

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 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.

Army suicides set record in July [Greg Jaffe, *The Washington Post*, 12 August 2011]

- The U.S. Army suffered a record 32 suicides in July, the most since it began releasing monthly figures in 2009.
- The Marine Corps, which reports information on suicides by corps members online, also has posted annual suicide rates similar to the Army's.
- If the suicide rate among troops is compared to a population that is similar to the military in terms of age, race and sex, the rate in the Army and Marine Corps appears to be about the same or slightly lower than the population at large, according to the Rand Corp., a government-funded think tank.

[Army suicides set record in July](#)

Executive order to push agencies on diversity [Isaac Arnsdorf, *The Washington Post*, 18 August 2011]

- President Obama on Thursday issued an executive order requiring government agencies to develop plans for improving federal workforce diversity.
- "The federal government has a special opportunity to lead by example," John Berry, director of the Office of Personnel Management, said in a conference call Thursday. "We will only succeed in our critical mission with a workforce that hails from, represents and is connected to the needs of every American community."
- You can see the full text of the order on the [White House web site](#) or following the full text of this article [below](#).

[Executive order to push agencies on diversity](#)

Poll: MLK's dream realized, but a gulf between races remains [Susan Page & Carly Mallenbaum, *USA TODAY*, 17 August 2011]

- ...[A] majority of Americans say King's dream of racial equality has been realized in the USA, although a gulf between blacks and whites persists over how much remains to be done.
- A USA TODAY/Gallup Poll finds both pride and division on race relations... A little more than half say King's dream has been fulfilled, and an additional one in four of those surveyed say major progress has been made toward it. Still, there is a chasm on some questions.
- "Whatever the civil rights movement did or did not accomplish, there remain very different perspectives, on average, between blacks and whites on how they view the country," says Vincent Hutchings, a political scientist at the University of Michigan who studies racial politics.

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Discrimination

Labor Department plans database to gauge discrimination by contractors

By Charles S. Clark

Government Executive, 11 August 2011

The Labor Department on Wednesday invited public comment on a proposal to create a new database of information on salaries, wages and benefits offered by federal contractors and subcontractors, with an eye toward curbing workplace discrimination.

The [proposed rule](#), still in the early planning stage, is aimed at improving the capacity of Labor's Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs to analyze indicators such as data revealing pay differentials for women and racial minorities. That office is charged with enforcing an executive order that bars companies doing business with the government from discriminating on the basis of sex, race, color, national origin or religion.

"Today, almost 50 years after the Equal Pay Act became law, the wage gap has narrowed, but not nearly enough," said Labor Secretary Hilda Solis. "The president and I are committed to ending pay discrimination once and for all."

The department reported that in 2010 women earned an average of 77 cents on the dollar paid to men. The database, OFCCP Director Patricia Shiu said in a news release, "will allow us to focus our enforcement resources where they are most needed. We can't truly solve this problem until we can see it, measure it and put dollar figures on it."

The notice offers the public 15 questions on what types of data should be gathered, how it should be used and what kind of burdens the database might impose on businesses. The public comment period extends to Oct. 11.

Contractor groups contacted by *Government Executive* are skeptical that such a tool can be fairly executed.

"We would oppose it as intrusive," said Trey Hodgkins, senior vice president for national security and procurement policy at TechAmerica. "We don't support wage discrimination, but contractors are already required when submitting proposals and winning awards to certify that they're not conducting such activities. This presumes that compensation packages can be compared in an apples-to-apples way."

TechAmerica, Hodgkins noted, has members such as Google, which offers employees 24-hour gyms, coffee bars and "romper rooms." "How do you compare that with other more traditional employers' salary and benefits and work locations, and pretend you can assign them a value?" he asked.

The plan reminds Hodgkins of the Obama administration's [High Road initiative](#), which was proposed in 2010 to allow agencies to favor labor-friendly firms when evaluating bid proposals. "Each company decides the best way to attract talented people that in combination produces the right skills in the room for the government and the taxpayer," he said. "Those differences drive competition," while this database approach "presumes a cookie-cutter pattern companies have to comply with."

The National Small Business Association also opposes the proposal. "NSBA certainly supports equity and fairness, but the new rule could prove burdensome for small businesses given the amount of information required and method for inputting such information," a spokeswoman said. "Of particular concern is the possibility that there would be an upfront requirement that bids include such compensation data -- before the business is even awarded any kind of contract. For a large business with a staff dedicated to federal contracting, this may not be a huge issue, but for a small business it could be a disincentive to entering the federal marketplace altogether."

Diversity

<http://www.military.com/news/article/navy-news/first-allfemale-arresting-gear-crew-supports-oef.html?col=1186032320397>

First All-Female Arresting Gear Crew Supports OEF

**Navy News|by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class (SW) Timothy Walter
Military.com. 19 August 2011**

ARABIAN SEA -- Seven female Sailors assigned to USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77) Air Department formed the first all-female arresting gear crew in Navy history, Aug. 15. Five Aviation Boatswain's Mates (Equipment) from George H.W. Bush and two temporarily assigned duty Sailors from USS Nimitz (CVN 68) and USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN 71) worked in the seven positions necessary to operate and maintain the arresting gear wires on the flight deck.

"This is a deployment of many firsts," said Chief Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Equipment) (AW/SW) Antonio A. Blanco, leading chief petty officer for George H.W. Bush Air Department V-2 Division's Arresting Gear workcenter. "We have the personnel to do it and we might as well be the first to have an all-female arresting gear crew."

Topside Petty Officer Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Equipment) 3rd Class (AW/SW) Beatrice A. Williamson was a leading force in making the all-female crew a reality after nearly four years aboard the ship.

The positions of the crew include the deck edge operator who retracts the arresting wire remotely; the hook runner who signals the operator; two push bar personnel who physically move the arresting wire away from starboard side of the flight deck; two deck checkers, one who inspects the wire and the other who acts as a spotter; and the topside petty officer who oversees the operation.

"I kept saying to myself that when I get topside, I am going to have an all-female crew before the end of deployment," Williamson said. "Chief Blanco made it happen by helping everyone to get qualified." For Williamson, making history was just as important as showing the abilities of the female Sailors who wear the Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Equipment) green shirt. Air Department's V-2 Division has 161 male and 43 female Sailors. Only 10 female Sailors are assigned to the arresting gear workcenter. "Nobody has ever done it and we wanted to be the first," she said. "It means a lot."

Shortly after 9 a.m. (local time), the seven Sailors helped recover their first aircraft of the day - an F/A-18E Super Hornet from Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 31. Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Equipment) Airman Kapri D. Ragin, a temporarily assigned duty Sailor from USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN 71), discovered broken strands in the one of the three arresting wires during her post-landing inspection and rushed to fix it until a replacement could be installed.

Following the first round of successful landings, the arresting gear crew quickly replaced the affected wire in an operation that required all seven Sailors to work in unison to switch out the 125-pound arresting wire. After a long 14-hour day, the all-female crew helped successfully recover 70 aircraft.

"They are a great group of young woman and I have all the confidence in the world in them," said Blanco. "This is something memorable for them and they deserve it."

Additional members of the first all-female arresting gear crew were Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Equipment) 3rd Class Alison R. Pint, Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Equipment) Airman (AW) Aquia A. Lunsford, Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Equipment) Airman Carissa M. Smith, and Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Equipment) Airman Megan E. Walker, who is temporarily assigned duty from USS Nimitz (CVN 68).

George H.W. Bush is deployed to the U.S. 5th Fleet area of responsibility on its first operational deployment conducting maritime security operations and support missions as part of Operations Enduring Freedom and New Dawn.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/dc-politics/executive-order-to-push-agencies-on-federal-workforce-diversity/2011/08/18/gIQAng5POJ_story.html?hpid=z4

Obama orders improved workforce-diversity effort

By Isaac Arnsdorf

Washington Post, 18 August 2011

President Obama on Thursday issued an [executive order](#) requiring government agencies to develop plans for improving federal workforce diversity.

The [long-awaited](#) executive order directs a group of high-ranking officials to create a government-wide plan, followed by specific plans in each agency. It marks the highest-profile response to a problem that has been on the administration's radar: Whites [still hold](#) more than 81 percent of senior pay-level positions.

“The federal government has a special opportunity to lead by example,” John Berry, director of the Office of Personnel Management, said in a conference call. “We will only succeed in our critical mission with a workforce that hails from, represents and is connected to the needs of every American community.”

The order creates a framework, but the details have not been worked out. Instead of creating a new administrative body, as with Obama's [2009 executive order on veterans' employment](#), this initiative will look to a council of deputy agency chiefs. OPM, the Office of Management and Budget and the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission will participate.

That group will be responsible for creating a government-wide plan within 90 days. According to the order, after that plan is released, each agency must present its own specific diversity plan within 120 days. The efforts must reflect initiatives on a number of fronts, including recruitment, training and promotion.

