

## DEOMI News Highlights

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

### **Cyber –school students: Pentagon snubs our service [Susanne M. Schafer, *Associated Press/Miami Herald*, 9 May 2011]**

- Students graduating from online high schools run into a hurdle if their goal is to join the military: The Pentagon doesn't want many recruits with nontraditional diplomas
- Critics, including some in Congress, say the military is behind the times and point to the growth of online teaching and education; Peter Groff, president and CEO of the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, said his organization estimates 168,310 students attended virtual schools in 2009-2010 and is expected to increase by 7,000 this year
- The House Armed Services subcommittee on personnel inserted language into its portion of the Pentagon fiscal year 2012 budget bill instructing the military to treat students from online high schools equally if the schools are in line with state education laws

[Cyber-students: Pentagon snubs our service](#)

### **Bill would require U.S. troops to receive job training before leaving military [Steve Vogel, *Washington Post*, 11 May 2011]**

- Legislation to be introduced in Congress on Wednesday would require all U.S. service members to undergo job-skills training before leaving the military; currently as many as one-third of departing service members do not participate in the program
- About 27 percent of veterans age 20 to 24 are unemployed, according to recent statistics from the Labor Department
- The bill would require the government to contact each veteran within six months of completing the Transition Assistance Program training and every three months thereafter for the first year to check on their job status

[Bill would require U.S. troops to receive job training before leaving military](#)

### **House GOP seeks 'don't ask' retention – amendment would prevent use of military facilities for gay weddings [Shaun Waterman, *New York Times*, 11 May 2011]**

- Republicans in the House are pushing legislation that could limit or delay the repeal of the ban on openly gay men and women serving in the military
- Rep. Todd W. Akin, Missouri Republican, said he will propose an amendment that bars the use of military facilities and military chaplains for gay weddings; "They would be in violation of the law" he said of such weddings, which the Navy authorized in an order published last month
- Rep. Duncan Hunter, California Republican, said he will propose an amendment that would also require that each of the four service chiefs have to certify that their branches of the military are ready for the repeal of the policy

[House GOP seeks 'don't ask' retention](#)

# DEOMI News Highlights

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## Discrimination

[Cyber-students: Pentagon snubs our service](#)  
[Department of Justice: Mississippi County, Miss. Continues Segregated Schools](#)

## Diversity

[Conn. Base welcomes 1<sup>st</sup> women bound for subs](#)  
[Feds: All kids, legal or not, entitled to school](#)  
[USDA Secretary Vilsack says agency will adopt recommendations on diversity](#)

## Miscellaneous

[Bill would require U.S. troops to receive job training before leaving military](#)  
[Female commanders find the sky's the limit at Patrick AFB](#)  
[Freedom Riders, 50 years on, see today's youths as disconnected from racism fight](#)  
[House GOP seeks 'don't ask' retention](#)  
[Strain on U.S. forces in Afghanistan at a five-year high](#)  
[Survey: Copter pilots seek civilian medical treatments in attempt to save careers](#)  
[Troops get training on end of 'don't ask'](#)  
[Yale Vote Opens Door for Return of ROTC](#)

## Racism

[Are black graduations at traditional colleges 'reverse racism'?](#)

## Religion

[Judge will allow Muslim man to wear head covering in court](#)  
[Navy halts move to allow gay unions by chaplains](#)  
[President to Renew Muslim Outreach](#)

## Sexual Assault / Harassment

[Peace Corps chief expresses regret for sexual assaults on young volunteers](#)

# **Discrimination**

# Cyber-school students: Pentagon snubs our service

**By Susanne M. Schafer**

**Associated Press/Miami Herald, 9 May 2011**

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) -- Students graduating from the growing ranks of online high schools are running into a hurdle if their goal is to join the military: The Pentagon doesn't want many recruits with non-traditional diplomas.

Many would-be soldiers like Ryker Packard, 17, of Fasset, Pa., say they weren't aware the armed services have a policy of not taking more than 10 percent of recruits with a non-traditional high school diploma. Critics, including some in Congress, say the military is behind the times and point to the growth on online teaching and testing at all levels of education, including college degrees.

"It just grinds my gears," said Packard, who wants to become an Army diesel mechanic after graduating from Pennsylvania's Agora Cyber Charter School in June.

Packard said his conversation with an Army recruiter came to a brusque end after he told him he was due to graduate from a virtual school. "He just wouldn't talk to me," said Packard.

Packard's mom, Sherri, said her son switched to online classes after floundering in a geometry course at his brick-and-mortar school. Once he got the attention of online teachers, his grades improved, she said.

Packard said her son's school is fully accredited by the state of Pennsylvania, which requires students to pass the same tests and meet the same curriculum requirements as those in traditional schools.

"It's part of the public school system," said Sherri Packard, 43. "It's considered one of the best in the state."

Job prospects amid the rolling hills and farms of northern Pennsylvania are slim, Ryker said. "My options are to work for the gas company or on a pig farm," the dejected teen said in a telephone interview.

Ryker and his family unknowingly ran into a policy the Department of Defense has that ranks graduates of traditional high schools as "Tier 1" and those from alternatives as "Tier 2" status. Tier 1 graduates now make up 99 percent of all recruits for all military branches, according to Pentagon spokeswoman Eileen Lainez. The secondary status includes virtual and homeschoolers, as well as those who've left high school and earned a GED or General Education Development certificate.

Lainez said the Department of Defense limits all branches of the military to accepting no more than 10 percent of recruits with what is known as an "alternate high school credential."

Those who've opted out of the traditional educational system just don't stick with military service, she said. That includes students from what she called "any computer-based, virtual-learning program."

"Years of research and experience show recruits with a traditional high school diploma are more likely to complete their initial three years of service than their alternate credential-holding (Tier 2) peers," Lainez said. Data collected since 1988 shows only 28 percent of graduates with traditional diplomas leave military service before their first three years in uniform, while those with non-traditional backgrounds have a 39 percent attrition rate, she said.

It comes down to money because it costs \$45,000 to replace someone who hasn't met their full term, she said.

But some members of Congress and supporters of online schools say the Pentagon should reconsider, in particular given the military's penchant for computerized weaponry and cyber warfare.

<http://www.miamiherald.com/2011/05/09/2208094/cyber-school-students-pentagon.html>

"We are dealing with new technology," said Rep. Joe Wilson, R-S.C., head of the House Armed Services subcommittee on personnel. "We just need to keep adapting."

Former Marine and Rep. Duncan Hunter, Jr., R-Calif., who is the only member of Congress to have served in both Iraq and Afghanistan, said it's unbelievable that potential recruits are being turned away during wartime.

"Their level of education is often right on par with traditional public school graduates," said Hunter.

The congressman, who serves with Wilson on the Armed Services and Education Committees, said he doesn't want to tell the military whom to recruit, but he thinks it will have to broaden its thinking when an improved economy starts pulling applicants into the job market.

Their subcommittee has inserted language into its portion of the Pentagon fiscal year 2012 budget bill instructing the military to treat students from online high schools equally if the schools are in line with state education laws. The full committee is due to take action on the bill on May 11.

One of the main backers of virtual schools says it has been seeking a change in the military's policy because the number of students attending online is growing.

Peter Groff, president and CEO of the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, said his organization estimates 168,310 students attended virtual schools in 2009-2010. They know of 219 charter schools that are purely online, and 134 that are a hybrid of bricks-and-mortar and virtual schooling, he said.

Projected enrollment is expected to increase next year by 7,000 students, Groff said.

States such as Minnesota have had programs for 20 years, while Utah, Illinois, Ohio and Pennsylvania also have seen strong growth, he said. In all, 40 states and the District of Columbia have some form of charter school program allowed, he said.

Jared Dennis, Lexington, S.C., said he was devastated when he sought out an Air Force recruiter, but was told he was in "Tier 2" status. He was told he could enlist only after he took about a year of college-level classes.

"It was heartbreaking to say the least," said the 18-year-old, who said he wants to follow a family tradition of joining the service and become a military policeman. He is set to graduate from the Connections Academy in Columbia in June, one of South Carolina's five virtual public charter schools.

Dennis's mother, Alice, said she sought out the virtual charter school after her son was barred from returning to his public school on a weapons violation. He left a pocket knife in his jacket, violating the school system's zero-tolerance policy. They sought an alternative where Jared could continue with honors-level classes, she said.

In California, 19-year-old Mandi Jenkins of Long Beach, said she gave up trying to join the military after graduating last year from Connections Academy in San Clemente. The message she got was the same as that given to Dennis: Go get some college credit.

Attending a virtual school fit Jenkins' schedule because she played competitive tennis. Now, she is thinking of becoming a professional tennis player instead of donning an Army uniform. Heeding her experience, Jenkins said her 17-year-old brother is staying in his local traditional high school because he wants to join the Marine Corps.

Jenkins said she's upset with the idea that students with a cyber-education are considered less capable of fitting in or following commands.

"You still have to get your work in, you have to turn it in on time," she said.

<http://www.miamiherald.com/2011/05/09/2208094/cyber-school-students-pentagon.html>

One student who was able to get the military's attention is 20-year-old Greg Bush, who is attending Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio, on a four-year Army ROTC scholarship.

