

DEOMI News Highlights

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 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.

ACLU sues for release of military rape records [John Christoffersen, *Associated Press*, *Navy Times*, December 14, 2010]

- The Pentagon refuses to release records that fully document sexual assault cases in the military and how they are handled
- The American Civil Liberties Union and other groups have filed a federal lawsuit that seeks access to the records
- The groups want information on the number of acquittals, convictions, and sentences, the number of disability claims related to sexual trauma that were accepted and rejected, and the number of sexual harassment complaints

[ACLU sues for release of military rape records](#)

Coast Guard Makes History By Picking Woman To Lead Academy [Daniela Altimari, *The Hartford Courant*, *CTnow.com*, December 15, 2010]

- Rear Admiral Sandra L. Stosz will become the first female superintendent of the U.S. Coast Guard Academy next summer
- Other firsts for Rear Admiral Stosz include being the first woman to command a Coast Guard cutter on the Great Lakes and the first female academy graduate to achieve the rank of admiral
- The Coast Guard Academy is the first military academy to “shatter the glass ceiling”

[Coast Guard Makes History By Picking Woman To Lead Academy](#)

New Bill Advances On ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell’ House votes to repeal military’s gay ban by wider margin [Ed O’Keefe, *Washington Post*, December 16, 2010]

- House lawmakers again approved a bill to repeal the military’s “don’t ask, don’t tell” law on Wednesday ahead of a possible Senate vote next week
- The House voted 250 to 175 to repeal the law, with the 75 vote margin being wider than a similar House vote in May, when language ending the ban was part of the annual defense authorization bill
- That bill failed a procedural vote in the Senate last week, requiring another vote in the House on a separate measure to end the gay ban

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Culture

India complains after emissary gets pat down in US

Associated Press

Washington Post, 9 December 2010

NEW DELHI (AP) -- India's foreign minister said Thursday it was unacceptable that the country's ambassador to the United States was patted down by a security agent at a Mississippi airport, and said he would complain to Washington.

The ambassador, Meera Shankar, was returning from giving a speech at Mississippi State University last week when she was pulled out of line at the airport and given a pat down by a female Transportation Security Administration agent.

The Clarion-Ledger newspaper of Jackson, Mississippi, quoted witnesses as saying Shankar, who was wearing a sari, was told she was singled out for additional screening because of her dress.

Foreign Minister S.M. Krishna said this was the second time the ambassador had been singled out for a pat down in the past three months.

"Let me be very frank that this is unacceptable to India," he said. "We are going to take it up with the government of United States, and I hope that things could be resolved so that such unpleasant incidents do not recur."

A TSA spokesman said diplomats were not exempt from the searches, and that bulky clothing could prompt a pat down.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton told reporters Thursday that the State Department is looking into the matter and is trying to determine what can be done to prevent such incidents in the future. She expressed concern but did not apologize for the incident and said it was not raised when she met with the Indian ambassador and other Indian officials on Tuesday.

The Indian Embassy spokesman, Virander Paul, said the State Department has reached out to the ambassador and offered regrets.

Karan Singh, a former Indian ambassador to the U.S., said if Shankar was singled out because of her clothing, the incident needs to be condemned. "I think she deserves an apology," he said.

While the TSA has garnered criticism for its new security measures, including body scanners and pat downs, the controversy is especially emotive in India, where issues of modesty and status often collide with increasingly stringent airport security.

Last year, India was scandalized when former President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam was told to remove his shoes and was scanned by a metal detector before boarding a flight to the United States.

Proud to serve - We're soldiers, not victims

Sometimes, people who aren't members of our tribe seem not to know what to think of us. Give America's soldiers your support, not your pity.

By Thomas W. Young

The Christian Science Monitor, December 10, 2010

Alexandria, Va. —

Imagine the following scenarios:

1. You're a sergeant riding shotgun with an Army convoy in Iraq. An improvised explosive device – IED – explodes next to your vehicle and showers you with sand, rocks, and flames. Seriously burned, you pull yourself from the damaged gun truck and wonder what will happen next.
2. You're a crew member of a C-5 Galaxy lifting off from Baghdad International. You hear a loud bang and see warning lights: GENERATOR OUT, LOW PRESSURE ... FIRE. A surface-to-air missile has destroyed one of your engines.
3. You're a young airman billeted at Khobar Towers, Saudi Arabia. As you take a shower, you hear a security policeman running down the hall shouting, "Get out! Get out!" That's because he's spotted a truck bomb. A tremendous blast tears open the building and kills 19 of your comrades. Survivors help carry the dead to a makeshift morgue in the chow hall.

America's warrior class

Most Americans will never face situations like this. Less than 1 percent of the US population has served in Iraq or Afghanistan. The all-volunteer military has given us a motivated, highly professional fighting force. But it has also created a warrior class distinct from the rest of society.

Perhaps it has to be this way. According to the group Mission: Readiness, which is made up of retired senior military leaders, 75 percent of Americans ages 17 to 24 are unfit for service. Most are physically unfit, and others have criminal records or inadequate education.

Among those who can make the grade, military service tends to run in families, sometimes for generations. My supervisor in the West Virginia Air National Guard has a great-great-grandfather who earned the Medal of Honor in the Spanish-American War.

I know a pilot who makes mission-related notes in flight on a knee board used by his father in Vietnam. Many of my squadron mates can trace family military history at least back to World War II. Parents wear the uniform alongside sons and daughters.

These family traditions serve the armed forces well, but they keep the burden of war within a narrow group. Those who self-select into the military have become a tribe apart. Sometimes, people who aren't members of our tribe seem not to know what to think of us.

Things could be worse. Thank goodness veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan usually receive only gratitude from civilians. We seldom, if ever, face the mistreatment heaped upon troops returning from Vietnam. While dining in uniform at restaurants, I've had strangers pay for my meals.

<http://www.csmonitor.com/Commentary/Opinion/2010/1210/Proud-to-serve-We-re-soldiers-not-victims>

That support means more than you know. But occasionally the expressions of support come with a tinge of incomprehension, even pity. "Why did you ever reenlist?" someone once asked me. She was incredulous that anyone who could get out would still choose to serve. Her attitude reflected the way much of society views veterans – as victims.

For understandable journalistic and emotional reasons, media coverage tends to focus on the tragedies. Those stories need telling, but so do some others.