Berry said that the executive order elevates the issue of diversity to a level of attention that will prevent this initiative from falling by the wayside, as other efforts have. “Rather than create a new structure, the president has built upon an existing structure at the very highest level that will get attention and scrutiny,” he said.

Officials did not commit to specific goals or measures, which they said will vary by agency.

“We are trying to say that this is something that should be folded into and a part of everything you do,” Deputy Director Christine Griffin said.

According to the latest Federal Equal Opportunity Recruitment Program Report, women hold 31 percent of senior positions, African Americans 7 percent and Latinos 4 percent.

At an EEOC conference in Baltimore this week, the commission and OPM [released a joint memorandum](#) vowing “the most rigorous possible enforcement” of equal-pay laws for federal employees. The memo noted that while the gender pay gap had fallen from 28 cents on the dollar in 1987, it still stood at 11 cents in 2007.

Increasing workplace diversity has been among Berry's top three long-term goals — alongside controlling health-care costs and improving the federal pay system — since he took office in 2009.

WEB of actual Order: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/08/18/executive-order-establishing-coordinated-government-wide-initiative-prom> or see attached

The White House

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

August 18, 2011

Executive Order--Establishing a Coordinated Government-wide Initiative to Promote Diversity and Inclusion in the Federal Workforce

EXECUTIVE ORDER

ESTABLISHING A COORDINATED GOVERNMENT-WIDE INITIATIVE TO PROMOTE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, and in order to promote the Federal workplace as a model of equal opportunity, diversity, and inclusion, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. Policy. Our Nation derives strength from the diversity of its population and from its commitment to equal opportunity for all. We are at our best when we draw on the talents of all parts of our society, and our greatest accomplishments are achieved when diverse perspectives are brought to bear to overcome our greatest challenges.

A commitment to equal opportunity, diversity, and inclusion is critical for the Federal Government as an employer. By law, the Federal Government's recruitment policies should "endeavor to achieve a work force from all segments of society." (5 U.S.C. 2301(b)(1)). As the Nation's largest employer, the Federal Government has a special obligation to lead by example. Attaining a diverse, qualified workforce is one of the cornerstones of the merit-based civil service.

Prior Executive Orders, including but not limited to those listed below, have taken a number of steps to address the leadership role and obligations of the Federal Government as an employer. For example, Executive Order 13171 of October 12, 2000 (Hispanic Employment in the Federal Government), directed executive departments and agencies to implement programs for recruitment and career development of Hispanic employees and established a mechanism for identifying best practices in doing so. Executive Order 13518 of November 9, 2009 (Employment of Veterans in the Federal Government), required the establishment of a Veterans Employment Initiative. Executive Order 13548 of July 26, 2010 (Increasing Federal Employment of Individuals with Disabilities), and its related predecessors, Executive Order 13163 of July 26, 2000 (Increasing the Opportunity for Individuals With Disabilities to be Employed in the Federal Government), and Executive Order 13078 of March 13, 1998 (Increasing Employment of Adults With Disabilities), sought to tap the skills of the millions of Americans living with disabilities.

To realize more fully the goal of using the talents of all segments of society, the Federal Government must continue to challenge itself to enhance its ability to recruit, hire, promote, and retain a more diverse workforce. Further, the Federal Government must create a culture that encourages collaboration, flexibility, and fairness to enable individuals to participate to their full potential.

Wherever possible, the Federal Government must also seek to consolidate compliance efforts established through related or overlapping statutory mandates, directions from Executive Orders, and regulatory requirements. By this order, I am directing executive departments and agencies (agencies) to develop and implement a more comprehensive, integrated, and strategic focus on diversity and inclusion as a key component of their human resources strategies. This approach should include a continuing effort to identify and adopt best practices, implemented in an integrated manner, to promote diversity and remove barriers to equal employment opportunity, consistent with merit system principles and applicable law.

Sec. 2. Government-Wide Diversity and Inclusion Initiative and Strategic Plan. The Director of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and the Deputy Director for Management of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), in coordination with the President's Management Council (PMC) and the Chair of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), shall:

- (a) establish a coordinated Government-wide initiative to promote diversity and inclusion in the Federal workforce;
- (b) within 90 days of the date of this order:
 - (i) develop and issue a Government-wide Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan (Government-wide Plan), to be updated as appropriate and at a minimum every 4 years, focusing on workforce diversity, workplace inclusion, and agency accountability and leadership. The Government-wide Plan shall highlight comprehensive strategies for agencies to identify and remove barriers to equal employment opportunity that may exist in the Federal Government's recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, professional development, and training policies and practices;
 - (ii) review applicable directives to agencies related to the development or submission of agency human capital and other workforce plans and reports in connection with recruitment, hiring, promotion, retention, professional development, and training policies and practices, and develop a strategy for consolidating such agency plans and reports where appropriate and permitted by law; and
 - (iii) provide guidance to agencies concerning formulation of agency-specific Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plans prepared pursuant to section 3(b) of this order;
- (c) identify appropriate practices to improve the effectiveness of each agency's efforts to recruit, hire, promote, retain, develop, and train a diverse and inclusive workforce, consistent with merit system principles and applicable law; and
- (d) establish a system for reporting regularly on agencies' progress in implementing their agency-specific Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plans and in meeting the objectives of this order.

Sec. 3. Responsibilities of Executive Departments and Agencies. All agencies shall implement the Government-wide Plan prepared pursuant to section 2 of this order, and such other related guidance as issued from time to time by the Director of OPM and Deputy Director for Management of OMB. In addition, the head of each executive department and agency referred to under subsections (1) and (2) of section 901(b) of title 31, United States Code, shall:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/08/18/executive-order-establishing-coordinated-government-wide-initiative-prom>

(a) designate the agency's Chief Human Capital Officer to be responsible for enhancing employment and promotion opportunities within the agency, in collaboration with the agency's Director of Equal Employment Opportunity and Director of Diversity and Inclusion, if any, and consistent with law and merit system principles, including development and implementation of the agency-specific Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan;

(b) within 120 days of the issuance of the Government-wide Plan or its update under section 2(b)(i) of this order, develop and submit for review to the Director of OPM and the Deputy Director for Management of OMB an agency-specific Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan for recruiting, hiring, training, developing, advancing, promoting, and retaining a diverse workforce consistent with applicable law, the Government-wide Plan, merit system principles, the agency's overall strategic plan, its human capital plan prepared pursuant to Part 250 of title 5 of the Code of Federal Regulations, and other applicable workforce planning strategies and initiatives;

(c) implement the agency-specific Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan after incorporating it into the agency's human capital plan; and

(d) provide information as specified in the reporting requirements developed under section 2(d).

Sec. 4. General Provisions. (a) Nothing in this order shall be construed to impair or otherwise affect:

(i) authority granted to a department or agency or the head thereof, including the authority granted to EEOC by other Executive Orders (including Executive Order 12067) or any agency's authority to establish an independent Diversity and Inclusion Office; or

(ii) functions of the Director of OMB relating to budgetary, administrative, or legislative proposals.

(b) This order shall be implemented consistent with applicable law and subject to the availability of appropriations.

(c) This order is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

BARACK OBAMA

THE WHITE HOUSE,
August 18, 2011.

Human Relations



DEFENSE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE

NEWS RELEASE

DEOMI EQUAL OPPORTUNITY ADVISOR COURSE PLATFORM INSTRUCTOR/FACILITATOR IS RECIPIENT OF NOMAR MERITORIOUS SERVICE AWARD FOR 2011

**Release No. 11-08-25
August 10, 2011**

PATRICK AIR FORCE BASE, Fla. – Headquarters Department of the Army has announced that Master Sergeant Jorge P. Said, an Equal Opportunity Advisor Course Platform Instructor/Facilitator at the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI), is the recipient of the National Organization for Mexican American Rights, (NOMAR) Meritorious Service Award for 2011.



MSG Said provides instructor support to all resident Equal Opportunity Advisor Courses and participates in the Service Specific portion as well. He ensures the objectives as established in lesson plans and facilitation guides are achieved during small group interaction.

MSG Said has distinguished himself by making significant contributions to his country in the area of Equal Opportunity, Civil Rights Programs and public service to his local community.

“We are extremely fortunate to have an instructor such as Master Sergeant Said,” said Mr. Ronald M. Joe, DEOMI Principal Director. “He is an outstanding Soldier, a dedicated leader, and a true professional as one of our senior instructors for our Equal Opportunity Advisor Course students and he brings key leadership talents to support our mission while teaching our students,” he said.

