

DEOMI News Highlights

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Historic Marine base gets 1st-ever female general [Susanne M. Schafer, *Associated Press/NPR.org*, 21 June 2011]

- For the first time in its 96-year history, a female general is taking charge at Marine Corps training depot at South Carolina's Parris Island
- Parris Island graduates about 20,000 Marines annually, and is the only site where female enlisted Marines are trained to enter the Corps
- Brig. Gen. Loretta Reynolds is also known as the first female Marine to ever hold a command position in a battle zone

[Historic Marine base gets 1st-ever female general](#)

Out of uniform means out of work for many new vets [Gregg Zorogy, *USA Today*, 17 June 2011]

- Unemployment payments to servicemembers have doubled since 2008
- Unemployment compensation for former servicemembers continues a steady rise:
 - FY 2008 - \$451.4 million in benefits
 - FY 2009 - \$624.8 million in benefits
 - FY 2010 - \$881.7 million in benefits
- Veterans are having a particularly tough time finding jobs: estimated jobless rate among male veterans ages 18-24 was more than 30% in May, compared to 18% among male civilians of the same age

[Out of uniform means out of work for many new vets](#)

Navy has spike in commanding-officer firings [Craig Whitlock, *Washington Post*, 18 June 2011]

- The Navy has fired a dozen commanding officers this year, a near-record rate, with the bulk getting the ax for offenses related to sex, alcohol, or other forms of personal misconduct
- Over the past 18 months, the Navy has sacked nine commanding officers for sexual harassment or inappropriate personal relationships; three others were fired for alcohol related offenses; and two on unspecified charges of personal misconduct
- The Navy is not the only military service dogged by poor performance in its upper ranks; the Army has relieved or disciplined three brigade commanders this year who were en route to – or returning from – war zones

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Diversity

Census shows whites lose US majority among babies

By Hope Yen

Associated Press/Miami Herald, 23 June 2011

WASHINGTON (AP) -- For the first time, minorities make up a majority of babies in the U.S., part of a sweeping race change and growing age divide between mostly white, older Americans and predominantly minority youths that could reshape government policies.

Preliminary census estimates also show the share of African-American households headed by women - made up of mostly single mothers - now exceeds African-American households with married couples, a sign of declining U.S. marriages overall but also continuing challenges for black youths without involved fathers.

The findings, based on the latest government data, offer a preview of final 2010 census results being released this summer that provide detailed breakdowns by age, race and householder relationships such as same-sex couples.

Demographers say the numbers provide the clearest confirmation yet of a changing social order, one in which racial and ethnic minorities will become the U.S. majority by midcentury.

"We're moving toward an acknowledgment that we're living in a different world than the 1950s, where married or two-parent heterosexual couples are now no longer the norm for a lot of kids, especially kids of color," said Laura Speer, coordinator of the Kids Count project for the Baltimore-based Annie E. Casey Foundation.

"It's clear the younger generation is very demographically different from the elderly, something to keep in mind as politics plays out on how programs for the elderly get supported," she said. "It's critical that children are able to grow to compete internationally and keep state economies rolling."

Currently, non-Hispanic whites make up just under half of all children 3 years old, which is the youngest age group shown in the Census Bureau's October 2009 annual survey, its most recent. In 1990, more than 60 percent of children in that age group were white.

William H. Frey, a demographer at the Brookings Institution who analyzed the data, said figures in the 2009 survey can sometimes be inexact compared with the 2010 census, which queries the entire nation. But he said when factoring in the 2010 data released so far, minorities outnumber whites among babies under age 2.

The preliminary figures are based on an analysis of the Current Population Survey as well as the 2009 American Community Survey, which sampled 3 million U.S. households to determine that whites made up 51 percent of babies younger than 2. After taking into account a larger-than-expected jump in the minority child population in the 2010 census, the share of white babies falls below 50 percent.

Twelve states and the District of Columbia now have white populations below 50 percent among children under age 5 - Hawaii, California, New Mexico, Texas, Arizona, Nevada, Florida, Maryland, Georgia, New Jersey, New York and Mississippi. That's up from six states and the District of Columbia in 2000.