An optimistic approach to service

Let's consider our scenarios again. Each one could have served as the opening sequence to a film about a whacked-out veteran who drinks away his days in existential angst – or worse. But here's what really happened to people who are my friends or mentors in the military:

1. The sergeant wounded by the IED finished his tour and finished his degree. He got an officer's commission and continues to serve as a lieutenant.
2. The C-5 flight engineer helped his crew land the stricken jet safely, though it suffered so much damage it remained grounded for nearly two months. The engineer stayed in the Air Force and continues to fly as an instructor. New crewmen still learn from his experiences and sharpen their skills under his guidance.
3. The young airman at Khobar Towers now serves as a senior noncommissioned officer. He's a father, a leader in his church and community, and one of his unit's most active fliers.

All three re-upped, knowing they'd go back into harm's way. The danger was no longer an abstraction. But neither were the rewards. No other job would give them the chance to contribute so much, in places where they were needed so badly.

Of course, many war stories have worse endings. That's why it's so important that the public acknowledges the sacrifices of military personnel. But most war stories are retold proudly by veterans who view their military experience as the highlight of their working lives.

In the meantime, the US remains involved in two major combat zones. (To troops in Iraq, the drawdown doesn't happen until they get to leave.) Tomorrow's veterans are training today. Please think of them often. Follow the news. Join us if you can. But do not see us as victims.

Thomas W. Young is a flight engineer with the West Virginia Air National Guard and the author of "The Mullah's Storm," a novel set in wartime Afghanistan.

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Discrimination

Muslims criticize handling of Israelis' stay at D.C. hotel

By Tara Bahrapour

Washington Post, December 15, 2010

Muslim employees of the Mandarin Oriental Hotel in Washington said they felt discriminated against after being barred over the weekend from floors where an Israeli delegation was staying, a Muslim advocacy group said.

One hotel worker whose duties involve going to all the hotel's floors said he was preparing for his shift Friday when his supervisor told him to steer clear of the eighth and ninth floors, where Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak and his delegation had booked rooms.

"I said, 'Why?' " said the worker, who is Muslim and wanted to remain unidentified to protect his job. He said his supervisor told him, "They're Israelis there, and they don't want no face-to-face with Muslims."

The hotel's general manager, Amanda Hyndman, said the hotel rearranged some shifts and told some workers not to come in after a routine State Department background check found "irregularities" in the checks of 12 employees.

"We don't know the reasons why," Hyndman said, adding that not all the people on the list were Muslim. She said she did not know whether any Muslim employees were allowed to work on the eighth and ninth floors over the weekend.

After receiving a letter Tuesday from the Washington-based Council on American-Islamic Relations, Hyndman said the hotel planned to investigate the incident. "We uphold our policies of anti-discrimination," she said.

An official at the Israeli Embassy said that "as a policy, the embassy does not discuss the logistical arrangements for visiting Israeli officials."

A State Department official said routine background checks are conducted on people who "may have access to, or be working in, the vicinity of the official we are protecting." The official said that "at no time do these checks include questions regarding religious or political affiliation" and that the same standards are applied for all delegations.

Ibrahim Hooper, a spokesman for CAIR, said that the organization was waiting for a formal response from the hotel and that it might consider litigation. "We need to determine what criteria were used to remove these people from their positions," he said. "It's of concern to us that there's at least a perception that they were singled out because they were Muslim or Middle Eastern."

The one worker said that after he was barred from the floors in question, co-workers teased him about being a terrorist.

"In the cafeteria, they were looking at me, laughing, saying: 'Ah, they don't want you there. They maybe think you have a bomb in your belly,' " said the worker, who came to the United States from Africa more than two decades ago.

He said he had worked in proximity to other VIPs, such as George W. Bush, with no security concerns.

"I don't care about Israel. To me, it's just another country," he said. "I work for [the hotel] 12, 14 hours a day, and they profile me like I'm a criminal, like I'm going to harm them. I'm like, 'If I'm going to harm them, why would you keep me in your hotel even one day?' "

In a similar case in 2004, a Muslim security guard at the Madison Hotel was told to stay away from the 10th floor while an Israeli delegation was there. In that case, the hotel's general manager said the request was made by security units guarding the delegation.

Diversity

<http://www.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123232111>

Air Force leaders release Diversity Strategic Roadmap

by Tech. Sgt. Amaani Lyle, Secretary of the Air Force Public Affairs

U.S. Air Force official web site, 23 November 2010

11/23/2010 - **WASHINGTON (AFNS)** -- Striving to remain a leading competitor in the search for talent to carry out the Air Force mission, the service's senior leaders released the Diversity Strategic Roadmap here Nov 17.

In a collaborative effort, members of the Air Force Diversity Operations Division authored the living document's priorities to "institutionalize diversity throughout the Air Force and allow the service to attract, recruit, develop and retain a high quality, talented total force." It is designed to take a sweeping approach in leveraging the spectrum of talent and perspectives of its members, Air Force officials said.

"Across the service, we represent a broad range of diverse missions, family situations, ethnicities, faiths, races and educational backgrounds," said Air Force Secretary Michael Donley. "Yet, together, this rich tapestry forms the world's finest Air Force, drawn from the best talent that America has to offer."

Senior leaders validated the Air Force Diversity Strategic Roadmap during a diversity senior working group session Oct. 17 and 18, and reaffirmed their collective commitment to diversity.

"Diversity is a strategic imperative for our nation, and something that we must pursue together," said Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Norton Schwartz. "Our commander-in-chief has rightly sounded the clarion call for service and sacrifice-in or out of uniform."

Officials in the Headquarters Air Force manpower and personnel directorate are charged with assisting the Air Force-at-large in execution of the roadmap's priorities, which identify actions and measures to enhance the diversity of the service, said Lt. Gen. Richard Y. Newton III, Air Force deputy chief of staff for manpower and personnel.

General Newton said the Air Force leaders will measure the service's diversity successes and track progress.

"We hope to foster an environment in which every individual's contribution is valued and respected and we can capitalize on the uniqueness of each Airman to enhance organizational effectiveness and readiness.

"While commanders at all levels have a leadership role in advancing these priorities, goals and actions, every Airman is a participant and shares responsibility for ensuring the talents and capabilities of each individual are recognized, valued and used towards enhancing mission accomplishment," General Newton said. "Diversity allows everyone -- active duty, Guard, Reserve and civilians -- to reach his or her potential and provide their capabilities to the Air Force and to the joint team."

To view the Air Force Diversity Strategic Roadmap, click [here](#).

Obama plans government workplace diversity effort

By Joe Davidson

Washington Post, December 15, 2010

If creating a government workforce that reflects the people it serves, particularly at top civil service levels, is a high priority for Uncle Sam, you can't tell it by his record.