The Delaware, Ohio, native said he thinks attending Ohio's Virtual Academy was a plus, both academically and socially. He was able to take Advanced Placement courses in English and literature and was able to feed an interest in military history and earned a 3.7 grade point average.

"I was a very introverted person, and doing so much course work on line drove me to reach out" to make friendships, he said. "It really benefited me."

[http://afro.com/sections/news/afro\\_briefs/story.htm?storyid=4956](http://afro.com/sections/news/afro_briefs/story.htm?storyid=4956)

## **Department of Justice: Mississippi County, Miss. Continues Segregated Schools**

by AFRO Staff

AFRO.com, May 07, 2011

A public school district in Mississippi continues to operate predominately single-raced schools, according to the U.S. Department of Justice, which has filed a motion in federal court to order the district to develop an plan to integrate.

“It is intolerable for school districts to continue operating schools that retain their racial identity from the Jim Crow era,” Thomas E. Perez, Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division, said in a statement. “If school districts are not willing to work collaboratively to eradicate the vestiges of de jure segregated schools, we will ask the courts to take the steps necessary to ensure that students of all racial backgrounds have the opportunity to attend diverse, inclusive schools.”

But an attorney for the Cleveland, Miss. Public School District told the Associated Press that they have fulfilled their obligation to a 1969 desegregation order and often update the federal government on their attempts to integrate.

“Of our 10 schools, we have six that have a significant integrated population,” attorney Jamie Jacks said. “The district was hopeful they [the Justice Department] would see not only that we are a truly integrated system within the Mississippi Delta, but we're a good school district. Our kids do well and get a great education.”

She said the district implemented a transfer program to bus Black students to historically White schools soon after the federal order came down more than 40 years ago.

During legalized segregation, schools on the west side of the railroad tracks in Cleveland, Miss., were White, while schools less than three miles away on the east side were Black.

The Justice Department alleges that students and teachers on the west side “maintain their character and reputation” as predominately White and the schools on the east were never integrated. The federal agency said their attempts to collaborate with the district to remedy the vestiges of segregation have been unsuccessful.

Of Cleveland’s 3,491 students, 68 percent are Black and 29 percent White, according to the AP.

Jacks insisted that one formerly White school and one historically Black school in the district have been integrated.

“Cleveland High School, which is the on the west side is 47 percent African-American; 50 percent white; 2 percent Hispanic and 1 percent Asian,” she told the AP. “Cleveland High used to be 100 percent white.”

Bell Academy, which used to be 97 percent Black, now has just an 80 percent Black population, she added.

It is unclear when the federal courts will rule on whether or not the school district is in violation of the 1969 desegregation order.

Last month, the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division spearheaded a court-authorized integration strategy in another school district in Southern Mississippi, located in Leake County. The agency found that the area operated four predominately single-race schools and requested that two of the schools shutter while the remaining schools improve their quality of education and diversify their student and teacher pool.

# Diversity

## **Conn. base welcomes 1st women bound for subs**

**The local Navy base on Monday welcomed the first class of female officers selected to serve on U.S. submarines.**

**The Associated Press, 9 May 2011**

GROTON, Conn. — The local Navy base on Monday welcomed the first class of female officers selected to serve on U.S. submarines.

The eight officers, who are scheduled to join submarine crews in February, will be among the first women to serve on submarines since the Navy repealed a ban.

Until the Navy announced the change last year, women had been barred on the theory that the close quarters and long deployments were unsuitable for coed crews.

The 10-week Submarine Officer Basic Course that began Monday in Groton, a town midway between New York and Boston, also includes 74 men. No changes have been required in terms of lodging or classrooms, Naval Submarine School spokesman William Kenny said.

The women are among 18 selected for assignment to crews of guided-missile and ballistic-missile submarines. They were split into two groups for training, which includes six months of Nuclear Power School and six months of Naval Nuclear Prototype Training besides the submarine school. The other 10 are due to report to their boats in November.

Limiting women to officer slots lets the Navy sidestep the problem of modifying subs to have separate bunks and bathrooms for enlisted men and women. The lone bathroom for officers will bear a reversible sign, letting men know it's in use by women and vice versa.

The Navy is still exploring the feasibility of modifying submarines' configurations to open the enlisted ranks to women, said Lt. Brian Wierzbicki, a Navy spokesman at Kings Bay, Ga.

## **Feds: All kids, legal or not, entitled to school**

**Associated Press**

**USA Today, May 8, 2011**

MIAMI (AP) — The U.S. Department of Education sent a letter to districts around the country Friday, reminding them that all students — legal or not — are entitled to a public education. The letter comes amid reports that schools may be checking the immigration status of students trying to enroll, and reminds districts they are federally prohibited from barring elementary or secondary students on the basis of citizenship status.

"Moreover, districts may not request information with the purpose or result of denying access to public schools on the basis of race, color or national origin," said the letter, which was signed by officials from the department's Office of Civil Rights and the Department of Justice. "We put this letter out now because we know school districts are in the process of planning for the next school year, and wanted to make sure they had this in hand," said Department of Education spokesman Justin Hamilton. "We were concerned about the number of reports that we've received and heard about, and felt it was necessary to make it clear that this has been the law of the land since Ronald Reagan was president."

A 1982 Supreme Court case, *Plyer v. Doe*, held that states cannot deny students access to public education, whether they are in the U.S. legally or not. The court ruled that denying public education could impose a lifetime of hardship "on a discrete class of children not accountable for their disabling status." The letter comes as the Office of Civil Rights investigates three complaints, and less than a week before the president is expected to deliver a speech on immigration during a visit to Texas. The Office of Civil Rights is also currently evaluating a complaint filed last month by the Southern Poverty Law Center against schools in Durham County, North Carolina.

The organization claims discrimination against Latino students. In one instance, a girl attempting to enroll in a district high school was asked for her passport and visa and was told that if she didn't have one, she must be an illegal alien, said attorney Gerri Katzerman. Ken Soo, a lawyer representing Durham Public Schools, said the district was looking into the complaint and would correct any problems found.

Katzerman said the issue has become increasingly common in the Deep South as demographics change and more Latino families move in. "We hear from them a very similar experience, where they attempt to enroll and are asked about their immigration status, are asked for documents they don't have, and they basically disappear back into the population without having the opportunity to participate in public education," she said.

Civil rights officials are also investigating a complaint in Hazleton, Pennsylvania, where school officials considered requiring four proofs of residency for new students. The proposal has been changed, though some believe the requirements are still too onerous. Legislation has been introduced in a number of states this year that would authorize districts to inquire about immigration status when students enroll in the district.

Republican Rep. Becky Nordgren, of Alabama, for example, sponsored a bill that would have required students and their parents to provide proof of citizenship to enroll. She said her district has seen a rise in the number of undocumented immigrants and that this has placed an undue cost on the local government. "Quite frankly, I believe that these issues need to be addressed," she said. Nordgren said that her bill stalled after she learned about the 1982 Supreme Court case.

The letter Friday said districts can require students to provide proof of residency within a district, such as phone or water bills, but that immigration status would not be relevant. Districts can also require a birth certificate to confirm a student's age, but cannot bar enrollment if the certificate is from another country. Nor can they deny enrollment if a student does not provide a social security number.

[http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2011/05/10/AFN5trlG\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2011/05/10/AFN5trlG_story.html)

## **USDA Secretary Vilsack says agency will adopt recommendations on diversity**

**By Krissah Thompson**

**Washington Post, May 11, 2011**

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said Tuesday that his agency would quickly adopt most of the recommendations contained in a two year study that looked at USDA's history of discrimination and its ongoing civil rights failings.

The recommendations range from making the department's rural development programs more accessible to women to appointing a "chief diversity officer" in each of the agency's state offices.

The \$8 million assessment by an outside group was spurred by a promise from the Obama administration to bring "cultural transformation" to a department that has been guilty of some of the government's most egregious cases of discrimination.

"There is a massive effort within USDA to change the culture," Vilsack said in an interview. "There is a real commitment from the top down."

The study, which officials described as voluminous, was not distributed. Among its more than 200 recommendations, which were released Tuesday, were suggestions that the agency's chief diversity officer monitor hiring, that farm service officials be required to "thoroughly" explain reasons for denying loans to minorities and women, and that the USDA mount public relations efforts to change the agency's reputation by emphasizing its focus on diversity.

The study by the Jackson Lewis consulting firm dug into divisions within the department, which has been accused of discrimination ranging from denying minorities access to farm programs to refusing promotions for female middle-managers. Tens of thousands of minority and female farmers and ranchers have filed and won civil rights settlements against the USDA, which also has faced thousands of discrimination complaints from its employees.

"They have let down minorities and women. What our report demonstrates is that the trend can be reversed," said Weldon Latham, the attorney who led the study — which included more than 2,000 interviews inside and outside the agency.

In April 2009, Vilsack announced a "New Civil Rights Era for USDA" and began tackling the backlog of 11,000 equal employment opportunity complaints facing the department. He also placed a priority on closing decades-old discrimination claims by Hispanic, female, black and Native American farmers. Settlements have been offered in all of the cases and the number of pending equal employment opportunity complaints is down to 461, the lowest since the department began keeping track, according to agency officials.

"We are aggressively going into communities, working with community building organizations to teach people how to access USDA programs," Vilsack said.