At current growth rates, seven more states could flip to "minority-majority" status among small children in the next decade: Illinois, North Carolina, Virginia, Colorado, Connecticut, South Carolina and Delaware.

By contrast, whites make up the vast majority of older Americans - 80 percent of seniors 65 and older and roughly 73 percent of people ages 45-64. Many states with high percentages of white seniors also have particularly large shares of minority children, including Arizona, Nevada, California, Texas and Florida.

"The recent emergence of this cultural generation gap in states with fast growth of young Hispanics has spurred heated discussions of immigration and the use of government services," Frey said. "But the new census, which will show a minority majority of our youngest Americans, makes plain that our future labor force is absolutely dependent on our ability to integrate and educate a new diverse child population."

Kenneth Johnson, a sociology professor and senior demographer at the University of New Hampshire, noted that much of the race change is being driven by increases in younger Hispanic women having more children than do white women, who have lower birth rates and as a group are moving beyond their prime childbearing years.

Because minority births are driving the rapid changes in the population, "any institution that touches or is impacted by children will be the first to feel the impact," Johnson said, citing as an example child and maternal health care that will have to be attentive to minorities' needs.

The numbers come amid public debate over hotly contested federal and state issues, from immigration and gay marriage to the rising cost of government benefits such as Medicare and Medicaid, that are resonating in different ways by region and demographics.

Alabama became the latest state this month to pass a wide-ranging anti-immigration law, which in part requires schools to report students' immigration status to state authorities. That follows tough immigration measures passed in similarly Republican-leaning states such as Georgia, Arizona and South Carolina.

But governors in Massachusetts, New York and Illinois, which long have been home to numerous immigrants, have opted out of the federal Secure Communities program that aims to deport dangerous criminals, saying it has made illegal immigrants afraid of reporting crimes to police. California may soon opt out as well.

States also are divided by region over old-age benefits and gay marriage, which is legal in five states and the District of Columbia.

Among African-Americans, U.S. households headed by women - mostly single mothers but also adult women living with siblings or elderly parents - represented roughly 30 percent of all African-American households, compared with the 28 percent share of married-couple African-American households. It was the first time the number of female-headed households surpassed those of married couples among any race group, according to census records reviewed by Frey dating back to 1950.

While the number of black single mothers has been gradually declining, overall marriages among blacks are decreasing faster. That reflects a broader U.S. trend of declining marriage rates as well as increases in non-family households made up of people living alone, or with unmarried partners or other non-relatives.

Female-headed households make up a 19 percent share among Hispanics and 9 percent each for whites and Asians.

Other findings:

-Multigenerational households composed of families with grandparents, parents and children were most common among Hispanics, particularly in California, Maryland, Illinois, Nevada and Texas, all states where they represented nearly 1 in 10 Latino households.

-Roughly 581,000, or a half percent, of U.S. households are composed of same-sex unmarried couples, representing nearly 1 in 10 households with unmarried partners. Unmarried gay couples made up the biggest shares in states in the Northeast and West, led by the District of Columbia, Oregon, Delaware, Massachusetts, Maine and Vermont. The largest numbers were in California and New York, which is now considering a gay marriage law.

-Minorities comprise a majority of renters in 10 states, plus the District of Columbia - Hawaii, Texas, California, Georgia, Maryland, New Mexico, Mississippi, New Jersey, Louisiana and New York.

Tony Perkins, president of the Washington, D.C.-based Family Research Council, a conservative interest group, emphasized the economic impact of the decline of traditional families, noting that single-parent families are often the most dependent on government assistance.

"The decline of the traditional family will have to correct itself if we are to continue as a society," Perkins said, citing a responsibility of individuals and churches. "We don't need another dose of big government, but a new Hippocratic oath of 'do no harm' that doesn't interfere with family formation or seek to redefine family."

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/billie-jean-king/looking-back-looking-forw_b_882828.html

Looking Back, Looking Forward: 40 Years of Title IX

Billie Jean King

Huffington Post, 06/23/11

From courtside at Wimbledon, I'm celebrating two important anniversaries this week: the 50th anniversary of my first championship win at Wimbledon, and the 40th anniversary year of Title IX, legislation that ensures equal access to both men and women in federally-funded educational programs and activities, including sports programs.