White men held more than 61 percent of senior pay level positions in fiscal 2009, far more than their representation in the total workforce, according to the latest Annual Report on the Federal Work Force by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Women hold just 29 percent of senior positions. African Americans are a paltry 7 percent, and Latinos are almost invisible at 3.6 percent.

"It's a very, very serious problem that you have for minorities and women," said Jorge E. Ponce, co-chairman of the Council of Federal EEO and Civil Rights Executives.

It's a problem that has not escaped the Obama administration's notice. The White House is preparing a presidential directive, in the form of an executive order or presidential memorandum, on increasing federal workplace diversity.

Presidential orders and memoranda sound impressive, but they are only as good as the effort to make them work. Previous attempts to increase workplace diversity have withered from inattention.

The directive would follow along the lines of the Executive Order on the Employment of Veterans in the Federal Government that President Obama issued in November 2009, an effort widely praised by veterans' organizations.

That order created an interagency Council on Veterans Employment and directed agencies to develop specific operational plans to boost hiring. Obama also told the agencies to "establish a Veterans Employment Program Office, or designate an agency officer or employee with full time responsibility for its Veterans Employment Program, to be responsible for enhancing employment opportunities for veterans within the agency."

A similar diversity directive would put teeth in a government personnel agenda item that has had more bark than bite. Six weeks after Office of Personnel Management Director John Berry took office last year, he listed increasing workplace diversity as one of his three long-term goals, along with controlling federal employee health-care costs while maintaining benefits, and reforming the federal pay system.

He labeled them "often intractable issues" and said reaching those goals would not be easy.

Diversity would be the first of Berry's three long-term goals to get the kind of attention a presidential directive would bring. The three short-term goals he announced at the time - reforming recruiting and hiring practices, improving work life and workplace conditions and veterans employment - all have received White House attention.

The government's senior-level diversity figures are so bad, said Christine Griffin, OPM's deputy director, "because historically we just haven't done a good job of making sure we provide everyone with career development training."

Career development to create a broader range of candidates for the Senior Executive Service may also be part of Obama's directive.

Griffin would not say anything about Obama's plans, but she did say OPM is "working on ways to establish a government-wide program to focus on diversity."

When Rep. Danny K. Davis (D-Ill.) was chairman of the House subcommittee that oversees federal employee issues, he made diversity a priority, holding one hearing on it after another. Along with Sen. Daniel K. Akaka (D-Hawaii), Davis introduced an SES diversity bill in 2009. But he no longer runs that subcommittee, and his legislation has gone nowhere.

"There is no great movement right now to do anything" legislatively on diversity, said Bill Brown, president of the African American Federal Executive Association.

The lack of movement also seems to apply, with a few exceptions, to organizations that represent employees of color. Perhaps they're active behind the scenes, and that certainly can be an effective strategy, but they don't apply much public pressure. An exception is when Congress holds hearings on workplace diversity, which isn't often.

"Then everybody gets all ginned up," Brown said.

One thing that could use ginning up is the "special emphasis programs" that were created decades ago to help agencies meet their equal employment opportunity goals. Special emphasis programs were established for women, Hispanics and other minorities, people with disabilities and veterans.

Federally Employed Women, perhaps the most active federal workers' organization devoted to diversity, complains that the special emphasis effort for women has "gradually eroded to the point of almost nonexistence."

The problem is compounded, according to FEW, because the OPM regulations outlining how the Federal Women's Program should be implemented can't be found. "While our understanding is that these instructions included requiring each agency to develop a Plan of Action, to designate an FWP Coordinator, and to submit a periodic progress report to OPM, our efforts to obtain the actual implementation language or these plans have been futile," says an FEW report.

If that language is missing, it shows just how little importance government officials over the years have given the issue of diversity. Griffin said the Obama administration is planning to develop guidance to agencies on the special emphasis program.

That can't come a decade too soon.

Miscellaneous

<http://ebird.osd.mil/ebfiles/e20101215795607.html> or
<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704694004576019944121568506.html?mod=W>
[SJ WSJ US News 5](#)

Air Force Blocks Media Sites

By Spencer E. Ante and Julian E. Barnes
Wall Street Journal, December 15, 2010

The U.S. Air Force is blocking its personnel from using work computers to view the websites of the New York Times and other major publications that have posted classified diplomatic cables, people familiar with the matter said.

Air Force users who try to view the websites of the New York Times, Britain's Guardian, Spain's El Pais, France's Le Monde or German magazine Der Spiegel instead get a page that says, "ACCESS DENIED. Internet Usage is Logged & Monitored," according to a screen shot reviewed by The Wall Street Journal. The notice warns that anyone who accesses unauthorized sites from military computers could be punished.

The Air Force said it had blocked more than 25 websites that contained the documents, originally obtained by the website WikiLeaks and published starting late last month, in order to keep classified material off unclassified computer systems.

Major Toni Tones, a spokeswoman for Air Force Space Command, wouldn't name the websites but said they might include media sites. Removing such material after it ends up on a computer could require "unnecessary time and resources," Major Tones said.

"It is unfortunate that the U.S. Air Force has chosen not to allow its personnel access to the most important news, analysis and commentary," a New York Times spokeswoman said. The other publications couldn't immediately be reached for comment.

The move was ordered by the 24th Air Force, which is responsible for maintaining Air Force computer networks. The Army, Navy and Marines aren't blocking the sites, and the Defense Department hasn't told the services to do so, according to spokespeople for the services and the Pentagon.

The Office of the Secretary of Defense has issued guidance against visiting WikiLeaks or downloading documents posted there, according to defense officials. The Air Force told its own personnel in August to avoid those actions. Service commanders have authority to go beyond Pentagon guidance and issue orders to protect classified information.

One senior defense official questioned the wisdom of blocking the newspaper sites or even prohibiting service members from visiting them on military computers, arguing that the information has spread on the Internet and that sites like the New York Times contain other, useful information. The defense official said blocking the New York Times was a misinterpretation of military guidance to avoid visiting websites that post classified material.

The new order doesn't prevent Air Force personnel from viewing the media websites on nonmilitary computers, one Air Force official said. The block can also be lifted if accessing one of the news sites is essential to a person's job, according to the screen shot.

Russell Adams contributed to this article.

<http://www.ctnow.com/news/connecticut/hc-ct-coast-guard-woman-1215-20101214,0,3385935.story>

Coast Guard Makes History By Picking Woman To Lead Academy

By Daniela Altimari, The Hartford Courant
CTnow.com (FOXCT), 15 December 2010

Thirty-five years after it began admitting women, the U.S. Coast Guard Academy will get its first female superintendent.