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<http://ebird.osd.mil/ebfiles/e20110815836348.html> or
<http://www.jdnews.com/news/don-94018-lejeune-troops.html>

Troops share thoughts on Don't Ask, Don't Tell

By Hope Hodge

Jacksonville (NC) Daily News, August 14, 2011

The question of whether gay and lesbian troops should be openly admitted into the armed services has long created a stir in the Camp Lejeune community. Lejeune was home to Sgt. Justin Elzie, the first Marine ever discharged under Don't Ask, Don't Tell, after the policy was established in 1993. Elzie, who came out to viewers of ABC World News Tonight at the beginning of that year, expecting an overturn of the current ban on gay troops would be forthcoming, later engaged in a very public court battle, winning the right to keep an honorable discharge and early retirement bonus.

In 2003, Marine reservist Lance Cpl. Stephen Eagle Funk, a gay antiwar protester being held in the Camp Lejeune brig for desertion, became a figure to rally behind for crowds who took to North Marine Boulevard in his defense. But as the 18-year-old policy enters its final stages of repeal, the lack of stir has become the most notable element of transition.

During training sessions attended by The Daily News earlier this year informing troops of new policies following the end of Don't Ask Don't Tell, troops told the newspaper they were unconcerned about the change. Marine recruiters who spoke to The Daily News earlier this month said it was business as usual at the recruiting offices in the region, even after the Marine Corps announced it would start accepting gay recruits. And after Sept. 20, a director of an organization serving GLBT troops said, people can expect more of the same.

"I think people are going to do their job," said Jonathan Hopkins, the DC director of the network Outserve. "Fundamentally, people are fighting for the right to do their job. That's how you celebrate repeal, is you do your job. It's much ado about nothing as regards to any changes are happening in the service, but it's a good nothing."

Hopkins, a former United States Army captain, was discharged under DADT in 2010. Outserve, founded in 2009, now has nearly 4,000 members nationwide, he said, including 106 in North Carolina.

Though "Don't Ask" is close to ending for good, Hopkins said many troops remain cautious about disclosing their sexuality until a repeal has been finalized. According to unscientific studies conducted by the organization surveying nearly 250 gay and lesbian troops, about 28 percent of gay troops have come out since the repeal was signed at the end of last year, and about 60 percent said they would take their significant other to unit functions after the repeal was enacted.

For Lejeune Cpl. Shantella Spriggs, making the disclosure was surprisingly easy. "Under DADT a few of my peers that are accepting of gays and lesbians simple asked me directly if I was a lesbian," she said via email from Afghanistan. "I knew the risks of outing myself to them but I took the chance anyway and told them that I was. After answering, the most common response that I have gotten is 'Why didn't you tell me sooner. I have tons of girls that I can introduce you to.'"

Spriggs said she has also admitted to being a lesbian during conversations with colleagues on the subject. "The response was, 'Really? I didn't know that.' And we continue on with the conversation," she said. She wasn't always as open as she is now. Spriggs said she was previously engaged to a woman in the Air Force, with plans to get married following a repeal of DADT. But she told her fellow Marines that she was engaged to a man.

"When being asked about our relationship, how we met, and when we planned to get married I had to constantly make up a lie and remember the lie that was told in case I was asked the same

<http://ebird.osd.mil/ebfiles/e20110815836348.html> or

<http://www.jdnews.com/news/don-94018-lejeune-troops.html>

question again," she said. Now a state chapter leader for Outserve, Spriggs said she appreciates the chance to talk to others who share her experiences and give others the opportunity to confide in fellow service members. Following repeal, Spriggs said gay men aboard Camp Lejeune may face the most opposition in disclosing their sexual preference.

"The majority of Marines do not want DADT repealed," she said. "Males can accept the fact that a female can identify as a lesbian but often times have trouble accepting a male Marine as gay. In their eyes males Marines are 'manly' -- they are brothers and should not be involved with homosexual conduct. Once the certification process is done I predict that there will be many female Marines willing to come out to others within their chain of command and seldom males."

A New River lance corporal who spoke with The Daily News under condition of anonymity has yet to tell his colleagues that he is gay.

"There are a few close friends from work that know that I am gay but that is all. In my personal opinion, it is none of their business whether I'm gay or not," he told the paper via email. "I go to work, do my job, give 110 percent and out-work most of my peers."

The Marine did encounter the realities of Don't Ask Don't Tell when a coworker accused him of performing homosexual acts. He said he was nearly discharged before the charges were finally dropped. Even with the policy's end in sight, he said he doubted he would become more vocal about his preferences, unless asked directly.

"More so at Camp Lejeune than here aboard New River if there is a troop that is 'out' in a unit that does their job well the command protects that individual so that they don't get kicked out, but over here at the Air Station they are so stuck on procedure and doing everything by the book that the majority of the separations happen (aboard New River and Cherry Point)," the Marine said. "I feel that the Marine Corps is probably the least accepting branch of all."

For Spriggs, the end of DADT means liberties like being able to bring a partner to the Marine Corps ball.

"We will be able to talk to our chain of command about serious issues concerning our significant others and we can live our day-to-day lives without fear that someone could be watching and waiting to out us," she said.

For the New River Marine, it will just be the ability to breathe easier. "We won't have to live double lives anymore, which is hard," he said, "very hard, at times."

By the numbers: Outserve conducted an unscientific survey this spring among 244 active-duty gay and lesbian troops, with 7 percent reporting from the Marine Corps. Among the findings they publicly disclosed:

- *78 percent of gay troops were "out" to at least some members of their unit

- *28 percent of troops said they would not tell anyone who didn't know about their orientation after the DADT repeal had been certified

- *30 percent said they were not yet sure whether or not they would come out to colleagues after the policy ended

- *56 percent said they would look to their chain of command for help in the event of harassment or discrimination

- *About 60 percent said they would or likely would take their significant other to unit functions following repeal.

Miscellaneous

<http://ebird.osd.mil/ebfiles/e20110813836074.html> or
http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/army-suicides-set-record-in-july/2011/08/12/gIQAfbGIBJ_story.html

Army suicides at record high in July

By Greg Jaffe

Washington Post, August 13, 2011

The U.S. Army suffered a record 32 suicides in July, the most since it began releasing monthly figures in 2009.

The high number of deaths represents a setback for the Army, which has put a heavy focus on reducing suicides in recent years. The number includes 22 active-duty soldiers and 10 reservists. The previous record was 31, from June 2010.

Army officials cautioned that investigations are underway in most of the deaths to confirm the exact cause.

“Every suicide represents a tragic loss,” Gen. Peter W. Chiarelli, the vice chief of staff of the Army, said in a written statement. “While the high number of potential suicides in July is discouraging, we are confident our efforts . . . are having a positive impact.”

Over the past several years, the Army has launched a major effort to institute new training to improve soldiers’ ability to bounce back from stress, and setbacks in combat and in their personal lives. It has hired hundreds of mental health and substance abuse counselors and has launched a push to convince soldiers that seeking help for mental health problems will not have a negative impact on their careers.

The service also has tapped the National Institute of Mental Health to conduct a five-year, \$50 million study and statistical analysis of suicide in the Army, an effort that includes surveys, data mining and medical testing.

Chiarelli, meanwhile, has devoted hundreds of hours to studying the suicide problem and its possible links to post traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injuries caused by battlefield explosions.

So far, the efforts have not resulted in a significant change in the suicide rate in the Army. Over the first seven months of 2011, about 160 active-duty and reserve soldiers have committed suicide, which is about on par with the number of troops taking their own lives during the same months in 2009 and 2010.

The Marine Corps, which does not release monthly suicide statistics, has posted annual suicide rates similar to the Army’s.

Senior Army officials had hoped that the slowing pace of combat deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan might reduce the overall strain on the force and help drive down the rate of soldier suicides. The extra time at home, however, does not appear to have had a significant impact on the suicide rate.

In recent years, the Army’s suicide rate has surpassed the rate for the overall population. Comparing suicide rates among soldiers is difficult because the latest national suicide statistics, which are compiled by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, are about three years old.

If the suicide rate among troops is compared to a population that is similar to the military in terms of age, race and sex, the rate in the Army and Marine Corps appears to be about the same or slightly lower than the population at large, according to the Rand Corp., a government-funded think tank.

<http://www.military.com/news/article/illinois-gov-signs-law-to-protect-military-funerals.html>

Illinois Gov. Signs Law to Protect Military Funerals

by **Brian Slodysko**

Chicago Tribune, 15 August 2011

As the U.S. continues to mourn the deaths of 30 Americans killed Aug. 6 when their helicopter crashed in Afghanistan, Gov. Pat Quinn signed a law Sunday that seeks to insulate grieving families from vitriolic anti-gay protests sometimes held alongside military funerals.

"Every family has a fundamental right to conduct a funeral with reverence and dignity," Quinn said in a statement. "This law ensures that the families of those who have given their lives for our country can grieve without harassment."