Still, the department faces many critics — both internally and externally. The issue came to national attention last year when Shirley Sherrod, then an official at the department, was fired by Vilsack for allegedly making racially discriminatory comments. Further vetting found that Sherrod's words were taken out of context, and she pointed to existing civil rights violations at USDA.

More recently, federal personnel complaints have been filed against senior USDA officials alleging age and gender bias and political favoritism. Chris Mather, the department's former communications director, and other officials in her office faced at least nine such complaints before she left last month to work for Chicago Mayor-elect Rahm Emanuel.

[http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2011/05/10/AFN5trlG\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2011/05/10/AFN5trlG_story.html)

Mather disputed the allegations, in which employees claim that promotions went only to staffers under the age of 30 or those who had worked for the Democratic Party. Before she left the office, Mather said she was making changes to improve operations and morale. Two of the complaints have been dismissed and two have been settled, according to Vilsack.

In addition, Hispanic and female farmers have complained that the settlement they were offered is less than the nearly \$2 billion that black and Native American farmers received.

“There is clearly more that needs to be done,” said Stephen Hill, attorney for Hispanic farmers who filed suit against USDA.

Vilsack said the settlement amounts differ because a legal ruling awarded class certification to black and Native American farmers but not to women and Hispanic farmers.

Joe D. Gebhardt, a civil rights attorney who has brought cases against USDA since the 1980s, said he believes the agency's willingness to settle discrimination cases fairly has begun to wane.

Gebhardt said that after the fall of 2009, “USDA went back to its old methods of looking at and settling cases, which is to start with the viewpoint that the minorities are wrong and the whites are right.”

Vilsack, who has declared “zero tolerance” for discrimination, disagrees. “We are really focused on inclusion and access,” he said. “At the end of it, what we hope to be able to say is USDA programs are more accepting of diversity, more inclusive and certainly far more accessible than they have been in the past.”

Lupe Garcia, a 67-year-old cotton farmer in Las Cruces, N.M., has his doubts.

“I wish it was that way,” said Garcia, one of the Hispanic farmers who have filed suit. “It sounds good, but there are still people out there from the old system that they need to weed out.”

# Miscellaneous

[http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/bill-would-require-us-troops-to-receive-job-training-before-leaving-military/2011/05/10/AFWNq5jG\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/bill-would-require-us-troops-to-receive-job-training-before-leaving-military/2011/05/10/AFWNq5jG_story.html)

## **Bill would require U.S. troops to receive job training before leaving military**

**Goal is to reduce unemployment among war veterans**

**By Steve Vogel**

**Washington Post, May 11, 2011**

Legislation to be introduced in Congress on Wednesday would require all U.S. service members to undergo job-skills training before leaving the military, a measure that supporters say is aimed at cutting the high unemployment rate among veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

About 27 percent of veterans age 20 to 24 are unemployed, according to recent statistics from the Labor Department. Many veterans returning from service in Iraq and Afghanistan are finding themselves at a competitive disadvantage when they look for civilian employment in the difficult economy because they lack job-skills training, according to Sen. Patty Murray (D-Wash.), the bill's sponsor.

"One of the biggest barriers they face upon returning is finding a job," Murray, who is chairman of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, said in an interview Tuesday. "With their training, leadership abilities and skills, they should be at the top of the list for jobs, and too often they go to the bottom of the pile."

The legislation, called the Hiring Heroes Act of 2011, would require all departing service members to participate in the Transition Assistance Program, which is administered by the Labor Department in partnership with the Defense Department and the Department of Veterans Affairs. The training, which is now voluntary, includes job-search techniques, resume writing and interviewing tips.

"They've been out of the workforce, and that puts them at a disadvantage," said Paul Rieckhoff, the executive director and founder of the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, which is supporting the legislation. "This is a good way to soften their landing. These folks shouldn't have to face high unemployment rates when they return. They shouldn't be coming home to unemployment checks."

As many as one-third of departing service members do not participate in the program, according to Murray's office. Commanders do not always set aside time to allow demobilizing service members to take advantage of the training. In other cases, service members are given little or no information about the program, or do not want the training.

Many service members do not receive the training "primarily because they don't have to," Rieckhoff said. "They may think it's not for them. But it's good for them, and good for employers."

The bill would require the government to contact each veteran within six months of his or her completion of the training program and every three months thereafter for the first year after they leave the service to check on their job status.

The legislation also would require the Defense Department, the Labor Department and the VA to jointly sponsor a study that would identify how to eliminate barriers in translating military jobs into civilian employment. Military medics, for example, are often unable to get certification that would allow them to get civilian positions despite their training. "They have tremendous experience in Iraq and Afghanistan, and they come home and they can't drive an ambulance," Murray said.

The Congressional Budget Office did not have an estimate yet on the potential cost of the legislation. The bill is drawing support from the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Military Officers Association of America and the Disabled American Veterans.

Murray said the numbers of unemployed young veterans might grow as more troops return from Afghanistan. "Twenty years from now, it will be on the conscience of our country if we don't do something to address this problem," she said.

<http://www.floridatoday.com/article/20110509/NEWS01/105090319/Female-commanders-find-sky-s-limit>

## **Female commanders find the sky's the limit at Patrick AFB**

### **Women lead 3 Space Wing groups in Brevard**

**Written by R. NORMAN MOODY, Florida Today, May 9, 2011**



PATRICK AIR FORCE BASE — It was only a few years ago when women were permitted only in certain roles or occupations in the military and often the top positions went to men.

Today, women are leading forces at every level in the military. That is no more apparent than at Patrick Air Force Base, where women lead the helm of three of the four groups commanding the 45th Space Wing.

"You think, 'I can be a squadron commander,' " Col. Denette Sleeth said. "You think, 'Wow, am I really ready to guide all these folks?' "

When Sleeth entered the service, her goal was to become a squadron commander. Today, she's commander of the 45th Operations Group.

The other two female group commanders at Patrick are Col. Corinne O'Meara Naughton, commander of the 45th Medical Group, and Col. Loretta Kelemen, commander of the 45th Mission Support Group.

Col. Lee Rosen is the commander of the fourth group, the 45th Launch Group.

In the early years of women in the military, before the Women's Army Corps was integrated as part of the regular Army, the number of occupations open to women was limited. Today, 99 percent of occupations in the Air Force are open to women. Other branches of the military are seeing women in expanding roles, as well. Direct combat positions are about the only positions still considered off limits.

The number of women serving in the Armed Forces also has steadily increased in the past two decades. The 45th Space Wing, for example, has a ratio of 21.5 percent women, or about 200 women, to 78.5 percent men. The ratio is slightly above the overall Air Force ratio of about 20 percent women. The Army has about 16 percent women.

Col. Adrienne Fraser Darling, military director of the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Armed Services, said the trend of women in top leadership positions will continue as more women remain in the services and more opportunities become available.

"We have more opportunities to qualify," she said. "And command opportunities are increasing."

Susan Helms -- former commander of the 45th Space Wing at Patrick -- is now a lieutenant general. She is commander of the 14th Air Force (Air Forces Strategic), Air Force Space Command, and commander of Joint Functional Component Command for Space, U.S. Strategic Command, at Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif. In her capacity with the 14th Air Force Space Command, Helms commands over Patrick and four other wings involved in Air Force space programs.

Helms, a former astronaut who flew on the shuttle and spent five months living on the International Space Station, was in Brevard County this past weekend, and was inducted into the Astronaut Hall of Fame in Titusville.

<http://www.floridatoday.com/article/20110509/NEWS01/105090319/Female-commanders-find-sky-s-limit>

The three female commanders at Patrick said they know it was difficult early on for women in the military, but today they feel they have the same opportunities as men.

"I've never been limited in my career," said Kelemen, who leads 1,400 active-duty military and contractor personnel. "I think they gave us every opportunity. Treat everybody with dignity and respect. We shouldn't be treated any differently."

Naughton, who served in the Air Force, left and returned during the first war with Iraq in 1991. She said she has encountered civilians who are surprised women are in high command positions at the base.

"They were so amazed that there were women commanders here," she said. "They were surprised, but it's never been negative."

Other leaders see them as commanders who have excelled in their careers.

"I am privileged to work with these three amazing commanders," Rosen said. "They're fine officers and humans first and foremost -- they just happen to be female. I can only hope our two young daughters will grow up to be as fantastic role models as these commanders and ladies."

The women said balancing career and family life can be difficult at times, but they have learned to make it work.

"It's a challenge," Kelemen said. "I want to be with my husband and my kids, but I also love my job. It's a tough balance."

[http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/freedom-riders-50-years-on-see-todays-youths-as-disconnected-from-racism-fight/2011/05/02/AFbAraKG\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/freedom-riders-50-years-on-see-todays-youths-as-disconnected-from-racism-fight/2011/05/02/AFbAraKG_story.html)

## **Freedom Riders, 50 years on, see today's youths as disconnected from racism fight**

**By Krissah Thompson**

**Washington Post, May 7, 2011**

JACKSON, MISS. — A half-dozen blacks and whites sat with boxed sandwiches and sweet tea in a community center on a recent afternoon, wrestling with what's changed — and what hasn't — since the Freedom Riders came to town 50 years ago.

“We're still trying to see each other as human,” said Albert Sykes, a 28-year-old black man. “We're still struggling with this.”