Rear Adm. Sandra L. Stosz will ascend to the helm of the New London academy next summer, becoming the first woman to lead a U.S. military service academy. Her appointment was announced Tuesday by U.S. Coast Guard commandant Adm. Robert J. Papp.

It's hardly the first first for Stosz. She was the first woman to command a Coast Guard cutter on the Great Lakes and the first female academy graduate to achieve the rank of admiral.

Stosz, 50, said her appointment symbolizes "a generation of progress" for women.

"There were challenges," she said in a phone interview from Coast Guard headquarters in Washington D.C. "But I always looked beyond the challenges to the opportunities. The Coast Guard didn't put any roadblocks in the way of women. ... I was blessed."

Indeed, some observers say they aren't surprised that the Coast Guard is the first military academy to shatter the glass ceiling. It has a unique dual role: Unlike other branches of the armed forces, the Coast Guard has law enforcement and first-responder duties in addition to its national defense role.

"It's significant that it's the Coast Guard and not the naval academy or West Point or the Air Force Academy," said Claire Potter, a professor of history and American Studies at Wesleyan University in Middletown. "The Coast Guard is as much a domestic service as a wartime service, and its emphasis on communications and cooperation strike me as gendered very female."

Stosz almost didn't wind up in the Coast Guard. A self-described tomboy who grew up in Maryland with three younger brothers, she had her sights set on the U.S. Naval Academy in nearby Annapolis. In 1976, just a couple of years before she graduated from high school, Congress mandated that the U.S. military academies open their doors to women.

"I liked the idea that I got to be in on something new, something adventuresome," she recalled. "I had never sailed, but I always dreamed of owning a tiny sailboat. ... I always had a fantasy of being a sailor. This was the chance to serve my country and go off on an adventure."

A high school guidance counselor told her about the Coast Guard, so she applied there as well, even though she had never heard of it before. The Coast Guard acceptance letter arrived before the one from the naval academy, so she set off for New London.

<http://www.ctnow.com/news/connecticut/hc-ct-coast-guard-woman-1215-20101214,0,3385935.story>

When Stosz graduated in 1982, there were just 11 other women in her class of 150 cadets. Today, women make up about one-third of the enrollment.

The Coast Guard has provided intensive training in human relations and sexual harassment issues. Several years ago it honed its policy on responses to sexual assault claims after the 2006 court martial of a male cadet on sexual assault charges.

Stosz said she hoped to build on the successes of her predecessor, Rear Adm. J. Scott Burhoe. During his tenure, the academy doubled its minority enrollment and drew a record number of Fullbright and Truman scholars.

"My goal will be to make sure I am delivering productive young ensigns that can perform for the American public ... to protect, defend them," she said.

Burhoe, who is expected to retire July 1, called Stosz "an excellent choice."

"She has a distinguished record of service and, as a member of the board of trustees, understands the importance of continuing to move the academy forward on its current track," Burhoe said in a statement.

In addition to 12 years at sea, she served as the first female aide to former Transportation Secretary Samuel Skinner. (The Coast Guard was then under the purview of the U.S. Department of Transportation. It is now part of the Department of Homeland Security.)

Stosz also worked as a social aide to former President George Herbert Walker Bush, a job that entailed escorting guests to the White House for state dinners.

In her current position, Stosz oversees policy for the more than 8,000 members of the Coast Guard reserve. She recently developed policy, and executed a budget, for the Coast Guard's reserves operations in the Gulf of Mexico following the BP oil spill.

That mission, along with the response to the earthquake in Haiti, emblemizes the Coast Guard's current mission. It's a mission that's more important than ever, she said. "We're more relevant than ever in the changing global environment."

Courant Staff Writer Kathy Megan contributed to this report.

New Bill Advances On 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' *House votes to repeal military's gay ban by wider margin*

By Ed O'Keefe

Washington Post December 16, 2010 Pg. 2

House lawmakers on Wednesday again approved a bill to repeal the "don't ask, don't tell" law, delivering renewed momentum to the years-long campaign to end the ban on gays in the military ahead of a possible Senate vote next week.

The House voted 250 to 175 to repeal the 17-year-old law; 15 Republicans voted for the bill, and 15 Democrats voted against it.

The 75-vote margin was wider than a similar House vote in May, when language ending the ban was part of the annual defense authorization bill. That bill failed a procedural vote in the Senate last week, requiring another vote in the House on a separate measure to end to the gay ban.

President Obama heralded the vote, saying in a statement that ending current military policy "is not only the right thing to do, it will also give our military the clarity and certainty it deserves. We must ensure that Americans who are willing to risk their lives for their country are treated fairly and equally by their country."

Senate Majority Leader Harry M. Reid (D-Nev.) said Wednesday night that he wants to bring up the bill, but warned, "We are very quickly running out of days in this Congress. The time for week-long negotiations on amendments and requests for days of debate is over. Republican senators who favor repealing this discriminatory policy need to join with us now."

The bill's Senate sponsors, Joseph I. Lieberman (I-Conn.) and Susan Collins (R-Maine), also called for a quick vote. "We are out of excuses," they said Wednesday in a statement.

Efforts to end "don't ask, don't tell" picked up a significant backer Wednesday in Sen. Olympia J. Snowe (R-Maine). She said she would vote to repeal the law, joining Collins and Sens. Scott Brown (Mass.) and Lisa Murkowski (Alaska) as Republicans who have said they would do so - enough, when combined with the 57 Democrats who supported last week's failed attempt, to overcome any attempt by opponents at a filibuster.

Though Lieberman and Collins introduced the bill first, its House co-sponsors, Majority Leader Steny

H. Hoyer (D-Md.) and Rep. Patrick J. Murphy (D-Pa.), pushed their colleagues to vote first so the Senate could consider it later as a privileged resolution, which requires fewer days of debate.

"It's time to end a policy of official discrimination that has cost America the service of some 13,500 men and women who wore our uniform with honor," Hoyer said Wednesday. "It's time to stop throwing away their service, their willingness to die for our country, because of who they are."

"The ball is now in the Senate's court, and I urge our senators of both parties to pass this bill and finally

dismantle 'don't ask, don't tell,' once and for all," Murphy said.

Rep. Howard P. "Buck" McKeon (R-Calif.), who is slated to chair the House Armed Services Committee in the next Congress, blasted Democrats for calling for a vote on "don't ask, don't tell" before reconsidering the defense authorization bill. "That's a bad system," he said.