Both milestones have special importance to me. When Karen Hantze and I won the Ladies' Doubles at Wimbledon in 1961, there were not nearly as many opportunities for girls and women in sports as there are today. The passage of Title IX legislation in 1972 opened important doors, but I knew it would take long-term and continued efforts and dedication to ensure those doors remained open. I founded the Women's Sports Foundation in 1974 with the goal of keeping the promise of Title IX alive.

There has been important progress. For example, high school varsity sports participation has increased from one in 27 in 1972 to about two in five girls today, and women's collegiate participation is up 500%, as a result of Title IX.

But forty years later, the reality is that women still have 1.3 million fewer high school and more than 55,000 fewer college sports participation opportunities than men. Women receive almost \$150 million less in athletic scholarship funds each year and women still have fewer professional sports opportunities.

I know firsthand the life lessons that sports teaches from an early age and I often hear stories from other men and women of all ages about how playing sports and being active has helped them build confidence, self-esteem, leadership skills and long-lasting friendships. You don't build these on the world stage or at the Olympics - they are forged at an early age and in the grind of daily training and discipline. So as I celebrate these anniversaries, I am not interested in looking back as much as I am interested in looking forward. How do we build on the momentum and make sure this generation and the next generation of youth are provided equal opportunities in sports and in life?

It takes more than one voice, and more than one athlete, parent or friend. I encourage you to share what Title IX means to you, and find out more about the importance of keeping Title IX alive for future generations, at Women's Sports Foundation on Facebook or www.WomensSportsFoundation.org . Let's work together to make sure all girls who want to get active and involved in sports have that opportunity.

Human Relations

Remarks by the President on the Way Forward in Afghanistan

Office of the Press Secretary (for immediate release), 22 June 2011

THE PRESIDENT: Good evening. Nearly 10 years ago, America suffered the worst attack on our shores since Pearl Harbor. This mass murder was planned by Osama bin Laden and his al Qaeda network in Afghanistan, and signaled a new threat to our security — one in which the targets were no longer soldiers on a battlefield, but innocent men, women and children going about their daily lives.

In the days that followed, our nation was united as we struck at al Qaeda and routed the Taliban in Afghanistan. Then, our focus shifted. A second war was launched in Iraq, and we spent enormous blood and treasure to support a new government there. By the time I took office, the war in Afghanistan had entered its seventh year. But al Qaeda's leaders had escaped into Pakistan and were plotting new attacks, while the Taliban had regrouped and gone on the offensive. Without a new strategy and decisive action, our military commanders warned that we could face a resurgent al Qaeda and a Taliban taking over large parts of Afghanistan.

For this reason, in one of the most difficult decisions that I've made as President, I ordered an additional 30,000 American troops into Afghanistan. When I announced this surge at West Point, we set clear objectives: to refocus on al Qaeda, to reverse the Taliban's momentum, and train Afghan security forces to defend their own country. I also made it clear that our commitment would not be open-ended, and that we would begin to draw down our forces this July.

Tonight, I can tell you that we are fulfilling that commitment. Thanks to our extraordinary men and women in uniform, our civilian personnel, and our many coalition partners, we are meeting our goals. As a result, starting next month, we will be able to remove 10,000 of our troops from Afghanistan by the end of this year, and we will bring home a total of 33,000 troops by next summer, fully recovering the surge I announced at West Point. After this initial reduction, our troops will continue coming home at a steady pace as Afghan security forces move into the lead. Our mission will change from combat to support. By 2014, this process of transition will be complete, and the Afghan people will be responsible for their own security.

We're starting this drawdown from a position of strength. Al Qaeda is under more pressure than at any time since 9/11. Together with the Pakistanis, we have taken out more than half of al Qaeda's leadership. And thanks to our intelligence professionals and Special Forces, we killed Osama bin Laden, the only leader that al Qaeda had ever known. This was a victory for all who have served since 9/11. One soldier summed it up well. "The message," he said, "is we don't forget. You will be held accountable, no matter how long it takes."