The measure updates the Let Them Rest in Peace Act, spearheaded by Quinn while he was lieutenant governor and enacted by former Gov. Rod Blagojevich in 2006. Keeping with the spirit of the old law, it bans picketing 30 minutes before and after military funerals, but it keeps protesters farther at bay by increasing the distance they must maintain from 200 to 300 feet.

Mentioned nowhere in the new law is the Westboro Baptist Church, an independent Kansas-based congregation that initially forced the issue. Members of the church protest at service members' funerals, bearing signs that said "Thank God for IEDs" and "God Hates Fags." The church contends a wrathful God is punishing America with war casualties for the country's embrace of "the mentality that it is OK to be gay," said Jonathan Phelps, an attorney and member of the church.

Quinn's signing of measure comes on the heels of an 8-1 Supreme Court decision in which justices reaffirmed the First Amendment right of the group to protest, overturning a lower court ruling that awarded \$5 million to the father of a Maryland Marine whose funeral the church picketed.

The decision does not appear to affect the laws in 43 states that seek to keep the protesters away from military funerals.

The heightened level of protection in Illinois was applauded by Dan Hough, assistant state captain of the Illinois Patriot Guard, a group of motorcycle enthusiasts who attend military funerals on roaring bikes to drown out the sounds of church protesters.

"To add another hundred feet, yes, that will help put that buffer between (them)," said Hough, a fourth-generation funeral director from Raymond. Given the extremism of the church's statements, he said, the protesters have been given more than enough leeway to exercise their First Amendment right of making "disrespectful and vulgar" comments.

Hough lamented the spotlight put on the protest group. Phelps at least partially agrees.

"We say Mr. Quinn ... you keep up the good work," Phelps said. "God is not going to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah, and (this) will put a larger megaphone to it."

Jim Frazier, of Lake in the Hills, whose son Jacob was killed in Afghanistan in 2003, praised Quinn for the new law but said even 1,000 feet of distance from a funeral wouldn't be enough.

"We do have a Constitution but we also have common sense, and when it causes that much harm and that much pain and anguish, then we have to group together and say, 'Wait a minute this is far too harmful.'"

USAFE: Airman's 'birther' comments not reason for discharge

By Jennifer H. Svan

Stars and Stripes, 18 August 2011

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — Air Force officials in Europe said Thursday that Daryn Moran, the Germany-based staff sergeant who publicly questioned the U.S. citizenship of President Barack Obama, was not being discharged for either disparaging the commander-in-chief or for his views on the repeal of “don’t ask, don’t tell.”

“We can confirm that Staff Sgt. Moran is not being discharged because of his recent public comments that have appeared on various Web sites,” U.S. Air Forces in Europe spokesman Mike Kucharek said in a written statement.

Citing privacy concerns, Kucharek said he could not provide the specific reason for Moran’s discharge nor confirm whether the dismissal was honorable, as claimed in an email attributed to Moran and posted Wednesday at BirtherReport.com.

“I am short on time to discuss much other than to say the Lord has allowed me to remain with my family and we are leaving Germany, and I am receiving an Honorable discharge,” Moran’s statement read in part.

Those receiving an honorable discharge from the Air Force would generally qualify for full veterans’ rights and benefits, according to information from the Air Force.

Moran’s announcement of his discharge followed nearly a week of comments that Moran made about Obama on various online forums, including a YouTube video showing Moran in his Air Force uniform criticizing the president and numerous posts on his Twitter account, in which he called Obama a “criminal” and an “enemy.”

But, according to his Twitter account, Moran was publicly vilifying the president well before this week. In a Twitter posting dated “about 1 month ago,” Moran wrote, “I just want to turn in my ID card and call the President an outlaw who should be arrested for lying about his birth document.”

He also tweeted about his displeasure with the “don’t ask, don’t tell” repeal — which will allow gay and lesbian troops to serve openly in the U.S. military — and said “I’m leaving military over gay issue.” In another tweet, he wrote: “My medical board to leave the military says I ‘can’t adapt and adjust.’ ”

Military members can be medically separated from military service for a mental health condition. Citing privacy rules, Kucharek said he could not disclose whether Moran was discharged as a result of a medical board evaluation.

In general, a discharge from the military usually takes weeks though under certain circumstances, “when deemed in the best interest of the Air Force and/or the service member,” it can be expedited, Kucharek said in an email. He said he could not disclose whether Moran’s discharge was expedited due to Privacy Act concerns. USAFE officials said Wednesday Moran’s commander approved his discharge Aug. 4.

For cases in which a medical board is convened, a discharge can take months, Kucharek said.

Moran, a member of the Air Force since 2002, was an ophthalmology technician with the 86th Airlift Wing.

Moran could not be reached for comment Thursday.

Misconduct

Navy: Sub Crew Was Encouraged to Cheat

By Michael Melia

Associated Press/Military.com, 16 August 2011

HARTFORD, Conn. -- When the Navy discovered an exam-cheating ring aboard one of its submarines, it swiftly fired the commanding officer and kicked off 10 percent of the crew.

Navy officials describe the case aboard the USS Memphis as a rare lapse in integrity, but some former officers say the shortcuts exposed by the scandal are hardly unique to a single vessel.

The former submariners tell The Associated Press it is not uncommon for Sailors to receive answer keys or other hints before training exams. They say Sailors know how to handle the nuclear technology, but commanders competing with one another to show proficiency have made tests so difficult -- and so detached from the skills Sailors actually need -- that crew members sometimes bend the rules.

An investigation report obtained by the AP through a Freedom of Information Act request describes an atmosphere aboard the USS Memphis that tolerated and even encouraged cheating: Sailors were emailed the answers before qualification exams, took tests outside the presence of proctors and openly asked officers for answer keys. One Sailor told investigators that test-takers were encouraged to "use their time wisely" during breaks, insinuating that they should look up answers to exam questions.

A submarine force spokeswoman, Navy Cmdr. Monica Rousselow, said the Navy holds its officers and crew to very high standards and denied that cheating is rampant. "The evidence we have shows that it's very rare," said Rousselow, who is based in Norfolk, Va.

But three former officers said the episode aboard the Groton, Conn.-based Memphis was an extreme example of shortcuts that occur aboard many of the roughly 70 American submarines in service.

One of the former officers, Christopher Brownfield, wrote in a book published last year that his superiors aboard the USS Hartford urged him to accept an answer key to pass a nuclear qualification exam. He said other crew members received answers by email, and the sub's leadership ignored him when he complained about cheating.

"It was almost universal," Brownfield said in an interview. "I don't know anybody on the ship who could have passed that exam without cheating on the first try."

As an instructor at the Navy's submarine school in Groton in 2005, Brownfield said he heard from members of roughly a dozen other crews that cheating also took place on their boats. He blamed pressure to hit ever-higher performance targets.

"They've expected more and more paperwork, with higher levels of compliance, and over time those expectations diverged from what people are actually doing," said Brownfield, who is now researching nuclear sustainability as a graduate student at Columbia University. "In the nuclear department, the test became so difficult it really had no bearing on what people were doing on a daily basis."

Two other former submarine officers who spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity for fear of losing connections to the Navy said that cheating is pervasive. "Most people have great integrity except in this one area. On a lot of boats, they'll bend the rules and try to juice the results," said one former officer. He said it was not unusual for crew members on his submarine to receive hints to study particular areas before exams. As an instructor at the submarine school, he said he learned of similar practices on other subs.

<http://www.military.com/news/article/navy-sub-crew-was-encouraged-to-cheat.html>

Submariners have to make it through rigorous, highly technical training and testing before going to sea. Once deployed, they face more exams to test their knowledge and preparedness for worst-case scenarios. Low scores can lead to consequences up to removal from a sub, and hurt the overall rating of the crew.

The scandal aboard the Memphis broke in November when Navy brass learned that an answer key to one such test had been discovered in a junior officer's email.

The sub's commanding officer, Cmdr. Charles Maher, was relieved of duty within two weeks. He wasn't accused being involved in the cheating, but the Navy said he fostered an environment that failed to uphold the expected standards of integrity. He did not respond to messages left by the AP.

Of the 13 crew members who were punished, only three returned to the Memphis for its final deployment. The other crew members were reassigned, kicked out of the Navy or are awaiting possible dismissal, said Navy Lt. Jennifer Cragg, a submarine group spokeswoman at Naval Submarine Base New London in Groton. The 33-year-old submarine was decommissioned in April.

John Fischer, a former officer who used to help oversee exams from a Navy base in Washington state, said the tests are about much more than the knowledge displayed by individual test-takers. Officers aboard each sub create their answer keys, and the process is meant to sharpen the superiors' skills as well. He said the exams are supposed to be difficult, with a certain number of failures designed in to identify areas for improvement.