House and Senate negotiators completed negotiations Wednesday on a new version of the defense

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/12/15/AR2010121507477.html>

bill that does not include provisions dealing with "don't ask, don't tell." Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Carl M. Levin (D-Mich.) and the panel's ranking member, John McCain (R-Ariz.), called on Congress to pass the bill before the lame-duck session ends.

In a joint statement, gay rights groups pushing to end the ban cheered Wednesday's vote, saying it "provides another resounding indication that 'don't ask, don't tell' can and should be repealed legislatively this year."

The groups, ranging from the liberal think tank Center for American Progress to the Log Cabin Republicans, plan to spend the rest of the week lobbying moderate Republican senators, including Richard G. Lugar (Ind.) and George V. Voinovich (Ohio). Neither has said in recent days how he might vote.

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates also asked the Senate on Wednesday to quickly pass the bill. Doing so would enable the Defense Department "to carefully and responsibly manage a change in this policy, instead of risking an abrupt change resulting from a decision in the courts," said Pentagon spokesman Geoff Morrell.

But Elaine Donnelly, president of the Center for Military Readiness and a vocal defender of the current military policy, criticized Democrats for holding Wednesday's vote "before most members of Congress have sufficient time to consider the consequences of that reckless action."

"Congressional chaos has become the new normal," she said.

McCain, the leading Republican critic of efforts to end the ban this year, did not comment on Wednesday's vote.

A majority of Americans support allowing gay men and lesbians to serve openly in uniform, according to a Washington Post-ABC News poll released this week.

Staff writers Ben Pershing and Felicia Sonmez contributed to this report.

New PT Program Develops Battle Skills, Warrior Tasks

By Chuck Cannon, Fort Polk Guardian
American Forces Press Service, 13 december 2010

FORT POLK, La., Dec. 13, 2010 – The winds of change are blowing through the Army's Physical Readiness Training Program, and Fort Polk, La., is taking the initiative to stay ahead of those changes.



Junior noncommissioned officers take part in a sprint exercise on Fort Polk, La., during a class on the Army's new Physical Readiness Training program Dec. 1, 2010. The class, hosted by the post's NCO Academy, gave the young leaders a first-hand look at the new program. U.S. Army photo by Chuck Cannon

"It was about time we took a look at how we did our physical fitness," said Fort Polk Command Sgt. Maj. Jeffrey Hof. "If you think about it, during peacetime, the all-volunteer Army goal was to take a civilian, break him down to nothing, then build a soldier."

Using the post's Noncommissioned Officers Academy as its conduit, Hoff and the Joint Readiness Training Center have come up with a plan to ensure each battalion on post has someone versed in the new program to lead the change.

"How many times did you run 10 miles in Afghanistan or Iraq?" Hof asked a collection of sergeants and staff sergeants during a class on the new PT program held on Dec. 1, 2010. "You didn't. That's why it's important to make these changes to the program. It incorporates scientific effort from doctors who understand the human body."

The new PT "manual" is Training Circular 3-22.20, replacing the old Field Manual 21-20. Sgt. 1st Class Vernon Alcorn, chief of training for Fort Polk's NCO Academy, was the lead instructor for the class on the new practices given to noncommissioned officers from each battalion in early December. He said Army PT has not really changed all that much over the years.

"The way we conduct that PT has changed," he explained. "We're working to get our soldiers physically fit and better able to complete their war-fighting tasks."

Alcorn said the new program goes along with what soldiers do in combat situations.

"The longer runs are going away," he said. "It will be more like a track meet, with sprints and shorter runs. You can still do unit runs, but you won't do the same thing every day."

Staff Sgt. W.B. Fancher and Staff Sgt. John McKenna, instructors at Fort Polk's NCO Academy, were two of the cadre who helped to train the post's junior NCOs on the new PT program.

"FM 21-20 trained soldiers for one thing only: The PT test," Fancher said. "The new program helps soldiers perform all of their combat roles, from jumping off the rear of a truck to clearing a room of combatants."

Fancher listed three reasons for the new program:

- Reduce injuries - building muscles in areas not normally used allows for muscle recovery;
- Combat efficiency - Correlates to actions used in combat and relates to warrior tasks and battle drills; and
- Instill discipline - Gets soldiers used to taking commands from leaders. Soldiers must be disciplined to survive in combat.

<http://www.defense.gov//News/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=62077>

The program's goal is to develop soldiers who are physically capable and ready to perform their duty assignments or combat roles. Once the program is in place, McKenna said, soldiers and leaders will see its benefits.

"It's going to help them with their warrior tasks and battle drills," McKenna said. "We want to show Fort Polk's leadership how the program works and how it will help them accomplish their mission, whether in garrison or down range."

McKenna said the new program is a total body workout. It incorporates old-school exercises like the eight-count pushup, the squat bender and the bend and reach, along with new drills such as the back bridge, quardraplex and medial leg raise.

"It doesn't just train for the PT test, which is pushups, sit-ups and a two-mile run," he said. "It works a soldier's core and upper and lower body. It also works the cardiovascular system."

McKenna said soldiers should not be concerned that the new PT program will cause their PT test scores to drop. "There is a lot of interval training - a lot of short distance, fast running," he said. "While it might not seem like you'll be able to run as fast, soldiers will see an improvement in their two-mile times. And the end result is it gets soldiers to a level of fitness the Army needs."

One change McKenna noted was that time, not distance, is now used to govern running.

"The manual says 30 minutes for the run, not a distance," he said.

Alcorn said the new program is an excellent way to standardize unit PT and meet the command sergeant major of the Army's intent to see Soldiers doing PT properly and to standard.

Fancher, speaking on the second day of the local two-day PT class for the post's junior NCOs, said some of the soldiers were already feeling the results of the new exercises. "We've turned a couple of heads," he said. "But there are still skeptics."

Alcorn said those who consider themselves "PT animals" are more likely to resist the change.

"Standardization takes away from the 'I can do more than you' attitudes," he said. "Everybody is different; body types are different. The new program is a total body workout, both strength and endurance - every session. It's strict and formal and geared to all types of soldiers."

McKenna said the intent of the program is to provide a 60-minute workout to start, eventually building up to about 90 minutes. A typical PT session would include 15-20 minutes of warm-up exercises, 30-40 minutes of cardiovascular or muscular work, followed by 5-10 minutes of cool-down exercises.

"The manual is full of great exercises to do during each session, so there's no reason to become bored with doing the same thing every day," McKenna said.

