are. And we’re not going to let them take it away from us, no.” Nathiri heads the association to preserve the Eatonville community, a town founded in 1887 by Joe Clark. That it even happened was remarkable. After the end of the Civil War, formerly enslaved African Americans flocked to central Florida to work. White property owners refused to sell them land, until Clark convinced two White Northerners with homes in the area, Lewis Lawrence and Josiah Eaton, to make available plots they could buy in what became Eatonville, one of the first Black towns to incorporate. Eatonville today is struggling. The median income is around \$27,000 a year. A Family Dollar is the only store. There’s no supermarket, no gas station, no pharmacy.

[More Black men are needed in the classroom, diversity advocates say](#) [Nicquel Terry Ellis, CNN, 19 March 2023]

A new [national study published in the peer-reviewed journal Early Education and Development](#) found that children taught by teachers of the same race develop better learning and problem-solving skills by the time they turn seven years old. Just 1.3% of public school teachers were Black men in the 2020-21 school year, [according to the National Teacher and Principal Survey](#). That school year, White women made up 61% of public-school teachers. Black children, meanwhile, accounted for 15% of public-school students in the fall of 2020. Black men are sorely needed in the teaching field, advocates say, as the nation’s school systems struggle with unfair disciplinary practices, achievement gaps, and political battles over Black history curriculum.

[Navy selects first woman to serve as CMC of Combined Maritime Forces](#) [Diana Stancy Correll, Navy Times, 22 March 2023]

The Navy this month selected the first woman to serve as the senior enlisted leader of U.S. 5th Fleet’s Combined Maritime Forces, the largest naval partnership globally. Naval Forces Central Command Master Chief Celina Miller, who enlisted in the Navy in 1998, is slated to take over the role from Marine Corps Sgt. Maj. Cortez Brown in May. Brown has served in that role since August 2021. This is not Miller’s first go as a command master chief. She was the first woman to serve as the command master chief of the guided-missile destroyer Halsey. She later served as command master chief of 5th Fleet’s Task Force 55, which oversees U.S. surface ships operating in the NAVCENT area of operations.

[The number of Black video game developers is small, but strong](#) [Brianna Scott, NPR, 20 March 2023]

In many ways, it all started with Jerry Lawson. It was rare to see Black engineers working in tech decades ago, but Lawson wasn’t alone. Ed Smith was another Black engineer who reimaged consoles in the early days of at-home gaming, working on the very first hybrid video game/personal computer, called The Imagination Machine. These two pioneers showed that Black people have a place in the multibillion-dollar video game industry. And yet, while the industry employs hundreds of thousands of people around the world, Black people are in the minority. Of the respondents to a [2021 survey from the](#)

[International Game Developers Association](#), only 5% were Black while close to 80% were White—suggesting the enormous gap that exists in the industry.

[SeaWorld Orlando’s all-women vet team breaks barriers](#) [Nichole Griffin, *Spectrum 13 News (Orlando, Fla.)*, 23 March 2023]

It’s Women’s History Month and right in Central Florida’s backyard a group of women is making waves in a field historically dominated by men. At SeaWorld Orlando they have a rare all-female veterinary team that claims tides are changing across the industry. Studies show there has been a major shift in the veterinary world as women flock to, and thrive in, what once was a male-dominated profession. According to the American Veterinary Medical Association, male enrollment in U.S. veterinary colleges decreased from 89% in 1970 to 22.9% in 2009.

EXTREMISM

[Antisemitic incidents are at an all-time high, the ADL reports](#) [Vanessa Romo, *NPR*, 23 March 2023]

Antisemitic incidents in the U.S. rose 36% in 2022, an annual audit by the Anti-Defamation League shows. The [report, released Thursday](#), tracked 3,697 incidents of harassment, vandalism and assault targeting Jewish people and communities last year. It is the third time in five years that the tally has been the highest number ever recorded since the ADL first began collecting data in 1979.