He said the collegial atmosphere aboard a submarine, where exams are administered by fellow shipmates and even friends, could be a factor in the cheating. "If you get one guy in there who doesn't have the integrity to do the right thing, then it can progress really easily," said Fischer, who now works as a manufacturing engineer. Like the other ex-officers interviewed for the story, Fischer said the safety of the reactors is not in question.

A spokesman for Naval Reactors, the agency that oversees the Navy's nuclear propulsion program, said the Navy works diligently to understand the root causes of any cheating case and to make changes. Spokesman Thomas Dougan said that out of 16,000 nuclear-trained officers and enlisted Sailors taking several exams annually, there are on average one or two cheating cases per year that result in the removal of nuclear qualifications. Most cases involve only a few Sailors, he said.

Dougan said the written exams are one of several measures used to assess the effectiveness of a continuing training program, and the kind of cheating that occurred on the Memphis would not put the ship or reactor plant at risk.

He said commanders use other measures, including supervisors' observations, drills and oral exams, to assess how well-trained crews are.

On the Memphis, the Navy investigation concluded that some of the mechanical operators decided to cheat partly because problems with the exam's design prevented questions from lining up with the expected answers. Five of eight Sailors stopped using the answer keys after the problems with the exams were addressed, the report said. It suggested that the exam program could be improved by requiring that all qualification exams be proctored.

In light of the scandal, Rousselow said squadron commanders and commanding officers have been encouraged to make any changes that might be necessary to prevent such cheating. She said the Navy was leaving it up to commanders to determine what steps if any should be taken to implement lessons learned from the Memphis.

Racism

<http://www.cnn.com/2011/CRIME/08/17/mississippi.hate.crime/index.html?hpt=ju>

Feds join probe of alleged Mississippi hate killing

By Drew Griffin and Scott Bronstein, CNN Special Investigations

August 17, 2011 5:13 p.m. EDT

Jackson, Mississippi (CNN) -- A hit-and-run killing that took place after a group of white teens allegedly set out to kill a black man simply because of his color is now being investigated by the U.S. Justice Department, federal and Mississippi officials tell CNN.

The killing, which a Jackson, Mississippi, district attorney says is a racially motivated hate crime, sparked national attention after [CNN obtained and aired exclusive surveillance video](#) that shows the attack as it took place.

James Craig Anderson, 49, was first beaten by the group of teens as he stood in a hotel parking lot early on the morning of June 26, according to some of the teens who were interviewed by police.

After the beating, a group of the teens drove a large Ford pickup truck over Anderson, according to witnesses and officials. Anderson died from his injuries later the same day.

Federal investigators are in Jackson at the request of Hinds County District Attorney Robert Shuler Smith, who says he will be seeking indictments against some or all of the white teens in coming weeks.

"This was a racially motivated murder, committed because the victim was black. We want to prosecute and bring justice in this case to the fullest extent of the law," said Smith, explaining that he called Justice Department officials and asked for more investigators to come to Mississippi to help interview witnesses and pursue leads in the crime.

Under federal law, authorities can pursue further charges and punishment if it is determined that a crime was racially motivated. Officials from the U.S. Department of Justice confirmed to CNN that "the department has an ongoing investigation."

[Opinion: Hate crimes are a national problem](#)

The group of teens that night was led by 18-year-old Deryl Dedmon Jr., of Brandon, Mississippi, according to police and officials in the DA's office.

Dedmon, who was arrested and charged with murder, is being held in Jackson. He could face two life sentences in connection with the killing.

Another teen, John Aaron Rice, was also charged with murder at first, until a judge reduced his charges because Rice was not believed to be driving the vehicle used to kill Anderson.

Smith and officials in the Hinds County District Attorney's office say they plan to indict both Dedmon and Rice for murder and a hate crime.

Attorneys for Dedmon and Rice did not return CNN's calls.

During a bond hearing, Dedmon's attorney told the court he saw nothing to back up the "racial allegations."

Neither teen has pleaded yet, and none of the other teens has been charged.

But Hinds and officials from the DA's office say they hope to bring indictments against not only Dedmon and Rice, but also other teens who were in their cars and part of the attack that early morning.

[DA: Video shows white teens driving over, killing black man](#)

<http://www.cnn.com/2011/CRIME/08/17/mississippi.hate.crime/index.html?hpt=ju>

Dedmon led and instigated the attack, according to officials; he took part in and led the beating of Anderson, and Dedmon was also the driver of the Ford 250 truck that served as the murder weapon, according to officials.

Before the murder, as the teens were partying and drinking miles away from Jackson that night, in largely white Rankin County, Dedmon told friends they should leave, saying, "Let's go fuck with some niggers," according to law enforcement officials.

Then the gang of teens climbed into Dedmon's green truck and a white SUV Cherokee and drove 16 miles down Interstate 20 to the western edge of Jackson, a predominantly black area.

The teens would have seen Anderson immediately as they exited the highway, because the parking lot where he was standing is just beside the exit ramp.

"This is the first business that you get to coming off the highway and so that was the first person that was out here and vulnerable," said Smith.

On the videotape, obtained and reviewed by CNN, a truck is seen pulling into the parking lot and stopping where Anderson is standing, though he is just off camera and not visible.

Teens can then be seen going back and forth between their cars and Anderson.

[Watch the video \(contains graphic images; discretion advised\)](#) 

Witnesses told law enforcement officials this is when the repeated beatings of Anderson took place. Dedmon pummeled Anderson repeatedly as he crumpled to the street, according to officials, though this is not visible in the videotape.

After the beating, some of the teens left and some got into the truck.

At this moment on the video, Anderson becomes visible, as he staggers into view and walks toward the headlights of the truck. The truck suddenly surges ahead, running over Anderson, then continues at high speed away from the scene.

Shortly after he allegedly drove the truck over Anderson, Dedmon allegedly boasted and laughed about the killing, according to the testimony of police detectives who interviewed the teens.

"I ran that nigger over," Dedmon allegedly said in a phone conversation to the teens in the other car. He repeated the racial language in subsequent conversations, according to the law enforcement officials.

"He was not remorseful. He was laughing, laughing about the killing," said district attorney Smith.

http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2011-08-17-race-equality-poll-mlk_n.htm

Poll: MLK's dream realized, but a gulf between races remains

By Susan Page and Carly Mallenbaum

USA TODAY, August 18, 2011

WASHINGTON — On this, blacks and whites overwhelmingly agree: Martin Luther King Jr. changed America, and for the better.



Richard P. Loving and his wife, Mildred, were convicted under Virginia law that banned mixed marriages. They eventually won a U.S. Supreme Court decision in June 1967 that overturned laws prohibiting interracial unions. In 1968, Gallup found that only 17% of whites approved of interracial marriage; 56% of blacks approved. Now, 83% of whites and 96% of blacks approve of interracial marriage. 1965 AP photo

Richard P. Loving and his wife, Mildred, were convicted under Virginia law that banned mixed marriages. They eventually won a U.S. Supreme Court decision in June 1967 that overturned laws prohibiting interracial unions. In 1968, Gallup found that only 17% of whites approved of interracial marriage; 56% of blacks approved. Now, 83% of whites and 96% of blacks approve of interracial marriage.

"When I went to work in the government in 1958, they didn't have black and white signs on the toilets, but they had one toilet that was unlocked and the other toilet you had to have the key for. The only ones who had the key were the white supervisors," recalls Carl Allen, 70, of Washington, D.C., who is black. He worked as a landscape gardener for the city's highway department. "There weren't black supervisors."

Over time, "all of it changed," says Allen, who was among those called for the survey. "Before I retired, we had full representation, black supervisors. We had everything we should have had years before."

Benjamin Cardenas, 42, of Santa Clara, Calif., a distribution manager for a pharmaceutical company, says interracial couples are now the norm in his community. With California's diversity, he says, "people have a tendency to look beyond the race of the person and look at the person."

A USA TODAY/Gallup Poll of more than 1,300 people nationwide finds that about nine of 10, black and white, say civil rights for African Americans have improved in their lifetimes.

Yet as the capital prepares to dedicate a mammoth statue honoring the civil rights leader — erected in the midst of monuments to Abraham Lincoln and Thomas Jefferson— there is less consensus across races about just how much the civil rights movement achieved, what remains to be done and what role the government should take now. On some issues, friction and a racial divide are apparent.

Among the poll's findings:

- When it comes to getting a job, whites see a level playing field; blacks say discrimination persists.

In 1963, 41% of whites said blacks had as good a chance as whites in their community to get any kind of job for which they were qualified; now that percentage has almost doubled to 78% of whites. Then, 23% of blacks said they had an equal chance at a job. That has risen, but only to 39%; a 59% majority say bias in employment is still a problem.

- On the role of government, six of 10 blacks say government should play a major part in improving the social and economic position of racial minorities in this country, a view held by only one in five whites.

http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2011-08-17-race-equality-poll-mlk_n.htm

Three in 10 whites say the government should have no role at all in addressing those issues. A 52% majority of blacks say new civil rights laws to reduce discrimination are needed; 15% of whites agree.