The opinions of the junior NCOs who attended the WLC's class were varied, but most said they were willing to give the new program a chance.

"It's going to take some getting used to," said Sgt. Christopher Nordin, Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 88th Brigade Support Battalion, 1st Maneuver Enhancement Brigade.

"I had to get used to not stretching, which is completely different. Apparently a study by scientists say our old style of stretching actually put our muscles to sleep. I guess I believe the scientists."

Staff Sgt. Monnicia Jackson, 21st Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Company, 83rd CBRN Battalion, said the new program is an improvement. "It's going to cut down on injuries," she said. "I think the core workout is best; it provides an overall body workout."

<http://www.defense.gov//News/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=62077>

She did note one area that she would have to work on. "The turns on the shuttle runs will take getting used to," Jackson said. "You've got to be coordinated."

Staff Sgt. Kevin Wellington, Headquarters Company, 4th Battalion, 353rd Infantry Regiment, 162nd Infantry Brigade, said he likes the fact that the program focuses on combat tasks.

"Pushups and sit-ups are great, but not what we're doing in Afghanistan or Iraq," he said. "The new program is battle focused."

McKenna said once the program is fully implemented, it consists of three phases.

"There is an initial conditioning phase, toughening phase and sustaining phase," he said. "Most Soldiers at Fort Polk are already through the initial conditioning phase and will begin in the toughening phase."

The toughening phase develops foundational fitness and fundamental movement skills, McKenna said. The sustaining phase continues physical development and helps the Soldier maintain a high level of physical readiness.

"Soldiers must do exercises correctly before moving to the next phase," McKenna said.

Frank Palkoska, the U.S. Army Physical Fitness School director, said the old fitness program was flawed. "You had units that said, 'all we've got to do is pushups, sit-ups and run, and the more we run, the better we'll be.' That's a flawed concept."

Palkoska said there is a false assumption that if you score high on the APFT, you can do everything a Soldier needs to do.

"You can't take a 130-pound marathon runner, put 120 pounds on his back and march him at 10,000 feet (elevation) in Afghanistan," he said. "Those are the types of issues that led us to the development of the new doctrine."

Hof said it's the "right time" to change the PT program.

"We are in the ninth year of a two-front war," he said. "We don't necessarily need soldiers who can run from tower-to-tower, although there is nothing wrong with that," he said. "But we do need soldiers who are physically fit, can complete their warrior tasks and battle drills and survive on the battlefield. The new PT program will help our soldiers do that."

Poll - Chiefs lead fleet in stress levels

By Mark D. Faram - Staff writer
Navy Times, Dec 13, 2010

If you're wondering why your chief is cranky, it's probably because he's under a lot of stress.

A new poll shows that stress is on the rise in the Navy, thanks to high operational tempo and a lack of manpower. And senior enlisted are the worst hit.

In the second consecutive year of polling, 82 percent of sailors reported having "some" or "a lot" of stress on the job, up eight percentage points from last year. For officers, 85 percent reported those stress levels, up 10 percentage points. The number of chiefs reporting higher amounts of stress saw the largest increase in the Navy Behavioral Quick Poll, official said.

Though officials say stress contributes to a drop in productivity on the job, the poll also showed that more sailors were aware of the problems that high stress can create and were more likely to get help and try to deal with it.

"Stress is higher on sea duty than for those ashore, with 86 percent of those on sea duty reporting high levels of stress as compared to 74 percent of those ashore," said Capt. Lori Laraway, who heads the Navy Operational Stress Control Program.

Though long deployments are still major sources of stress, officials say that for the second straight year, the No. 1 reason is a lack of manpower on the job.

As for the reasons behind the stress among chiefs, officials say it could be related to the Navy's Perform to Serve re-enlistment approval system. They added that further study is needed.

The poll also showed that 50 percent of sailors aren't getting enough sleep, and the problem is worse during sea duty.

Laraway said that although stress on the job is increasing, family related stress is holding relatively stable, and sailors are more aware of stress and how it can affect their job.

"In this year's quick poll we did see a larger number of people saying they had found ways to cope with that stress," she said. "They were talking to family members and shipmates and using the chain of command trying to solve their problems."

This, she said, shows that the Navy's educational programs are working and that the stigma surrounding mental health issues isn't as great of a concern as it once was.

"It's not good news that stress is increasing," she said. "But the fact that sailors are more aware of that stress and trying to deal with it leads us to believe that our training has been effective."

The poll was sent to a random sample of 11,867 sailors and officers around the fleet in June; 2,846 responded.

The poll was sponsored by the operational stress control office with the help of the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery.

Snowball Express takes children of fallen soldiers on holiday vacation

By Catherine Pritchard, Staff writer

Fayetteville (NC) Observer December 10, 2010

Father Christmas wore boots, the pilot a Santa hat, the plane an American flag and Christmas decorations.

And everyone wore smiles as nearly 100 children of fallen soldiers got ready to fly to Texas for four days of special fun, all expenses paid, as part of the fifth annual Snowball Express.

"Six Flags!" said 11-year-old William Jewell of Deep Run, when he was asked what he was looking forward to. "Bull riding and the bounce house," said 11-year-old Billy Lewsader of Fayetteville. "Seeing everybody again," said 18-year-old Breanne Priestner of Sanford.

Like many on hand in Fayetteville on Thursday morning, Priestner had been part of previous Snowball Express trips. The charity was formed in 2006 to provide a fun-filled free trip around the holidays to children of service members killed since Sept. 11, 2001. Its aim: to provide hope and new memories for those children.

During this year's trip, about 1,300 children and their adult companions will be taken to a variety of places, including Six Flags over Texas, a rodeo, a performance of "The Nutcracker," a concert by Gary Sinise and the Lt. Dan Band, and Southfork Ranch, where the TV show "Dallas" was filmed.

Everything will be free to them, including food, lodging and air travel. American Airlines donates the flights to and from airports around the country.

On the plane ferrying 131 children and adults from Fayetteville, airline personnel had decorated the interior with Christmas lights, ribbons, stars, streamers and cheery pictures drawn by kindergartners. They said they happily volunteered to work the trip on their off time.

"We just want to give back any little bit we can," said flight attendant Stephanie Walston.

Theresa Steffeny, whose husband was killed by a roadside bomb in Iraq in 2005, said the trip is important to her children, 17-year-old Alexa and 12-year-old Blake, and thus, it's important to her.

"It takes their mind off things during the holidays," she said.