On Mother's Day, 1961, a bus full of young people was firebombed in Anniston, Ala. The passengers were black and white, one of several groups that rode from Washington, D.C., to force the integration of interstate transportation on a reluctant South.

In the following days, other Freedom Riders were arrested by segregationist city leaders here in Jackson and taken to the state penitentiary. Over the next four months, supporters from across the country descended on bus stations, train depots and airports across the South. One wave followed another, a total of 436 people who risked their lives to face down angry mobs and the volatile Ku Klux Klan.

Most of the legal barriers the Riders confronted toppled over in the next few years with the passage of federal civil rights laws — and the willingness of a generation of activists to subject themselves to fire hoses and axe handles. But other, worrisome legacies endure. Many schools have effectively re-segregated, and those who took risks to defeat segregation are disappointed that the current generation seems unwilling or unable to make similar sacrifices.

Sykes is helping organize one of the many tributes this spring to the Freedom Riders, reminders that it was teenagers and young adults who were beaten with broken baseball bats, chains and steel pipes as they attempted to enter “white only” waiting rooms at bus stations.

Some young people have been inspired by those stories. But in the minds of an older generation, they have not always seized the challenge as their elders did.

“It makes me want to push myself to do better in life and get out of my comfort zone to talk to people of different races,” said Iasia Collins, 17, at the luncheon hosted by Jackson 2000, a group that has been bringing whites and blacks together for more than two decades. “It makes me want to do that more. People died for that.”

But others who were gathered around the cafeteria tables with Collins blamed earlier generations for leaving them with few opportunities to interact. There are no movie theaters or shopping malls in the city — even a skateboard park that used to attract both black and white kids has shut down. Churches also tend to be either black or white.

Collins, who is black, and another young woman who is white were inspired by the conversation and exchanged phone numbers. “I'll text you,” one of the white students promised Collins. But neither has sent a message.

Since 1960, Jackson's population has been transformed from roughly one-third black to three-quarters black. City schools followed suit. The most integrated high school has a rostrum of 1,350 students, and only 13 are white. The steady climb to re-segregation began in 1970 with whites pulling their children out of school to avoid integration.

[http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/freedom-riders-50-years-on-see-todays-youths-as-disconnected-from-racism-fight/2011/05/02/AFbAraKG\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/freedom-riders-50-years-on-see-todays-youths-as-disconnected-from-racism-fight/2011/05/02/AFbAraKG_story.html)

Anne Lovelady, a retired teacher who is black, spent her afternoon listening to the students, thinking they would try harder if they really understood the past. All of the documentaries, social studies lessons and talk of 50th anniversaries had not translated into an “emotional connection” to the movement, she said.

“We have protected them,” Lovelady said. “My aunts and grandmother, we heard them talk about it. We heard the emotion with which they talked about it. It gave me an appreciation for the sacrifice that my parents went through so that . . . I knew that I too had to make a sacrifice.”

The Freedom Riders have gone on to become social workers, software developers, teachers, preachers and shopkeepers. Two of them serve in Congress, Rep. John Lewis (D-Ga.) and Rep. Bob Filner (D-Calif.).

One of the youngest of the riders, Hezekiah Watkins, is now 63 years old and lives across town from Lovelady in Jackson. He has found himself thinking the same thing when he looks at his 21-year-old daughter, Kristie. In recent weeks, as he has given interviews and speeches about his experience during the rides, he has juxtaposed his teenage years with hers.

“A lot of times, she feels as though somebody owes her. I’m always asking, ‘What are you owed and by whom?’” Watkins said. “I talked to all of my kids about the ’60s and what we went through. They’ll just look at me like, ‘It’s not relevant.’ My thing has always been this: You’re standing on a banana peel, and any given day you could slip.”

For Hank Thomas, who was 19 when he joined the Freedom Riders, the contrast between his experiences and those of young people today could not be more stark.

Fifty years ago, the sacrifice was unambiguous. Forcing integration on the South meant putting your body on the line. It meant buying a bus ticket down to Jackson after hearing about the bus firebombed in Anniston and the men and women beaten in Birmingham and Montgomery.

“You never knew what was going to happen,” Thomas said, remembering the anxiety of the times.

Thomas, a black businessman, lives outside Atlanta. He owns three McDonald’s franchises and three Marriott hotels. When he was in the first group of 13 riders, launched with little fanfare by the Congress of Racial Equity, they called themselves the “young eagles.” Thomas jokes now that they are the “bald eagles.”

The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. considered that first ride a fool’s errand, and at one point he declined an invitation to board the bus with the students. The young felt haughty about going where the leader of the civil rights movement would not dare. Their protest, in retrospect, is credited with giving the nonviolent movement a template for future campaigns.

Now, Thomas is traveling to Jackson often to help plan this month’s big Freedom Rider reunion. He has been working with Lew Zuchman, a fellow Freedom Rider who runs a large nonprofit serving inner-city youths in New York.

Zuchman, who is white, and Thomas helped set the agenda for the reunion, which will include breakfast at the Governor’s Mansion, a tour of the penitentiary where they were held and a youth summit intended to inspire and challenge the next generation. Zuchman said he is frustrated at the lack of action by young adults to address present-day racism.

“Things are demonstrably worse for young blacks. It is still shocking to see the numbers of young black men that are in jail today,” Zuchman said. “We’ve got rid of some cosmetic issues that were important, but things haven’t changed that much.”

But for some families with a connection to the Freedom Riders, it appears things have changed.

[http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/freedom-riders-50-years-on-see-todays-youths-as-disconnected-from-racism-fight/2011/05/02/AFbAraKG\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/freedom-riders-50-years-on-see-todays-youths-as-disconnected-from-racism-fight/2011/05/02/AFbAraKG_story.html)

Nineteen-year-old Austin Goetzman, who is white, says he has friends of both races at college. His black friends and his white friends dress alike, listen to the same music and have no second thoughts about dating across racial lines.

Fifty years ago, a relative of Goetzman's was indicted for the role he played in the firebombing of the bus carrying Thomas and six other Freedom Riders. The bus had its tires slashed and windows broken by an angry white mob in Anniston.

Prosecutors said Jerome Couch, the father of Goetzman's stepfather, Richard Couch, drove his car slowly in front of the disabled bus as it tried to flee town. The tires fell flat and the bus stalled. Then someone in the crowd lobbed a bundle of flaming rags through a window. Smoke filled the bus, and the riders were trapped. Minutes later, the sound of an exploding fuel tank scared the mob away, and the Riders were able to escape with only minor injuries.

Jerome Couch, who could not be reached for comment, was sentenced to one year of probation in 1962 after promising to sever his connections to the Klan.

It has only taken one generation to see real change, said Richard Couch, who practices law in Anniston but describes himself as a San Francisco liberal.

"You'll see wide differences here between people who are 70 years old and 40 years old," said Couch, who for years hasn't spoken to his father, now 75. He said that the two have religious disagreements but that the older man's views on race have moderated.

"That's the clearest way to look at this petri dish," he said, referring to the South five decades after the Freedom Rides. "Just let the air hit the dirty laundry, and that will clean it up. It's dying if you'll let it die."

Staff researcher Lucy Shackelford contributed to this report.

<http://ebird.osd.mil/ebfiles/e20110511819360.html> or

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2011/may/10/house-gop-seeks-dont-ask-retention/>

## **House GOP seeks 'don't ask' retention**

### **Amendment would prevent use of military facilities for gay weddings**

**By Shaun Waterman**

**Washington Times, May 11, 2011**

Republicans in the House are pushing legislation that could limit or delay the repeal of the ban on openly gay men and women serving in the military.

The House Armed Services Committee meets Wednesday to consider its annual defense policy bill, and four GOP committee members are planning to propose amendments that will affect the repeal of the 17-year-old current policy - known as "don't ask, don't tell" - under which gays can serve if they don't reveal their sexual preference.

Advocates for repeal of the policy said they think the amendments will not save the gay ban.

Rep. Todd W. Akin, Missouri Republican, said he will propose an amendment that bars the use of military facilities and military chaplains for gay weddings.

Mr. Akin told The Washington Times that same-sex marriages on military bases or ceremonies performed by military chaplains would violate the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), which only recognizes marriages between a man and a woman.

"They would be in violation of the law," he said of such weddings, which the Navy authorized in an order published last month.

The order - one of the policy changes driven by the preparations for the repeal of the "don't ask" policy - said Navy base facilities could be used for gay weddings in states where they are legal.

"This amendment tells them they must be in conformity with the law," Mr. Akin said of the Defense Department chiefs who are preparing for the repeal.

The Justice Department has recently decided not to defend the constitutionality of the federal marriage law.

"We're fighting an activist mentality that wants to ignore the proper role of government," Mr. Akin said, accusing the Obama administration of "following the laws it likes and ignoring the ones it doesn't."

Retired Lt. Gen. Benjamin R. Mixon, former head of the Army's Pacific command, complained of the administration's "rush to repeal" the gay ban in an interview with The Times earlier this week.

At the moment, the law says the repeal will take effect 60 days after the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, the defense secretary and the president all certify that the armed services are ready and that lifting the ban will not affect the military's ability to fight.