"All the segregation is gone," says Cody Czajka, 21, an Air Force medic from Moyock, N.C., who is white. In the military, he says, race "is not allowed to matter. We have a zero-tolerance policy." That's not how the nation looks to George Evans, 56, a house painter from Sanford, Fla., who is black. "Racism to a certain degree is still there, especially in the court systems," he says. "Some of it is more subtle than it used to be. Some of it is flat-out aggressive."

- Acceptance of marriage between blacks and whites is one area of dramatic change.

In 1968, Gallup found that only 17% of whites approved of interracial marriage; 56% of blacks approved. A year earlier, the Supreme Court ruled unconstitutional a Virginia statute banning interracial marriage — once the law in 38 states. Now, 83% of whites and 96% of blacks approve of interracial marriage.

- Whereas fewer than half of Americans said in a 1963 Gallup Poll they would vote for a well-qualified person for president who was black, 95% of whites and 97% of blacks now say they would. Barack Obama's groundbreaking election in 2008 would seem to be proof of that shift.

- On the question of whether relations between blacks and whites will always be a problem, there has been virtually no change at all among whites since 1963: 44% of whites said then that relations between blacks and whites would "always be a problem in the United States." In the new poll, almost precisely the same number, 45%, of whites hold that view.

In 1963, seven in 10 blacks predicted relations between blacks and whites "will eventually be worked out"; 26% said they would always be a problem. Now, 55% of blacks see it is as a conflict that won't end. On some matters of race, there is a prickly difference in perceptions .

Jarrad Quadir, 21, a student at Loyola University in Chicago who is white, sees a sort of hypersensitivity among his friends and acquaintances. "You're afraid to be characterized as a racist, afraid you can do the littlest thing that can be misconstrued," he says. "You're always watching yourself." 'It's about him'

On the other hand, Willie Belle Richard, 70, of Baton Rouge, La., who is black, says she believes criticism of Obama has been intensified because he's the nation's first African-American president. "It's not about his politics, it's about him," she says.

The day after Obama's election in 2008, 70% of Americans predicted his presidency would make race relations in the United States better. Now, half that number, 35%, say his presidency has in fact made things better; 41% say they haven't changed.

King's statue will be dedicated on the 48th anniversary of his iconic "I Have a Dream" speech.

Has that dream been achieved? Just over half of Americans say it has, including 49% of whites and 54% of blacks.

"He did a lot to change the way things are done in America," says Amanda Jenkins, 27, a customer-service representative from Oak Ridge, Tenn., who is white. Blacks, whites, Asians and Hispanics live on her street, she says. "Everybody intermingles. We have a lot of public areas, and everyone hangs out." Still, she says, old divisions sometimes spark. A shooting in the next block a few days earlier of a white man by a black man left residents "mad, upset, scared," she says.

Quadir says King's view of America today surely would be mixed. "I don't think it's been realized," he says of King's dream, but "I don't think he'd be unhappy, either."

Rush Limbaugh Goes Full-Tilt Racial Slur with "Or-Bam-eo" Cookies

If Limbaugh's Latest Racially Edgy Remarks Weren't Racist, What Were They?

Saul Relative

Yahoo! Contributor Network, Aug 17, 2011

COMMENTARY | Most who listen to Rush Limbaugh don't think too much about what he is saying. That's why they -- as a collective -- earned the nickname "dittoheads" back in the day when Limbaugh lorded it over both a radio and television empire. But those who do still think while the man drones on (and on) about how liberals and Democrats are driving America down the highway to hell in a truck loaded with handbaskets must have cringed inwardly when Limbaugh started talking about the new line of Triple Double Oreo cookies from Kraft and began insinuating President Obama into the mix. And if most Americans had given Limbaugh the benefit of the doubt over the years concerning the various charges that he might be either a racist or a closeted one, that benefit probably now has been rescinded.

On his radio talk show Wednesday, as [revealed by Media Matters](#), Limbaugh cited a *Chicago Tribune* article concerning the new Triple Double Oreo cookie, a cookie that has three wafers and both chocolate and vanilla creme filling to separate them.

"Well, it -- what it's going to be here, it's actually a biracial cookie," Limbaugh said as he described the new product.

"The Triple Double Oreo," he continued. "You wait, it isn't going to be long before it's called the Or-Bam-eo, or something like this. Well, it's a biracial cookie, here. And this story is from the *Chicago Tribune*, and it's all about Kraft's juicing up its investment in the Oreo in recent years. Legitimate businesses."

Limbaugh went on to talk about how one could get Oreos in ice cream and being able to get Rolos candy in [McDonald's](#) shakes. But Limbaugh can't resist just one more swipe at Obama, tying the entire idea into some pretzel logic attack against the president and the First Lady.

"In the midst of all this talk of obesity. And, I mean, every time [Michelle Obama](#) goes out there and talks about healthful eating, the food industry responds with, 'Oh, yeah? Take this.' And Kraft comes up with the Or-Bam-eo, the triple double-dipper."

Those who think nothing of such remarks should know -- and most already do know -- that an Oreo is not only a cookie made by Kraft Foods. It is also a denigrating slang term used to pejoratively describe a black person who acts as if they are actually white (black on the outside, as the slur is defined colloquially, white on the inside), a pretender, an impostor, a fraud. It is used to describe others who appear to be something they are not. Sociologically, it is the social backlash in verbal form against the assimilation of an individual into another social structure or culture.

It is also common knowledge that President Obama's lineage includes his white Kansas-born mother as well as his black Kenya-born father.

http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/8320733/rush_limbaugh_goes_fulltilt_racial.html?cat=9
To say that Rush Limbaugh was not aware of the double-meaning is to stretch the bounds of credibility. And it would not be true. In a diatribe against comments about race made by [Philadelphia Eagles](#) quarterback Donovan McNabb, Limbaugh mentioned an incident where then lieutenant governor Michael Steele of Maryland allegedly had had Oreos thrown at him during speeches. His reference to a new Oreo cookie with both chocolate and vanilla creme stuffing being called an "Or-bam-eo" is simply an extension of the street pejorative. It is nothing short of a racial (more specifically, a bi-racial) slur.

He also passed the story off as something presented by the *Chicago Tribune*. It was not. [The Tribune](#) story highlighted the introduction of the Triple Double Oreo, which is what it is called. It is Americanized version of the cookie concoction created in Argentina called the "Oreo x3," or "Por Tres." There is no suggestion in the article that "Or-bam-eo" would be used. Not by those interviewed. Not by the staff writers who wrote the article.

And then there is the outright insinuation that somehow Michele Obama is responsible for the creation of something like the Triple Double, that her speeches about maintaining good health and healthy eating somehow goads the food industry into producing foodstuffs that contribute even more to the obesity of America.

Simply put: In his constant crusade against any and all things Obama, Limbaugh decided to do what he has done here and there throughout his career -- dabble in a little racial stereotyping, race-baiting, and/or outright effrontery.

Back in 2003, while a commentator on ESPN, [he made the comment](#) that part of the Philadelphia Eagles' quarterback problem was [Donovan McNabb](#) being quarterback, which was the result, he said of "social concerns" in the NFL, "...the media being desirous that a black quarterback do well." He later resigned over the remark.

On his radio program in 2007, he complained about the showboating and excessive celebrating going on in the NFL, [then said](#), "Look, let me put it to you this way: The [NFL](#) all too often looks like a game between the Bloods and the Crips without any weapons. There, I said it."

He also once advocated dismantling the National Basketball Association. After the headline-making brawl in 2004 between the Indiana Pacers and the Detroit Pistons, he said, "You just gotta be who you are, and I think it's time to get rid of this whole National Basketball Association. Call it [the TBA, the Thug Basketball Association](#), and stop calling them teams. Call 'em gangs. You have the Laker Gang, you have the Heat Gang, you have a Timberwolf Gang [distortions of official team names], and let 'em strap up out there, and let 'em market their CDs. Instead of selling concessions, sell CDs out there at the concession stand." Limbaugh later added, "They're going in to watch the Crips and the Bloods out there wherever the neighborhood is where the arena happens to be, and be who you are."

In fact, it was his apparent racially-tinged comments and [statements over the years that ultimately led to his failed bid](#) to become a partial owner in an NFL team.

Is Rush Limbaugh a racist or closet racist? Although he may not be what many consider a full-on racist, and the argument can be made both pro and con on the matter, it certainly appears as if the closet door is often left ajar.

<http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Politics/2011/0803/What-were-two-Republicans-thinking-calling-Obama-tar-baby-and-boy>

What were two Republicans thinking, calling Obama 'tar baby' and 'boy'?

Republican Rep. Doug Lamborn of Colorado and commentator Pat Buchanan, a former candidate for president, both apologized Wednesday for using racially charged terms to refer to Obama.