Arthur Butler was accompanying his great-grandson, William Jewell, whose father died in a helicopter crash in Afghanistan in 2007. "This is awesome; it really is," Butler said of the Snowball Express. "It gives me cold chills just talking about it."

Melissa Lewsader of Fayetteville, who was taking the trip for a second time with her four children, said they'd talked about it all year long. "They love it," she said.

She said the first trip had a welcome effect on her oldest daughters, aged 13 and 14, who'd become withdrawn after their father was killed in Afghanistan in 2007. But during last year's trip, both girls made friends with whom they keep in touch. Thirteen-year-old Cheyenne Lewsader said she was most looking forward to seeing those friends.

"It's awesome," Melissa Lewsader said. Several Snowballers said they value spending time with people who have suffered the same sort of profound loss as themselves. "It helps a lot," said 14-year-old Megan Priestner, whose father was killed in a helicopter crash in Iraq in 2006. "They don't know exactly what we're going through, but it's similar."

"They can say they understand," said Breanne Priestner, "and they actually do."

Study finds 'hidden epidemic' of female vet suicides

By Kelly Kennedy

Army Times, December 20, 2010

Female veterans commit suicide at a rate three times higher than women who never served, according to a new study.

“These findings suggest a hidden epidemic of suicide among young women with military service,” the researchers wrote in their study.

Dr. Mark Kaplan of Portland State University’s School of Community Health, a co-author of the study, said higher suicide rates among female vets “should be a call to action, especially for clinicians and caregivers, to be aware of warning signs and helpful prevention resources, such as the Veterans Suicide Prevention Hotline.”

The study — the first general-population analysis of suicide risk among female veterans, according to the authors — looked at data on 5,948 female suicides committed from 2004 to 2007 in the 16 states that participate in the National Violent Death Reporting System.

Researchers found that the gap in suicide rates between veteran and nonveteran women was largest among younger women. Female veterans 34 and younger committed suicide at a rate of 13.4 per 100,000, compared with about 4.4 per 100,000 among female nonveterans.

The gap narrowed for the next-oldest group studied, ages 35 to 44, and narrowed again among 45- to 64-year-olds, said co-author Dr. Bentson McFarland, a professor of psychiatry at Oregon Health and Science University.

But even within those groups, the rate for female veterans was higher than for their nonveteran counterparts, McFarland said.

The difference in suicide rates among female veterans and nonveterans is also higher than in men; male veterans kill themselves at twice the rate of male nonveterans. The authors said suicide rates may be higher for female veterans because of military sexual trauma, exposure to combat or injuries such as traumatic brain injury.

However, they lacked the data to draw any correlations between combat exposure, military sexual trauma and mental health diagnoses.

The national Veterans Suicide Prevention Hotline number is 800-273-8255.

Women and suicide

In all age groups, women who served in the military committed suicide at a higher rate than civilian women, with the difference being most pronounced among younger women:

Suicide rate per 100,000

34 and under -- veterans: 13.4; nonveterans: 4.4

35-44 -- veterans: 12; nonveterans: 6.7

45-64 -- veterans: 11.3; nonveterans: 7.2

Source: Journal of the American Psychiatric Association

Racism

Medvedev vows crackdown on racist soccer fans after Moscow rampage

Thousands of ultranationalist soccer fans rallied near the Kremlin on Saturday, prompting a wave of violence against ethnic minorities in Moscow and St. Petersburg.

By Fred Weir, Correspondent

Christian Science Monitor, December 13, 2010

Moscow

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev is vowing to crack down hard on ultranationalist extremists after weekend riots by soccer fans, egged on by neo-Nazi groups, led to a wave of violence against ethnic minorities in Moscow and other major Russian cities.

"Everything is under control – both in Moscow and the country," Mr. Medvedev wrote on his Twitter page late Sunday. "We will deal with everyone who did filthy things. Everyone. You can be certain of that."

The threat of nationalist backlash against Russia's multitude of non-Slavic minorities has long been a proverbial elephant in the room, and it came roaring into the open on Saturday as some 5,000 soccer fans rallied in a square adjacent to the Kremlin, some shouting racist slogans such as "Russia for the Russians" and making explicit threats against members of Moscow's darker-skinned and mainly-Muslim minority from the North Caucasus region.

Protesters set off fireworks and threw chunks of ice at police on Manege Square. Heavily armored riot police drove the protesters back from the Kremlin, arresting 65 people and injuring more than 30 in what looked at times like a pitched battle. The soccer fans fled into Moscow's metro system, where some reportedly went on a rampage against non-Slavic looking people.

Anger over death of soccer fan

While a few youths appeared to be giving Nazi-style salutes, some observers argued that the demonstrations were less provoked by ultranationalist agitators than by anger over last week's death of soccer enthusiast Yegor Sviridov.

Fans of Moscow's Spartak soccer team blame police for failing to properly investigate the gang-related killing of Mr. Sviridov, who died in a fight with a group of youthful immigrants from the North Caucasus region.

"They are just angry because their comrade was killed, and the suspects were freed by police," says Eduard Sorokin, an expert with Stadion, a Moscow sports consultancy. "One wonders if the authorities aren't deliberately whipping this trouble up to have a pretext to toughen order."

Several hundred soccer fans and friends of Sviridov last week blockaded a downtown Moscow thoroughfare and demanded that police explain why two of the three suspects had been released. This ballooned into the much larger rally on Saturday over authorities' alleged failure to address the fans' questions, and the growing belief that police corruption was blocking justice for Sviridov, says Nikolai Petrov, an expert with the Carnegie Center in Moscow.

<http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Europe/2010/1213/Medvedev-vows-crackdown-on-racist-soccer-fans-after-Moscow-rampage>

"The problem is that our political system is inflexible and authorities are incapable of providing any avenues for people to redress their grievances. So they only react when those problems have grown into mass protests," he says.

"In the absence of any other options, the situation was left to snowball. In their frustration the fans took to the streets, where they became wide open to the suggestions of neo-Nazis. It seems that the ultranationalists are much more adept at communicating with soccer fans than the authorities are," Mr. Petrov adds.

Ultrnationalists penetrate ranks

Galina Kozhevnikova, deputy director of the independent Sova Center in Moscow, which tracks nationalist groups, says that protesters beat up at least 40 people in the wake of the riot on Saturday. The violence continued throughout the weekend with several more attacks, and the reported murder of an immigrant from Kyrgyzstan on Sunday.

Similar outbreaks of ethnic violence apparently conducted by soccer fans took place over the weekend in St. Petersburg and the southern Russian city of Rostov.