Rep. Duncan Hunter, California Republican, said he will propose an amendment that would also require each of the four service chiefs have to certify that their branches of the military are ready for the repeal of the policy.

Tommy Sears of the Center for Military Readiness said other members of the committee will offer an amendment to reaffirm DOMA's application to the military and another one to guarantee religious liberty for service members, including those who oppose homosexuality.

# Strain on U.S. forces in Afghanistan at a five-year high

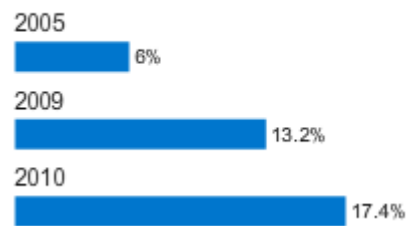
By Gregg Zoroya

USA TODAY, 8 May 2011

U.S. troops fighting in Afghanistan are experiencing some of the greatest psychological stress and lowest morale in five years of fighting, reports a military study. "We're an Army that's in uncharted territory here," says Gen. Peter Chiarelli, Army vice chief of staff, who has focused on combat stress. "We have never fought for this long with an all-volunteer force that's 1% of the population."

## Stressed-out

Percentage of U.S. Army soldiers in Afghanistan who reported feeling acute stress:



Joint Mental Health Advisory Team 7, Operation Enduring Freedom

Mental health strain was most severe among veterans of three or more deployments, with a third of those showing signs of psychological problems defined as either stress, depression or anxiety, the report obtained by USA TODAY says.

The research, based on a survey of soldiers and Marines in 2010, also found that the praise the troops have for their unit sergeants has never been higher as the United States approaches the 10th year of its longest war.

The report says decline in individual morale is significant: 46.5% of troops said they had medium, high or very high morale, compared with 65.7% who said that in 2005. About one in seven soldiers — and one in five Marines — reported high or very high morale.

President Obama ordered a surge of 30,000 troops into Afghanistan last year, bringing the total number to 100,000 troops. He said at the time that withdrawals would begin this July depending on security. The report says soldiers and Marines reported more intense fighting than during the surge in Iraq in 2006-07, with 75%-80% of those in Afghanistan involved in firefights.

Half or more of those surveyed said they had killed the enemy, and 75%-80% described the death or wounding of a buddy. Half also said that an improvised explosive device detonated within 55 yards while they were on foot patrol. The study's researchers also found evidence of physical wear-and-tear with a third of the force experiencing chronic pain.

"I'm not worried about our ability to continue the fight," Chiarelli says. "Folks who are coming home now are going to see that they're not going back for 24 months. And that hasn't been the way it's been for 10 years."

Mental health staffing has doubled in Afghanistan since 2009 and troops report better access to this care, though many are so busy fighting "outside the wire" to seek help, the study says.

"Having therapists forward, we're able to get them to talk to someone right away and intervene," says Kathleen Chard, a psychologist with the Department of Veterans Affairs who trains Army medics. "In as little as two to four sessions we can begin having an impact on these guys and women."

The report noted that the emotional strain, while high, was lower than expected given the severity of combat — evidence of a growing resilience in the force. And confidence in the command skills of squad and platoon leaders has never been higher at close to 50%, up from 38.6% in 2005.

"They have learned to be leaders in a crucible," Chiarelli says. "And their soldiers have seen that."

<http://www.stripes.com/news/survey-copter-pilots-seek-civilian-medical-treatments-in-attempt-to-save-careers-1.143459>

## **Survey: Copter pilots seek civilian medical treatments in attempt to save careers**

**By Seth Robson**

**Stars and Stripes, 13 May 2011**

TOKYO — Military helicopter pilots who suffer chronic back and neck problems — thought to be caused by long missions in constantly vibrating aircraft — have been secretly seeking treatment at civilian medical facilities for fear the injuries could jeopardize their careers, an unreleased Navy study has revealed.

Back and neck injuries were the focus of the survey of 1,800 Navy and Marine Corps aviators conducted last year, according to Kurt Garbow, director of aviation and operational safety in the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Safety).

“What we are finding out is that many pilots and aircrew have been going outside the military to obtain treatment because they are concerned about their ability to be medically qualified (to fly). They are afraid of losing their careers,” said Garbow, who explained that it is not uncommon for such military studies not to be released to the public.

The results of the Navy study, obtained by Stars and Stripes, confirm what previous investigations have found.

Now, the military is attempting to gather more detailed information about the extent of the problem and come up with potential solutions, Garbow said. More than 8,000 military aviators from all service branches, including the Coast Guard, took part in a more in-depth survey last month. Dick Healing, a former U.S. Navy safety chief, who leads a team from defense consultant R Cubed that is analyzing data from last month’s survey, said the survey asked aviators about the number of hours they had flown, the type and intensity of pain they had experienced and whether they had sought medical treatment.

Healing said there is a large discrepancy between the general population, where 20 percent of people suffer back pain, and helicopter crewmembers, where as many as 80 percent to 90 percent suffer lower back pain.

“In the worst cases, people have had to stop flying or go into surgery for fused spinal discs,” he said.

Poor posture and heavy gear such as body armor, helmets and night-vision goggles are believed to be part of the problem, he said. But the biggest problem might be in the design of helicopter seats.

“A significant issue is that the seats have been designed to sustain forces of a crash with little accommodation of normal flying comfort,” Healing said. “Even though the crashes occur infrequently, about 90 percent of the design is focused on that rare event.”

A panel of active and retired admirals and generals will meet in Washington, D.C., in late July to hear a report on last month’s survey along with testimony from subject matter experts and industry representatives about potential solutions to the problem. Garbow, who retired as a Navy captain in 2006 with 27 years’ experience flying helicopters and said he is still receiving physical therapy for a sore neck, said the panel will then make recommendations to the Defense Department.

Those recommendations are likely to incorporate new technology that should be able to accommodate crashworthiness and, at the same time, provide a seat that will eliminate most or all of the pain and injuries that result from the present system, Healing said.

Helicopter crews experience “whole-body vibration” that is a lot stronger than what people feel in, for example, a commercial jet aircraft, he said.

<http://www.stripes.com/news/survey-copter-pilots-seek-civilian-medical-treatments-in-attempt-to-save-careers-1.143459>

“Ten years ago the average flight in a helicopter was 90 minutes,” he said. “Today in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is not unusual to have six to eight hours (in the seat) so the amount of wear and tear on the body is significant.”

Installing NASCAR-style molded seats in military helicopters is seen as one possible solution, Healing said.

“Right now, vibration of the helicopter is transmitted directly to the seat and the only interface is a foam cushion,” he said. “NASCAR seats have virtually no padding at all but they are made to fit the drivers.”

NASCAR seats provide drivers with strength where they need it and accommodate weaknesses in their posture, Healing said.

“There is a strong case for changing not only the seats (in military helicopters) but also the whole cockpit layout so it is designed with the human being in mind rather than designing the helicopter to do a mission and then saying: ‘Where do we put the person?’ “ he said.

A short-term solution might be putting helicopter crews on a regimen of physical exercises to help protect against vibration injuries, he said. Other fixes might range from putting vibration isolators between the seat and the airframe to make seats adjustable to particular body types.

“There has to be new technology in the 21st century to bring solutions to this long-standing problem,” he said.

Data from the latest survey will be analyzed to look at things such as the severity of aviators’ back injuries and how they might be related to the number of hours flown, types of helicopters and service components, Healing said.

It isn’t the first time the military has examined this issue. In a 2005 study, “Back Pain in the Naval Rotary Wing Community,” Navy doctors Lt. Paul Sargent and Lt. Angela Bachmann described the uncomfortable posture of helicopter pilots as a “helo hunch” that leads to “fatigue, overload and pain.”

And a 2010 report released by the Army suggested that more flight time during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan has led to more back pain among aviators.

“Rotary-wing operations in OIF (Operation Iraqi Freedom) and OEF (Operation Enduring Freedom) often require six to 12 continuous hours of prolonged sitting by the aircrew,” the report stated. “With this increased exposure and resultant pain, aircrews are reporting decreased concentration and situational awareness. This leads to errors and/or premature mission termination and ultimately will adversely impact tactical and strategic objectives.”

The report cites one unit — the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne) — which reported 50 pilots grounded due to herniated discs and the permanent loss of 10 pilots and 15 aircrew over three years. Each lost aviator cost the Army \$200,000 to \$600,000 to recruit and train, the unit reported.

Lt. Col. Robert Brinson, commander of U.S. Aviation Detachment Japan, out of Camp Zama, said the vibration hazard of helicopters was known when he joined the Army 20 years ago.

Two Camp Zama-based aviators are currently being treated for back problems, he said, adding that it’s about time new technology was introduced to protect people against vibration hazards.

“We come out with new devices to protect our hearing so it only makes sense that new devices will come out to protect against the vibration hazard,” he said.

[http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/troops-get-training-on-end-of-dont-ask/2011/05/06/AFEMKiSG\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/troops-get-training-on-end-of-dont-ask/2011/05/06/AFEMKiSG_story.html)

## Troops get training on end of ‘don’t ask’

**Teaching respect is goal; Highest level of concern reported among Marines**

By Ed O’Keefe

**Washington Post, May 9, 2011**

CAMP LEJEUNE, N.C. — Marine Maj. Daniel Bartos was looking for a volunteer. Standing in a windowless classroom with slides running behind him, he was explaining to about 40 Marines what will happen after the ban on gays in the military ends. He presented a hypothetical scenario for someone to tackle. Cpl. Brooke Cardona, 22, shot her hand in the air, then stood to answer.