**By Patrik Jonsson, Staff writer
Christian Science, 3 August 2011**

Atlanta; The specter of two national Republican figures apologizing for calling President Obama, the first African-American president, alternately a "tar baby" and "boy" gave new fuel to speculation on the left that underneath much of the criticism of the president and his policies lurks the shadow of racism.



*Rep. Doug Lamborn (R) of Colorado, recently used a racially charged phrase on a Denver radio talk show.
Newscom/File*

Last week, Rep. Doug Lamborn (R) of Colorado, on a Denver talk radio show, said, "Even if some people say, 'Well, the Republicans should have done this or they should have done that,' they will hold the president responsible. Now, I don't even want to have to be associated with him. It's like touching a tar baby and you get it, you're stuck, and you're a part of the problem now and you can't get away."

The term tar baby comes from the 19th-century Uncle Remus stories, where B'rer Fox uses a doll made of a lump of tar to trap B'rer Rabbit, who gets more stuck the more he pummels and kicks the tar baby. In more recent parlance, tar baby is widely considered racial slur.

IN PICTURES: Race in America

Other Republicans, including Sen. John McCain of Arizona and former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney, have in recent years apologized for using the phrase "tar baby," although in reference to various government policies and projects, not a black man.

And then Tuesday night, former GOP presidential candidate and MSNBC contributor Pat Buchanan, in a tête-à-tête with the Rev. Al Sharpton, referred to Mr. Obama as "your boy." "My what?" the Rev. Mr. Sharpton shot back. "My president, Barack Obama? What did you say?"

Mr. Buchanan hinted that he was using a boxing analogy, replying that the president was "your boy in the ring."

Representative Lamborn, who apologized to Obama in a letter, said in a separate statement Wednesday that he shouldn't have used a term "that some find insensitive" and that he meant to criticize presidential policies that have "created an economic quagmire for the nation, and [which] are responsible for the dismal economic conditions our country faces."

"Some folks took what I said as some kind of a slur," Mr. Buchanan said on Wednesday. "None was meant, none was intended, none was delivered."

<http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Politics/2011/0803/What-were-two-Republicans-thinking-calling-Obama-tar-baby-and-boy>

Nevertheless, to some critics, the gaffes are illuminating bits of evidence to underscore what many believe is an essentially racist view of Obama by some in America's conservative circles.

Given that language is the primary purveyor of people's deepest thoughts, as well as the fact that language use is often unconscious, "even a slip of the tongue can reflect the kind of prevalence of racism that still exists within our culture," says Shawn Parry-Giles, director of the Center for Political Communication and Civic Leadership at the University of Maryland in College Park. "Progressives would say it's part of a larger conspiracy to target voters to use Obama's race as a means to help defeat him."

For especially conservative critics of the president, on the other hand, the gaffes hint how the shifting sands of language and perception have become intensified in the not-quite-post-racial Obama era, when some attempts to criticize the president have far overshot the lines of political correctness.

Progressives and tea party members, moreover, continue to be embroiled in a war of words and images in which liberals charge tea partyers with latent racism for some depictions of Obama, and tea party folks say their critics use derogatory terms tied to social class.

"You talk about intent and reception in politics, where intent does matter, but reception is everything," says Professor Parry-Giles. "In an ideal world, when these situations happen, they can be a source of productive discussion about how language can harm and hurt, and that what may have been appropriate 20 years ago or part of the vernacular is no longer there. Oftentimes, though, it just ends up being a partisan moment on either side."

Religion

<http://ebird.osd.mil/ebfiles/e20110815836304.html> or

http://www.boston.com/news/local/massachusetts/articles/2011/08/15/clergy_play_key_role_in_veterans_mental_health/

Clergy play key role in veterans' care

Spiritual advisers called crucial 'first responders' on mental health issues

By Ben Wolford

Boston Globe, August 15, 2011

Pastor Elizabeth M. Krentz-Wee says that as many as 10 of the 50 worshippers who attend Sunday services at St. Mark Lutheran Church in Norwich, Conn., are veterans.

But like many clergy, Krentz-Wee acknowledges that she has had little experience dealing with mental health problems that plague many of those who have served in Afghanistan, Iraq, and other conflicts.

Now, the military and psychiatrists are engaging spiritual leaders in the region, like Krentz-Wee, saying they are pivotal as first responders in helping soldiers and their families cope with issues like post-traumatic stress.

Though soldiers might refrain from seeing a military psychiatrist because of a stigma that seeking help suggests weakness, they may be comfortable approaching a clergy member, experts said. And reaching veterans sooner rather than later is imperative to recovery as they make the jarring transition from violent battle zones to quiet New England life.

“What [clergy] can do that we can’t is actually take the first and most important major step and see the person,” said Dr. John A. Fromson, associate director of postgraduate medical education at Massachusetts General Hospital.

Fromson led a recent conference in Boston, attended by some 100 religious leaders, doctors, and military chaplains, on how to help soldiers suffering from mental distress. The conference was sponsored by Home Base, an organization that serves the region’s soldiers and their families.

“In talking with vets, I find that the last person in the world they want to talk to is someone like myself,” Fromson said.

The effects of post-traumatic stress disorder, such as flashbacks, emotional numbness, and isolation, can worsen if veterans delay seeking help, said Fromson, adding that such problems are normal responses to the “very abnormal circumstances” of war.

“You can be in the battle theater on a Friday and find yourself in your living room with your family on a Sunday,” he said.

Of the approximately 40,000 service members in New England who have served in Iraq or Afghanistan, an estimated 12,000 of them are affected by post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, or chronic pain, Home Base reports.

The Massachusetts National Guard has been trying to help clergy understand military issues through workshops around the state, said Guard Chaplain Paul Minor, who spoke at the Home Base conference. He said the military has long recognized spirituality as a component of resiliency.

Last month, Minor was on hand as soldiers just back from Afghanistan waited at National Guard headquarters in Milford for what the military calls “processing” - a series of paperwork and postcombat evaluations. Minor said he observed them from the edge of the room.

<http://ebird.osd.mil/ebfiles/e20110815836304.html> or

http://www.boston.com/news/local/massachusetts/articles/2011/08/15/clergy_play_key_role_in_veterans_mental_health/

“They just look regular,” he said later, describing the scene. “But something’s got to be going on in their heads.”

Minor said church leaders can provide the spiritual guidance and community support that medical professionals cannot - something Kimberly Potts, 48, the mother of two service members, can attest to.

“My experience was that if I didn’t have my faith community and I didn’t have my faith in God, I wouldn’t have made it through three deployments,” she said.

Potts sat on a panel at the Boston conference and talked of how her community at St. James Episcopal Church in Amesbury assisted her when her sons deployed to Kosovo, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

The 134 clergy members representing two dozen denominations grappled with questions about their role: Should they avoid judgment, given their generally pacifist beliefs? Is faith a useful crutch after a traumatic event, or should it be a constant presence in soldiers’ lives?

One answer, clergy members said they have found, is to focus on their role as impartial listeners, concentrating on soldiers’ anguish and not on diagnoses.

“It’s a privilege to hear their stories,” said Kathryn Zubin, a certified clinical chaplain from New York who attended the seminar. She said she found a calling in religious treatment for victims of trauma after Sept. 11, 2001, and later worked for a year at the 23d Street Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Manhattan.

Fromson said he received positive feedback from clergy who said they better understand the worlds of military and medicine.

“Mental health and chaplaincy, we need to know each other’s language,” Zubin said. “I think the dialogue is not there. This is an attempt.”

Krentz-Wee, a pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, said the conference gave her a new awareness of the circumstances of service members and particularly their families. She said she now understands that church leaders are first responders.

“We’re just not used to thinking of that term,” she said. “But we hear from people who are suicidal. I’ve been the first to hear from people who were getting divorced. And this is just in civilian culture. Both of those are classic examples of something that a vet or a family could be dealing with.”

Does Secularism Make People More Ethical?

By Hilmar Schmundt
Spiegel, 11 August 2011

Barry Kosmin is a different kind of market researcher. His data focuses on consumers targeted by companies like Lifechurch.tv or World Overcomers Christian Church TM. The sociologist analyzes church-affiliated commercial entities, from souvenir shops to television channels and worship services.



Boston University Psychologist Catherine Caldwell-Harris has studied the difference between religious and secular minds.

But the most significant target of Kosmin's research is the consumer group most likely to shy away from such commercial products: secularists. "The non-religious, or Nones, hold the fastest-growing world view in the market," says Kosmin. "In the past 20 years, their numbers in the United States have doubled to 15 percent."

The director of the Institute for the Study of Secularism in Society and Culture at Trinity College in the US state of Connecticut, Kosmin is among the few researchers focused on the study of non-believers. This umbrella covers various groups including atheists, agnostics and humanists, as well as those who are simply indifferent to religion.