"Nobody talks about this, but the penetration of ultranationalists into the ranks of soccer fans is a growing problem," says Ms. Kozhevnikova. "Not a single soccer match goes by without racist slogans and banners being raised. Yet there has been no effort by the police to single out the nationalist agitators and punish them. Now our officials act as though it's all a big surprise to them."

The riots are an especially acute embarrassment for the Kremlin since they erupted just days after Russia was awarded the right to host the 2018 soccer World Cup, which was widely hailed as a sign that Russia is becoming accepted into the European community.

Religion

Rabbi sues Army over beard ruling

By Spencer S. Hsu, Washington Post, 8 December 2010



An Orthodox Jewish rabbi from Brooklyn sued the U.S. Army Wednesday for denying him a commission to serve as an Army chaplain because his faith prohibits him from shaving his beard.

Menachem M. Stern of the Chabad-Luvabitch community, a Hasidic group in Brooklyn, alleges in federal court in the District that the Army at first approved his application to serve as chaplain in June 2009 and appointed him a reserve commissioned officer (first lieutenant), before rescinding the appointment that September citing the Army's "no-beard" regulation.

Stern's attorneys, Nathan and Alyza D. Lewin of the District, say that since then, the Army has granted a waiver to two Sikh captains and an enlisted man, who were permitted to wear a turban and beard in uniform, and an unnamed, bearded Muslim officer who has served as a surgical intern at Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

Stern says the Army rules, which only apply on entering service and can be waived for those who cannot shave for medical reasons, are discriminatory and violate the Constitution, especially because waivers have been granted to Sikh and Muslim soldiers. The federal courts in 1976 barred the Air Force from enforcing its beard ban against an Orthodox Jewish chaplain, his suit added.

A spokesman for the Army did not immediately return a telephone call for comment Wednesday afternoon.

Sens. Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.), Kirstin Gillibrand (D-N.Y.) and Joseph I. Lieberman (I-Conn.) wrote Army Secretary John McHugh about Stern's case, the suit said, and were told that current Army grooming standards do not allow beards.

US Sues School Over Denial Of Muslim Pilgrimage

by The Associated Press
NPR.org, December 14, 2010

WASHINGTON

The federal government sued a suburban Chicago school district Monday for denying a Muslim middle school teacher unpaid leave to make a pilgrimage to Mecca that is a central part of her religion.

In a civil rights case, the department said the school district in Berkeley, Ill., denied the request of Safoorah Khan on grounds that her requested leave was unrelated to her professional duties and was not set forth in the contract between the school district and the teachers union. In doing so the school district violated the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by failing to reasonably accommodate her religious practices, the government said.

Khan wanted to perform the Hajj, the pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia which every adult Muslim is supposed to make at least once in a lifetime if they are physically and financially able to. Millions go each year.

Khan started as a middle school teacher for Berkeley School District 87 — about 15 miles west of Chicago — in 2007. In 2008, she asked for almost three weeks of unpaid leave to perform the Hajj. After the district twice denied her request, Khan wrote the board that "based on her religious beliefs, she could not justify delaying performing hajj," and resigned shortly thereafter, according to the lawsuit filed in federal court in Chicago.

Berkeley School District compelled Khan to choose between her job and her religious beliefs, the lawsuit said.

The government asked the court to order the school district to adopt policies that reasonably accommodate its employees' religious practices and beliefs, and to reinstate Khan with back pay and also pay her compensatory damages.

In November 2008, Khan filed a complaint with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which found reasonable cause that discrimination had occurred and forwarded the matter to the Justice Department. The case is the first brought by department in a project to ensure vigorous enforcement of the 1964 act against state and local governments by improving cooperation between the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the department's civil rights division.

A message left for the school district seeking comment was not immediately returned.

Associated Press writer Sophia Tareen in Chicago contributed to this report.

Sexual Harassment/ Assault

http://www.navytimes.com/news/2010/12/ap-aclu-military-rape-lawsuit-121310w/?keepThis=true&TB_iframe=true&height=650&width=850&caption=Navy+Times++News

ACLU sues for release of military rape records

By John Christoffersen - The Associated Press
Navy times, 14 December 2010 14:08:18 EST

NEW HAVEN, Conn. — Sexual assault pervades the military, but the Pentagon refuses to release records that fully document the problem and how it is handled, the American Civil Liberties Union and other groups said in a federal lawsuit that seeks access to the records.

Tens of thousands of service members have reported some form of sexual assault, harassment or trauma in the past decade, according to the lawsuit filed Monday in New Haven against the departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs. The plaintiffs include the Service Women's Action Network, the ACLU of Connecticut and Yale Law School students.

The groups that filed suit want information on the number of acquittals, convictions and sentences, the number of disability claims related to sexual trauma that were accepted and rejected, and the number of sexual harassment complaints. The records are needed to determine the extent of the problem and what has been done to address it, the groups say.

“The government’s refusal to even take the first step of providing comprehensive and accurate information about the sexual trauma inflicted upon our women and men in uniform ... is all too telling,” said Anuradha Bhagwati, a former Marine captain and executive director of SWAN. “The DOD and VA should put the interests of service members first and expose information on the extent of sexual trauma in the military to the sanitizing light of day.”

Messages were left Monday with the departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs.

The government prosecutes 8 percent of military sex offenders, while 40 percent of civilian sex offenders are prosecuted, according to the lawsuit. Post-traumatic stress disorder claims related to sexual trauma are often denied for failing to prove the case, even when men and women in uniform have been diagnosed with the disorder, the lawsuit said.

The Defense Department said there were 3,230 reports of sexual assault involving military service members as victims or subjects in fiscal year 2009, an increase of 11 percent from the prior year. The report said part of the increase stemmed from a social marketing campaign aimed at preventing sexual assault.

The lawsuit contends sexual assaults are nearly twice as common within military ranks as in civilian society, and surveys show that nearly one in three women report being sexually assaulted during their time in the military.

About 80 percent of unwanted or threatening sexual acts are not reported, according to the lawsuit. Victims who report abuse to their superiors often face social isolation, retribution and counteraccusations, the lawsuit says.

Sexual abuse is the primary causes of PTSD among female service members.

“Much of the information about the extent and cost of the [military sexual trauma] problem, along with the government’s reluctance to prosecute offenders and treat victims, is not in the public sphere,” the lawsuit states. “The public has a compelling interest in knowing this information, given the potential enormity of the problem, the emotional and financial cost that it imposes on military service members and the increasing number of women serving in Afghanistan and Iraq.”