[Former Air Force officer gets prison term for Capitol attack](#) [Michael Kunzelman, *The Associated Press*, 17 March 2023]

A retired Air Force officer who stormed the U.S. Capitol dressed in combat gear and carried zip-tie handcuffs into the Senate gallery was sentenced on Friday to two years in prison. Larry Brock, 55, of Grapevine, Texas, joined other rioters on the Senate floor only minutes after then-Vice President Mike Pence, senators and their staff evacuated the chamber to escape the mob attacking the building on Jan. 6, 2021. The judge said Brock expressed “very troubling” and violent rhetoric before the Jan. 6 riot. The judge read aloud several of Brock’s social media postings calling it “really pretty astounding” that a former high-ranking military officer expressed those words.

[Judge sentences Jan. 6 defendant who breached Pelosi’s office to 36 months in prison](#) [Kyle Cheney, *Politico*, 23 March 2023]

A Jan. 6 defendant who surged with the mob into Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s office and helped strategize ways for the mob to overcome police resistance was sentenced Thursday to 36 months in prison, ending one of the earliest and most unusual sagas to stem from the Capitol attack. Attorneys for Riley Williams—a devotee of White nationalist Nick Fuentes who is 5 feet, 4 inches tall and was 22 at the time of the attack—repeatedly urged U.S. District Judge Amy Berman Jackson to treat her like an immature child who couldn’t be responsible for her actions. But Jackson sharply rejected that effort, noting that Williams repeatedly and intentionally took steps to breach police lines and marshaled the mob to resist even further.

[Leader of White supremacist group arrested for threatening to kill journalist trying to report on organization](#) [Hannah Rabinowitz, *CNN*, 21 March 2023]

Nicholas Welker, who also goes by “King ov Wrath” and “ilovehate5150,” was the leader of the Feuerkrieg Division—a White supremacist group that prosecutors said has a goal of “challenging laws, social order, and the government via terrorism and other violent acts” and “encourages attacks on

racial minorities, the Jewish community, the LGBTQ+ community, the U.S. Government, journalists, and critical infrastructure.” According to [court documents](#), Welker allegedly posted violent memes online about a Brooklyn-based journalist who was reporting on the Feuerkrieg Division.

[Some radicalized people didn't get mental health care](#) [Shirley Cardenas, *Futurity*, 17 March 2023]

A majority of people radicalized to hold extremist views needed mental health services that they hadn't previously received, research in Canada finds. The [new study in the International Journal of Forensic Mental Health](#) calls for more specialized services to assess and treat radicalized individuals with mental health disorders who may be vulnerable and who may express their distress through violent behavior. The study, which included over 150 radicalized individuals referred to the Polarization Team, shows that a majority of extremist individuals needed mental health services but often failed to receive them because they were distrustful of the system or because primary care providers felt unequipped to deal with them.

[\[REPRINT\]](#)

HUMAN RELATIONS

[Empathy Can Be Part of a Leader's Toolkit](#) [Adam Butler and Ross Gianfortune, *Government Executive*, 21 March 2023] [PODCAST]

While women make up half the population, women are underrepresented in leadership roles at large organizations. According to research, women face challenges when leading teams that men do not, including many stereotypes about leadership style. But, as social mores change, traits often associated with femininity like empathy may become more a part of leadership. Dr. Nicole Price is the author of “Spark the Heart, Engineering Empathy In Your Organization”, which will be released in April. She also is the CEO of Lively Paradox, a professional coaching business that focuses on practicing empathy in leadership. She joined the podcast to discuss how traits associated with women can help shape organizations and leadership.

[Why workplace drinking culture is fading fast](#) [Megan Carnegie, *BBC News Worklife*, 27 March 2023]

Drinking has long been the centre of workplace culture. But younger employees are changing the role of alcohol in the office. In almost all spheres of life, regular alcohol consumption has been institutionalised, and even encouraged: it's embedded in rites of passage, such as college and university; and carries through to the workplace as a bonding ritual, morale booster and stress reliever. And yet, while the pandemic destabilised workplace social culture as we knew it, alcohol didn't disappear. Some experts say this move is long overdue. After all, many workers don't drink for personal reasons, and interactions involving alcohol at work can be fraught. Add to this the increasingly large cohort of [Gen Zers who are driving deeper conversations](#) about sobriety and normalising socialising without alcohol, and it raises questions: does alcohol have a place at work any longer—and should it?