Secularists make up some 15 percent of the global population, or about 1 billion people. As a group, this puts them third in size behind Christians (2.3 billion) and Muslims (1.6 billion). Despite their large numbers, little is known about this group of people. Who are they? And if not religion, what do they believe in?

"Sometimes I feel like Christopher Columbus on an expedition to an unknown continent," says Kosmin. "For example, many believe that the US population is steadily becoming more religious -- but this is an optical illusion. Many evangelicals have simply become more aggressive and more political."

US Churches Losing Millions of Members

This heightened public profile may be contributing to the shrinking numbers of religious believers. Churches in the US are losing up to 1 million members every year. In Europe, secularization has advanced even further. The number of non-religious people, those who do not believe in God or any higher power, has reached approximately 40 percent in France and about 27 percent in Germany.

Until now, researchers examining religious populations have mostly come from faith-based backgrounds. The Vatican was a pioneer when it established the Secretariat for Non-Believers in order to "detect in the atheistic mind the hidden causes for the denial of God" in 1965.

But the numbers of secularists are growing. By now, non-believers have even infiltrated the churches: In a survey conducted by the Protestant Church in Germany, 3 percent of Protestants admitted that they did not believe in God. Church leaders may seek comfort in the idea that skepticism towards God is limited to Western Christian thought. China, South Korea and Japan, however, are commonly counted as being amongst the most secular countries.

Now secular researchers like Kosmin want to determine just how the religious and secularist minds differ -- and their initial findings are a surprise. While secularism was typically limited to the realm of educated, affluent and male-dominated urban societies, atheism is now spreading across much broader spectrums of society.

<http://www.spiegel.de/international/spiegel/0,1518,777281,00.html>

Opposition to the Death Penalty, War and Discrimination

So what do these increasing numbers of non-believers believe in, if not God? Sociologist Phil Zuckerman, who hopes to start a secular studies major at California's Pitzer College, says that secularists tend to be more ethical than religious people. On average, they are more commonly opposed to the death penalty, war and discrimination. And they also have fewer objections to foreigners, homosexuals, oral sex and hashish.

The most surprising insight revealed by the new wave of secular research so far is that atheists know more about the God they don't believe in than the believers themselves. This is the conclusion suggested by a 2010 Pew Research Center survey of US citizens. Even when the higher education levels of the unreligious were factored out, they proved to be better informed in matters of faith, followed by Jewish and Mormon believers.

But their knowledge doesn't seem to do them much good, since secularists rank among the least-liked groups of people in the US, falling behind even Muslims and homosexuals. In the states of South Carolina and Arkansas, those who deny the existence of a supreme being are not even permitted to hold public office.

The secularists' problem is that, unlike the religious believers, they do not have a strong organization backing them. There is no such thing as a "typical" non-believer and every society has its own version of secularism.

Germany Serves as Case Study

Germany serves as a sort of historical case study for sociologists, thanks to the distinct differences in religious tendencies between the formerly divided east and west. In the former East Germany, or German Democratic Republic (GDR), where atheism long ago shed its association with the educated classes and became a common value, it has evolved over three generations.

Nearly 67 percent of eastern Germans have no religious affiliation, compared to just 18 percent in the West. This trend isn't likely to change in the foreseeable future, since children who grew up with non-religious parents are almost certain to remain secular. The mother's beliefs have an especially significant impact on the children's belief systems.

When the GDR ended its period of religious repression, no process of re-Christianization occurred. "After the fall of the Berlin Wall, the withdrawal of a church presence in the east actually sped up," says Detlef Pollack, a professor in the sociology of religion at the University of Münster.

Ironically, the link between church and state contributed to secularization in the East, he says. Publicly funded theological professorships, military chaplaincies, and the presence of church representatives on broadcasting councils were common. As a result, public perception came to closely link authority with religion, which was seen as coming from the West.

Germany's case also counters the assumption that economic instability encourages people to embrace religion. In fact, the opposite seems to be true. The oil crisis of the 1970s, the difficult period of reunification and the recent financial crisis were all accompanied by waves of exodus from the church. Many former Christians name Germany's church tax -- an automatic levy of 8 to 9 percent of a person's total income tax that is managed by local government tax offices and applied to all members of the Catholic and Protestant churches -- as a reason for leaving.

According to Pollack's estimates, eastern Germany may well be a trendsetter, but at some point, he predicts, at least 70 percent of people in the West will also live a secular life. Religion, though, will never disappear entirely, he says. "When supporters of the church fall into a minority, a so-called 'diaspora effect' often ensues, and the sense of unity between the scattered communities increases," he says.

<http://www.spiegel.de/international/spiegel/0,1518,777281,00.html>

Two Different Thinking Styles

Boston University's Catherine Caldwell-Harris is researching the differences between the secular and religious minds. "Humans have two cognitive styles," the psychologist says. "One type finds deeper meaning in everything; even bad weather can be framed as fate. The other type is neurologically predisposed to be skeptical, and they don't put much weight in beliefs and agency detection."

Caldwell-Harris is currently testing her hypothesis through simple experiments. Test subjects watch a film in which triangles move about. One group experiences the film as a humanized drama, in which the larger triangles are attacking the smaller ones. The other group describes the scene mechanically, simply stating the manner in which the geometric shapes are moving. Those who do not anthropomorphize the triangles, she suspects, are unlikely to ascribe much importance to beliefs. "There have always been two cognitive comfort zones," she says, "but skeptics used to keep quiet in order to stay out of trouble."

Only a small portion of secularists are as radical as the "strong atheists" championed by British evolutionary biologist and author Richard Dawkins. The majority are more likely to be indifferent to religion or mildly agnostic, according to Kosmin's analysis. There are also secular humanists, free thinkers and many other factions. "One problem of atheism research is that we simply can't agree on a unified terminology," notes Kosmin. "Every researcher thinks he is Linnaeus and invents his own labels."

Then he tells of a meeting of secular groups last year in Washington. They were planning a big demonstration. "But they couldn't even agree on a motto," he says. "It was like herding cats, straight out of a Monty Python sketch." In the end, the march was called off.

Translated from the German by Alison Kilian

Sexism

http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/federal-eye/post/eEOC-and-opm-target-federal-gender-wage-gap/2011/08/16/gIQAETcrJJ_blog.html#pagebreak

EEOC and OPM target federal gender wage gap

By Steve Vogel

Washington Post, August 17, 2011

A letter being sent to all civilian federal employees by the U.S Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the Office of Personnel Management is vowing “the most rigorous possible enforcement” of equal pay laws for federal employees.

The [joint memorandum from OPM director John Berry and EEOC Chair Jacqueline Berrien](#) notes that women in the federal government are still paid less for the same work than their male counterparts. While the gender wage gap for federal employees declined from 28 cents on the dollar in 1987 to 11 cents in 2007, “clearly much work remains to be done in order to close the wage gap,” the letter states.

Berrien released the letter Tuesday at the commission’s [Examining Conflicts in Employment Law conference](#) in Baltimore, a training event for federal sector equal employment that continues through Thursday.

“We cannot achieve our national commitment to equal employment opportunity until women are included as equal partners in every workplace, including the federal government,” Berrien said in a statement. “The federal government should be a model employer in every regard—including equal pay.”

The [National Equal Pay Enforcement Task Force](#) established by President Obama recommended last year that OPM and EEOC develop a strategy to improve the federal government’s performance.

The memorandum said the two agencies are working with the Government Accountability Office to identify the reasons for the remaining federal wage gap and find ways to close it.

Sexual Assault / Harassment

<http://www.military.com/news/article/ex-cruiser-xo-punished-on-assault-harassment-charges.html>

Ex-Cruiser XO Punished on Assault, Harassment Charges

by Jeff Brumley

Jacksonville Times-Union, August 17, 2011

A former executive officer aboard the USS Gettysburg has received non-judicial punishment on charges of conduct unbecoming an officer, sexual harassment and assault, the Navy said.

Legal proceedings were initiated against Cmdr. Joseph Baxter following an investigation into claims Baxter harassed a subordinate Sailor aboard the guided-missile cruiser at Mayport Naval Station, where it is based, and at sea. The incidents took place April through July of 2010 and in September of that year.

Baxter, who was removed from the ship in September 2010, waived his right to a board of inquiry as part of a pre-trial agreement.

Non-judicial punishment means the chain of command handles the case and administers punishment instead of the accused facing a court-martial.

Rear Adm. Dave Thomas docked Baxter a half month's pay for two months and issued a punitive letter of reprimand that will be placed in Baxter's personnel file, said Lt. Cmdr. Bill Urban, a Navy spokesman in Norfolk, Va. Baxter also could be required to retire, a decision that is up to Navy Secretary Ray Mabus.