What would she do, Bartos asked, if she saw two male Marines in a mall food court “kind of petting each other, putting their arms around each other, kissing each other?” “That’s a very good question, sir,” Cardona said. “They’re not in a work environment, sir, so I can’t exactly tell them that that’s not appropriate.” “You’re on the right track,” Bartos said. “When you see these situations, think of it as two members of the opposite sex,” he told them.

He then asked a corporal what he would do if he heard two junior Marines joking in the locker room about showering in front of a gay colleague. “It’s inappropriate in any situation, whether that Marine is homosexual, heterosexual, black, white, we’re all Marines, we’re all professionals,” the corporal said. Bartos smiled. “You’re spot-on,” he said.

Similar sessions have been occurring on aircraft carriers and military bases, including in Iraq and Afghanistan. According to a law passed by Congress in December, the Defense Department must instruct the more than 2 million men and women in uniform about the end of the policy known as “don’t ask, don’t tell” before President Obama can officially repeal the almost 18-year ban on gays serving openly in the military.

The process began in February with training for chaplains, military lawyers and civilian Defense Department workers, followed by courses for commanding officers (including Bartos) and then the rank and file. Pentagon officials said the process has cost just \$10,000 to develop instructional materials. The goal is to underscore that everyone should be treated with dignity and respect. This was Bartos’s second training course and although both started slowly, he said, what’s gotten Marines engaged is “how it will affect their daily lives.”

Obama’s certification could come before the training sessions end, because it won’t go into effect until 60 days after he issues it. White House and Pentagon officials wouldn’t say when he will issue the order, but close observers of the process expect it to come before Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates retires in late June.

Advocates for and against ending the ban have paid special attention to the Marines, who reported a higher level of concern about serving alongside gays in a Pentagon-sanctioned study released last fall. Although most of the 400,000 troops surveyed said they had served with someone who they believed to be gay, and reported few, if any issues, between 40 and 60 percent of Marines were either concerned or predicted a negative reaction if the military started enlisting gays and lesbians. No other service reported such high levels of concern.

Nonetheless, “we still step out smartly to faithfully implement this new law,” Gen. James F. Amos, the commandant of the Marine Corps, told the Marines in a video at the start of their training session. Last year, Amos voiced some of the strongest skepticism about lifting the ban. Although the ban is ending, Bartos reminded the Marines that the federal Defense of Marriage Act will still prohibit same-sex partners from earning most military benefits. A base commander may one day permit a gay couple to live together on base, but he said partners might not enjoy the same access to recreational or dining facilities as heterosexual couples.

[http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/troops-get-training-on-end-of-dont-ask/2011/05/06/AFEMKiSG\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/troops-get-training-on-end-of-dont-ask/2011/05/06/AFEMKiSG_story.html)

The Marines listening to Bartos — most in their 20s — sat quietly, upright and stone-faced in blue plastic chairs, sipping occasionally from water bottles or cans of Red Bull. There were no smirks or eye-rolls as he discussed issues such as “consensual sodomy” or potential religious opposition to homosexuality.

Members of OutServe, a network of anonymous active-duty gay service members, said they have heard of very few occasions of instructors or troops joking about the instructional information.

Aubrey Sarvis, executive director of Servicemembers Legal Defense Network, said, “It’s remarkable how so far, the training and education is really a nonevent.” SLDN is representing troops discharged under the current policy.

When Bartos asked for follow-up questions, most came from Juan Vega, 25, a Navy combat medic from Houston. “Life happens,” Vega said. “What if a military member was in an accident at work and they were in the emergency room or admitted to the naval hospital, which would be on base. Their civilian partner doesn’t have a military ID card due to the Defense of Marriage Act. How would that person get on base in an emergency? Does anyone have a plan for that?”

“Just because they’re not entitled to specific beneficiary entitlements, you could still put a same-sex partner on a record of emergency data,” Bartos replied.

Later, Vega turned to Lt. Cmdr. Marcus Lawrence, a chaplain with the Convocation of Anglicans of North America, who was also attending the session. Vega asked him whether a same-sex couple could attend religious services on base together. “I’ve never issued a test to figure out what a person’s sexual orientation is,” Lawrence said. “Anybody is more than welcome to attend a service.”

But Douglas Lee, who is responsible for selecting and endorsing chaplains with the Presbyterian and Reformed Joint Commission on Chaplains and Military Personnel, said once the policy changes, “many chaplains will be wondering if their career is going to be in jeopardy because of what they might say.”

“They’re already assisting homosexuals and all sorts of people who come their way,” Lee said. “My concern is the challenge will come from the homosexual lobby in some interesting ways that could affect the opportunity for our chaplains to freely exercise their faith.”

After the session, about a dozen Marines said they closely tracked last year’s political debate that prompted the policy change and believe they better understand gay culture than previous generations. “Back in the ’80s and ’90s, you never saw gays and stuff on the TV shows that often,” Sgt. Jimmy Smalygo, 28, said. “But as the years progressed, especially in the last decade, how many shows are out there that are based on gays?”

Some level of familiarity may exist, said Cpl. David McGuire, 24, but the training matters because “you have Marines from all over the country — from California, where it’s legal to be married to a gay person, or in Mississippi and Arkansas, where there are Marines who grew up with their family completely disagreeing with that situation.”

Cpl. Crystal Person, 23, was more philosophical about the changes. “Over the years, things are going to change,” she said. “As of now, they’re letting gay people in the military, but they’re not letting gay people get married. But that’s something that everybody sitting in this room wearing the uniform agreed to when they signed up. As a Marine, as a sailor, you have to abide by those rules.”

<http://www.military.com/news/article/yale-vote-opens-door-for-return-of-rotc.html>

## **Yale Vote Opens Door for Return of ROTC**

**New Haven Register/Military.com, May 09, 2011**

NEW HAVEN -- There is no timetable when it will happen, but the major obstacles to bringing back the Reserve Officers' Training Corps to Yale University after a four-decade absence have been removed.

Yale faculty members last week voted to resolve questions around curriculum, the academic status of ROTC instructors, administrative support and financial aid, reversing positions adopted in 1969 that prompted the Army and Navy to phase out the ROTC programs at Yale.

The decision by faculty members 40 years ago, as the Vietnam War raged and students were drafted, was to give ROTC training extracurricular status, rather than academic credit. They also downgraded the titles and status of the military trainers, which was unacceptable to the military.

In later years, objection to ROTC on the Yale campus centered on the "don't ask, don't tell" military policy, under which gay servicemen and women were not allowed to be open about their sexual orientation.

After President Obama rescinded "don't ask, don't tell," Yale President Richard C. Levin spoke with Defense Secretary Robert Gates around the new year about bringing ROTC back, and those discussions are continuing, said Yale spokesman Tom Conroy.

ROTC is on other Ivy League campuses, including Princeton, the University of Pennsylvania and Cornell. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology also has a program, and Harvard University recently agreed to a Navy ROTC presence on its campus, but students will continue to train at MIT. Columbia University faculty members also recently welcomed resurrecting the program.

Going forward, the Yale faculty agreed that courses required by the ROTC program that use curriculum now offered and taught by Yale College faculty members would be given credit; courses not part of the regular curriculum would be on a student's transcript, but would not count toward a degree. The titles of the visiting military teachers would depend on their qualifications and experience.

There are only four Yale students in a ROTC program, and they are trained at either the University of Connecticut or the University of New Haven.

A student survey taken by the Yale College Council in January found that 67.8 percent of respondents, or 1,346 students, were in favor of ROTC coming back to the campus; 16.5 percent were opposed and the rest were indifferent. Around the same time, Yale officials had a meeting with representatives of the Air Force to explore the conditions under which ROTC might be considered by the military.

Yale College Dean Mary Miller told the Yale Daily News that the military made it clear that any program at Yale would need to have a robust enrollment to be worthwhile. Miller said it could attract students from other colleges.

# **Racism**

## **Are black graduations at traditional colleges 'reverse racism'?**

**By Janelle Richards**

**thegrio.com, May 10, 2011**

Ward Connerly, founder and President of the American Civil Rights Institute, called the ceremonies "part of a well-intentioned but counterproductive approach to diversity. They are part of an infrastructure of programs aimed at making students feel welcome. The problem is that this whole entourage of efforts has formed to isolate students in cultural ghettos" in a 2003 Washington Post article.

All students on the different campuses are welcomed to attend the ceremonies to support their classmates. But living in a post-racial America causes some to question whether the ceremonies are even a necessity.

"They are very necessary," said Dr. Norment. "You can affirm your culture without being anti anyone else. At graduation and at a homecoming black alumni have separate events. It is very needed, and very positive."

Michigan State University has about 36 thousand undergraduate students, and 16.2 percent of them are people of color. The black ceremony at the university was founded in 2002. Mary Phillips helped organize it as a senior then, and is now the advisor for the African American celebratory at the university.