INTERNATIONAL

[Italy leaves children of same-sex parents in limbo](#) [Davide Ghiglione, *BBC News*, 19 March 2023]

In 2018, Maria Silvia Fiengo and Francesca Pardi were among Italy's first same-sex couples to be registered as parents. The mayor of Milan, Giuseppe Sala, took a progressive stance and allowed children born to parents of the same gender to be acknowledged in the absence of clear national legislation. For Maria Silvia and Francesca—and their four children Margherita, twins Giorgio and

Raffaele, and Antonio - being finally recognised as a household after years of legal challenges and discrimination was “truly incredible”. This week, however, what was then seen as a major victory for equality and acceptance by the LGBT community was reversed.

[Met Police: Women and children failed by “boys’ club”, review finds](#) [Thomas Mackintosh & Lucy Manning, *BBC News*, 21 March 2023]

Women and children have been failed by the Metropolitan Police, with racism, misogyny, and homophobia at the heart of the force, a blistering review says. Baroness Casey says a “boys’ club” culture is rife and the force could be dismantled if it does not improve. Her [year-long review](#) condemns systemic failures, painting a picture of a force where rape cases were dropped because a freezer containing key evidence broke. Baroness Casey was appointed to review the force’s culture and standards after the abduction, rape and murder of Sarah Everard by serving police officer Wayne Couzens, in 2021.

[Uganda passes a law making it a crime to identify as LGBTQ](#) [Reuters, 22 March 2023]

Uganda’s parliament passed a law on Tuesday making it a crime to identify as LGBTQ, handing authorities broad powers to target gay Ugandans who already face legal discrimination and mob violence. More than 30 African countries, including Uganda, already ban same-sex relations. The new law appears to be the first to outlaw merely identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ), according to rights group Human Rights Watch.

MISCELLANEOUS

[Book ban attempts hit record high in 2022, library org says](#) [Hillel Italie, *The Associated Press*, 23 March 2023]

Attempted book bans and restrictions at school and public libraries continue to surge, setting a record in 2022, according to a [new report](#) from the American Library Association released Thursday. More than 1,200 challenges were compiled by the association in 2022, nearly double the then-record total from 2021 and by far the most since the ALA began keeping data 20 years ago. Librarians around the country have told of being harassed and threatened with violence or legal action.

[\[SEE ALSO\]](#)

[DOD Announces Six New Measures to Enhance Well-Being of Military Force and Their Families](#)

[DOD News, 22 March 2023]

Today, Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III unveiled a comprehensive plan aimed at improving the lives of our dedicated military force and their families. The new plan consists of six additional actions that address essential needs in education, childcare, parental leave, and career advancement. The Department of Defense (DOD) is committed to working with Congress and other stakeholders to ensure the successful implementation of these measures.

[\[SECDEF MEMO\]](#)

RELIGION

[Leaders express more of their faith at work](#) [Avery Ruxer Franklin, *Futurity*, 20 March 2023]

The study, which used survey data from a nationally representative sample of employed U.S. adults, was published in a recent edition of the [Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion](#). Expressions of religion

that were measured included displaying faith with symbols, feeling comfortable talking about faith, and speaking up when observing unfair work practices that conflict with their beliefs. According to Robert Thomson, the study's lead author and a former postdoctoral fellow at Rice University, "expression at work is influenced by more than simply a person's religious enthusiasm or identity."

VETERANS

[VA change will lower home loan rates for some Native American vets](#) [Leo Shane III, *Military Times*, 22 March 2023]

Native Americans using a special Veterans Affairs home loan program will see their interest rates slashed by more than half as part of a new initiative to make housing more affordable for them. The move is only expected to affect a few hundred veterans over the next few years. But it represents the latest in a series of outreach efforts by VA officials to disenfranchised groups of veterans and specifically to Native Americans, whose unique status has sometimes caused difficulties in obtaining department benefits.

[VA Rolls Out New Mental Health Scholarship as Need Increases](#) [Drew F. Lawrence, *Military.com*, 22 March 2023]

The Department of Veterans Affairs launched a scholarship program last week aimed at recruiting mental health and counseling professionals to underserved facilities across the country. The program also seeks to help boost a "severe" specialized worker shortage as veterans face an increasing need for their services post-Afghan War, among other mental health crises affecting the community. Vet Centers, counseling centers the agency runs nationwide, are looking to award at least five scholarships to prospective psychologists, social workers or family counselors this year in exchange for working in underserved areas.