"It was extremely important to us to start this," said Phillips. "Particularly as African-Americans to celebrate our academic success, it was immeasurable. I don't think it was or is promoting separatism. It was about celebrating our community. We do a lot of African traditions that we have embraced and put in the black graduation- libations, induction and family."

And at many schools now, it isn't just black students who are celebrating their achievements. Many universities also have ceremonies or events during the graduation season for other minority groups on campus including Latino, Asian and LGBT students.

At UPenn, 40.8 percent of those accepted for admission to the Class of 2014 are Black, Hispanic, Asian, or Native American. The Pan-Asian American Community House (PAACH) has a senior reception for students. It is an informal event that allows the UPenn PAACH staff who often become like family to meet the real families of their students who have been involved in various activities throughout the year.

The PAACH event is more personal than the school wide graduation, and the Pan-Asian students who decide to participate celebrate the space they have visited over the years where they shared and overcame their challenges.

"Students describe PAACH as home," said Dr. June Chu, Director of PAACH. It speaks to acceptance at an institutional level, to have these opportunities."

Joanna Wu, a graduating senior at UPenn is attending the ceremony and is looking forward to being rewarded and acknowledged by PAACH, the group she has worked diligently with over the past four years. She's participated in peer mentoring for incoming Asian-American freshmen, has organized events for heritage week, and participated in the Pan Asian dance troupe.

"I have really had personal development in terms of understanding my racial identity, and I was really able to grow in terms of leadership, organizational, personal and professional skills," said Wu. "Programs like PAACH allows for people to get involved and adds to their personal fulfillment."

Aside from serving as a center for developing, Wu has several friends from working with PAACH over the years, and is looking forward to celebrating her graduation milestone with them.

<http://www.thegrio.com/education-1/are-black-graduation-ceremonies-still-.php>

But some see additional celebrations as a way of fragmenting the students on campuses.

William Prasifka, 20, is a junior and President of the Columbia University College Republicans. Earlier this year, he was a part of a debate surrounding "safe spaces" on Columbia's campus - two lounge areas, one for black students and one for LGBT students.

Similar to his viewpoint on safe spaces, when it comes to the celebrations, Prasifka doesn't have a problem with students gathering on their own, but he does not support the university subsidizing the graduations.

"With separate ceremonies, it almost says, you can come to our university, but it is not necessarily for you, and what you need is a some separate thing to make you feel welcomed," said Prasifka. "It says that the only way we can make it up to you is to give you this other ceremony... you assign people into boxes, and that hurts a liberal academic environment. It is a very complicated issue."

But for Ohio University sophomore Seyi Odunaiya, 20, it is about celebrating common ground.

"The majority here at Ohio is so huge, you kind of have to find where you fit in, and its nice to see other people who are going through what you are," said Odunaiya. "People who plan the programming throughout the years, they're saying, you have a support system here, we're going to be here for you until the end, and they've really helped us throughout our four years, and we want to congratulate you."

Karlene Burrell-Mcrae, Director of the Makuu Black Cultural Center at UPenn that puts on the black ceremony at UPenn says the ceremonies serve as a way to thank their students for their work and contributions, and honor the senior students.

Makuu has hosted the event for the nearly ten years, but black ceremonies at UPenn have existed for almost 25 years.

"This is a celebratory event," said Burrell-Mcrae. "Students invite friends of all ethnicities. More schools need to do this, don't shy away from finding wonderful ways to acknowledge students of color. There is still a challenge of being black at a predominantly white institution, and struggling to feel connected. Our students have significantly contributed to bettering our community, and we have to celebrate them."

A celebration that some students look forward to from the moment they step on campus.

"I think it's a great tradition," said Crystalyn Thomas-Davis, an Ohio University senior. "I knew it existed when I was younger, and I was looking forward to it because I had upperclassmen friends and I went and supported them. You bring everyone together for the last hoorah, and recognize everyone in one last place."

# Religion

# Judge will allow Muslim man to wear head covering in court

By Alexis Stevens

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, 9 May 2011

A [Henry County](#) state judge has reversed his own decision and will allow a Muslim man to wear his head covering into the courtroom.

“The Court finds through its own research that there is a basis in the Quran for both men and women to cover their heads as a religious observance,” Judge James T. Chafin wrote in an order obtained by the AJC. “Accordingly, the Court will permit the defendant to wear his hat in the courtroom as a valid religious observance.”

Chafin had blocked Troy “Tariq” Montgomery, of [DeKalb County](#), from entering the courtroom three separate times to defend a speeding charge, attorney Mawuli Mel Davis told the AJC. Montgomery, 46, wears a kufi, a tight-fitting cap, as a symbol of humility at all times, Davis said.

But Chafin previously requested to see proof, such as in a religious doctrine, that Montgomery must wear the kufi, which violated Montgomery's rights, Davis said.

A policy enacted in 2009 already allows religious head coverings to be worn in courtrooms.

In December 2008, Lisa Valentine was arrested in Douglas County for refusing to remove her headdress, called a hijab. The ACLU filed a lawsuit in Valentine's behalf, and in July 2009, the Georgia Judicial Council adopted a policy clarifying that religious head coverings can be worn in Georgia courthouses.

“I was surprised when I got the news and hopeful that no other Muslims will have to face these objections of wearing their Islamic attire in court,” Montgomery said in a statement issued through his attorney. “I also want to make it clear that I do not just wear a ‘hat’ as the judge referred to in his order, but a kufi, which is a religious head covering worn for the purpose of identifying my religious affiliation.”

Montgomery is now scheduled to appear in court May 16.

<http://www2.oanow.com/news/2011/may/11/navy-halts-move-allow-gay-unions-chaplains-ar-1829951/>

# Navy halts move to allow gay unions by chaplains

By Lolita C. Baldor

Associated Press/Media General, 11 May 2011

WASHINGTON (AP) -- Under pressure from more than five dozen House lawmakers, the Navy late Tuesday abruptly reversed its decision that would have allowed chaplains to perform same-sex unions if the Pentagon decides to recognize openly gay military service later this year.

In a one-sentence memo obtained by The Associated Press, Rear Adm. Mark Tidd, chief of Navy chaplains, said his earlier decision has been "suspended until further notice pending additional legal and policy review and interdepartmental coordination."

The Navy said its lawyers wanted to do a more thorough review of the legal decision that allowed Navy chaplains to receive training to perform civil unions on military bases, but only in states where same-sex unions are legal.

Military training to apply the new law allowing gays to serve openly began earlier this year and is expected to be completed by midsummer.

House members wrote to Navy Secretary Ray Mabus to object to the Navy's initial ruling, saying the service was violating the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act by appearing to recognize and support same-sex marriages.

That law defines marriage as only between a man and a woman, and it also says states don't have to recognize gay marriages performed in other states where they are legal.

"We find it unconscionable that the United States Navy, a federal entity sworn to preserve and protect the Constitution of the United States, believes it is their place alone to train and direct service members to violate federal law," said the lawmakers' letter, which was signed by 63 House members.

The lawmakers asked Mabus to direct the Navy to defend the Constitution, adding that individuals should not be allowed to pick and choose the laws they will follow.

The Navy's decision triggered an uproar, particularly since the Army and Air Force had not made similar decisions, and there was no overall Defense Department guidance issued on the same-sex union issue.

Navy officials had said Monday that they updated the training after questions came up about civil ceremonies for gay couples.

In earlier training guidelines issued by the Defense Department and the military services, same-sex ceremonies were not mentioned and therefore not explicitly prohibited.

When first asked about the Navy's decision to allow the training, the Pentagon said the federal Defense of Marriage Act does not restrict the types of ceremonies a chaplain may perform in a chapel on a military base. And officials have repeatedly stressed that the military would not compel chaplains to perform a same-sex union if it was against their religious beliefs.

The military dust-up comes against the backdrop of the Obama administration's decision in February to no longer defend the constitutionality of the Defense of Marriage Act. Attorney General Eric Holder said at the time that President Barack Obama concluded that the law was unconstitutional.

The Pentagon has been moving carefully to implement the repeal of the 17-year-old ban on openly gay troops. Under the law passed and signed by the president in December, final implementation would go into effect 60 days after the president and his senior defense advisers certify that lifting the ban won't hurt troops' ability to fight.

<http://www2.oanow.com/news/2011/may/11/navy-halts-move-allow-gay-unions-chaplains-ar-1829951/>

Under the Navy's initial ruling, the civil union ceremonies would be allowed at military facilities such as chapel and catering centers, but only in states that already recognize same-sex unions.

And even if a same-sex union ceremony is performed, same-sex partners would not get any health, housing or other benefits that are provided to married couples involving a man and woman.

The Air Force and Army did not include discussion of same-sex union ceremonies in their training.

Under Pentagon guidelines, chaplains and other key military leaders were among the first tier of service members to be trained about the new law repealing the ban on openly gay service. Much of that instruction has been completed, so the Navy will send out updates to include the same-sex union ceremony provision.

Under the military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy, service members face dismissal if they revealed they were gay.

<http://ebird.osd.mil/ebfiles/e20110511819332.html> or  
<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703864204576315680040526802.html?KEYWORD=President+To+Renew+Muslim+Outreach>

# President To Renew Muslim Outreach

By Jay Solomon and Carol E. Lee

Wall Street Journal, May 11, 2011

WASHINGTON -- President Barack Obama is preparing a fresh outreach to the Muslim world in coming days, senior U.S. officials say, one that will ask those in the Middle East and beyond to reject Islamic militancy in the wake of Osama bin Laden's death and embrace a new era of relations with the U.S.

Mr. Obama is preparing to deliver that message in a wide-ranging speech, perhaps as early as next week, these officials say. The president intends to argue that bin Laden's death, paired with popular uprisings sweeping North Africa and the Middle East, signal that the time has come to an end when al Qaeda could claim to speak for Muslim aspirations.

"It's an interesting coincidence of timing—that he is killed at the same time that you have a model emerging in the region of change that is completely the opposite of bin Laden's model," Ben Rhodes, deputy national security adviser at the White House, said in an interview.

Since January, popular uprisings have overthrown the longtime dictators of Tunisia and Egypt. They have shaken rulers in Libya, Bahrain, Syria, Yemen and Jordan, marking the greatest wave of political change the world has seen since the fall of the Berlin Wall.

But the push for democracy appears to have stalled in some countries. The street protests against Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi have morphed into a civil war, with North Atlantic Treaty Organization backing the rebels. Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and Bahrain's ruling Khalifa family have both met demonstrations with violence.

Bin Laden's death gives Mr. Obama a chance to underscore the belief among many administration officials that the terror leader's relevance had already begun to diminish during the so-called Arab Spring. Mr. Obama, who has made outreach to the Muslim world a cornerstone of his presidency, plans to describe the Islamic world as at a crossroads, said U.S. officials, making the case that bin Laden represented a failed approach of the past while populist movements brewing in the Middle East and North Africa represent the future.

Mr. Rhodes said timing of the speech remains in flux but Mr. Obama could deliver it before leaving on a five-day trip to Europe on May 23. The White House is already telegraphing the message of the coming speech to the Islamic world by placing American diplomats on Arab television and radio, according to U.S. officials.

The White House is still debating, however, whether Mr. Obama should lay out a concrete plan for revitalizing the stalled Arab-Israeli peace process.

Many Arab governments have been pressing Mr. Obama to publicly outline his own parameters for the creation of an independent Palestinian state as a way to exert more pressure on Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who visits Washington next week. These diplomats said the Mideast's democratic surge is raising expectations among their own populations for an end to the decades-old Arab-Israeli conflict.

White House officials said they are still reassessing the monumental changes in the Middle East and whether an aggressive U.S. push to resume peace talks would likely be successful.

Last week, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas forged a unity government with the militant group Hamas, which the U.S. and European Union designate a terrorist group. Israeli officials have already

<http://ebird.osd.mil/ebfiles/e20110511819332.html> or  
<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703864204576315680040526802.html?KEYWORDS=President+To+Renew+Muslim+Outreach>

cited Hamas's role in the Palestinian Authority as the reason why Mr. Netanyahu is unlikely to unveil any major new overtures to the Palestinians during his Washington trip.

"We need to sort through these issues as we consider the next steps on a peace process," Mr. Rhodes said. The May 20 Obama-Netanyahu meeting "is a chance for the U.S. and Israel to review the full range of issues, from Iran to the regional change to the peace process."

Arab officials and Mideast peace advocates say there are major risks for the U.S. and Israel in delaying a return to talks.

Mr. Abbas is pressing the United Nations to recognize an independent Palestinian state during the September gathering of the General Assembly. He has specifically cited his frustration with the lack of progress in negotiations with Mr. Netanyahu, as well as the rising expectations among his own people as a result of the Arab Spring.

"There's clearly a lot going on in the region, and there's a case to be made and some are making it, that now is not the time," said Jeremy Ben-Ami, founder of J-Street, a U.S. lobbying group that advocates Washington laying out its own peace plan, something Israel's government opposes. "But we do believe that the only way to avoid U.N. action on a Palestinian state in a unilateral kind of way is for either the president or prime minister to put forward" a peace plan.

A number of lawmakers have cited Hamas's new alliance with Mr. Abbas as reason for the White House to move slowly in restarting the peace process. Mr. Netanyahu is scheduled to address a joint session of Congress during his Washington visit as well the annual conference of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the U.S.'s most powerful pro-Israel lobby.

Avigdor Lieberman, Israel's foreign minister, on Tuesday broke with Israel's policy of keeping quiet on the regional turmoil, saying the international community's response to repression of demonstrations in Syria, Lybia and Yemen has been "inconsistent" and "confusing." In remarks delivered before Mr. Netanyahu's scheduled White House visit, Mr. Lieberman added that the confusion sends a "damaging message to the people of the Middle East, and further erodes the path to peace, security and democracy for our region."

Mr. Obama is also scheduled to meet Jordan's King Abdullah II in Washington next week. The Arab monarch has been at the forefront of Mideast leaders calling for the U.S. to impose its own peace plan on the Israelis and Palestinians. Jordan's population is 60% Palestinian, and the king has faced his own popular protests in recent months.

Evan Perez and Joshua Mitnick contributed to this article.

# **Sexual Assault / Harassment**

[http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/peace-corps-chief-expresses-regret-for-sexual-assaults-experienced-by-young-volunteers/2011/05/11/AFjrCitG\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/peace-corps-chief-expresses-regret-for-sexual-assaults-experienced-by-young-volunteers/2011/05/11/AFjrCitG_story.html)

## Peace Corps chief expresses regret for sexual assaults on young volunteers

By Lisa Rein

Washington Post, May 11, 2011

The chief of the Peace Corps appeared on Capitol Hill on Wednesday to express regret for the agency's failure to respond with compassion to a series of rapes of young volunteers and the recent slaying of another while they served overseas.

Director Aaron S. Williams told angry lawmakers on the House Committee on Foreign Affairs he was "amazed and shocked" when he learned of the crimes, which he said gave him "great anguish."

He acknowledged that the Peace Corps has not been "sufficiently responsive or sensitive" to crime victims and their families while they are still volunteering and after they come home. He said that the agency has taken steps in the 20 months since he took the top job to improve training for volunteers and staff and that he is ready to work with Congress on long-sought legislation to change how victims are treated.

But as the respected government organization founded by President John F. Kennedy celebrates its 50th anniversary, it was the dramatic testimony of three rape victims and the mother of the slain volunteer that took center stage.

The women's harrowing experiences in developing countries arose in different circumstances at different times. But the witnesses' themes were the same: They said the Peace Corps did little to train its workers and volunteers in strategies to avoid or deal with violent attacks. And in the aftermath, they said, the message from top officials was clear: The victim was to blame.

"Apologies without action are useless," said Carol Marie Clark of North Carolina, who accepted a posting in Nepal shortly after graduating from Wake Forest University in 1984, only to be told by her local program director that female volunteers would have to have sex with him to receive their living expenses. Three months later, he raped her and got her pregnant, she testified.

Lois Puzey said she lives a "heartbreak every day" from the loss of her daughter Kate, who was killed at 24 in a remote village in Benin in 2009. She was found with her throat slit shortly after she urged her country director to terminate the contract of a Peace Corps employee who she knew, according to her family and friends, had raped students at the school where she taught. Her mother said she believes the Peace Corps helped cause Kate's death because an e-mail to her boss suggesting the man be fired fell into the hands of the accused killer's brother and was not kept confidential.

Jessica Smocek joined the Peace Corps in 2004 as a volunteer in Bangladesh, where she was gang raped by local men after months of harassment, she testified. When she returned to Washington to debrief with Peace Corps staff about what happened to her, "Rather than feeling safe and supported, I felt belittled and blamed," she said. The country director in Bangladesh told other volunteers about her rape and blamed Smocek for being out alone after 5 p.m., she said.

The former volunteers who are going public with their ordeals are attracting promises of legislation from Congress and what Williams called a new era of reform from Peace Corps' top managers. He vowed to end what he called a culture of "blaming the victim." He said an outdated training video that shows past sexual assault victims discussing what they did wrong to bring on the assaults will be replaced.

Williams suggested several other reforms, including staff counsel to victims about sexual violence and advocating for them before and after they leave the organization, better training for volunteers and staff, and anonymity for whistleblowers such as Puzey.

[http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/peace-corps-chief-expresses-regret-for-sexual-assaults-experienced-by-young-volunteers/2011/05/11/AFjrCitG\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/peace-corps-chief-expresses-regret-for-sexual-assaults-experienced-by-young-volunteers/2011/05/11/AFjrCitG_story.html)

Lawmakers on the committee said they were moved by the women's accounts — and outraged that for years, as reports of sexual assaults against Peace Corps volunteers have surfaced, little has changed.

“For the last 11 years, I've heard what we ought to do, and we haven't had one single piece of legislation,” said Rep. Donald M. Payne (D-N.J.).

The Peace Corps now has more than 8,600 volunteers and trainees serving in 77 countries. They range in age from their 20s to their 80s. From 2000 to 2009, more than 1,000 volunteers reported sexual assaults, including 221 rapes or attempted rapes, according to agency statistics. Because sexual crimes often go unreported, the incidence is likely to be higher than those figures, advocates say.

A 2010 report by the agency's inspector general found that when compared with crime statistics gathered by the United Nations from 86 countries, Peace Corps volunteers suffered higher rates of rape and burglary than other nations reporting.