The information that we recovered from bin Laden's compound shows al Qaeda under enormous strain. Bin Laden expressed concern that al Qaeda had been unable to effectively replace senior terrorists that had been killed, and that al Qaeda has failed in its effort to portray America as a nation at war with Islam — thereby draining more widespread support. Al Qaeda remains dangerous, and we must be vigilant against attacks. But we have put al Qaeda on a path to defeat, and we will not relent until the job is done.

In Afghanistan, we've inflicted serious losses on the Taliban and taken a number of its strongholds. Along with our surge, our allies also increased their commitments, which helped stabilize more of the country. Afghan security forces have grown by over 100,000 troops, and in some provinces and municipalities we've already begun to transition responsibility for security to the Afghan people. In the face of violence and intimidation, Afghans are fighting and dying for

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/06/22/remarks-president-way-forward-afghanistan>

their country, establishing local police forces, opening markets and schools, creating new opportunities for women and girls, and trying to turn the page on decades of war.

Of course, huge challenges remain. This is the beginning -- but not the end -- of our effort to wind down this war. We'll have to do the hard work of keeping the gains that we've made, while we draw down our forces and transition responsibility for security to the Afghan government. And next May, in Chicago, we will host a summit with our NATO allies and partners to shape the next phase of this transition.

We do know that peace cannot come to a land that has known so much war without a political settlement. So as we strengthen the Afghan government and security forces, America will join initiatives that reconcile the Afghan people, including the Taliban. Our position on these talks is clear: They must be led by the Afghan government, and those who want to be a part of a peaceful Afghanistan must break from al Qaeda, abandon violence, and abide by the Afghan constitution. But, in part because of our military effort, we have reason to believe that progress can be made.

The goal that we seek is achievable, and can be expressed simply: No safe haven from which al Qaeda or its affiliates can launch attacks against our homeland or our allies. We won't try to make Afghanistan a perfect place. We will not police its streets or patrol its mountains indefinitely. That is the responsibility of the Afghan government, which must step up its ability to protect its people, and move from an economy shaped by war to one that can sustain a lasting peace. What we can do, and will do, is build a partnership with the Afghan people that endures -- one that ensures that we will be able to continue targeting terrorists and supporting a sovereign Afghan government.

Of course, our efforts must also address terrorist safe havens in Pakistan. No country is more endangered by the presence of violent extremists, which is why we will continue to press Pakistan to expand its participation in securing a more peaceful future for this war-torn region. We'll work with the Pakistani government to root out the cancer of violent extremism, and we will insist that it keeps its commitments. For there should be no doubt that so long as I am President, the United States will never tolerate a safe haven for those who aim to kill us. They cannot elude us, nor escape the justice they deserve.

My fellow Americans, this has been a difficult decade for our country. We've learned anew the profound cost of war -- a cost that's been paid by the nearly 4,500 Americans who have given their lives in Iraq, and the over 1,500 who have done so in Afghanistan -- men and women who will not live to enjoy the freedom that they defended. Thousands more have been wounded. Some have lost limbs on the battlefield, and others still battle the demons that have followed them home.

Yet tonight, we take comfort in knowing that the tide of war is receding. Fewer of our sons and daughters are serving in harm's way. We've ended our combat mission in Iraq, with 100,000 American troops already out of that country. And even as there will be dark days ahead in Afghanistan, the light of a secure peace can be seen in the distance. These long wars will come to a responsible end.

As they do, we must learn their lessons. Already this decade of war has caused many to question the nature of America's engagement around the world. Some would have America retreat from our responsibility as an anchor of global security, and embrace an isolation that ignores the very real threats that we face. Others would have America over-extended, confronting every evil that can be found abroad.

We must chart a more centered course. Like generations before, we must embrace America's singular role in the course of human events. But we must be as pragmatic as we are passionate; as strategic as we are resolute. When threatened, we must respond with force -- but when that force

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/06/22/remarks-president-way-forward-afghanistan>

can be targeted, we need not deploy large armies overseas. When innocents are being slaughtered and global security endangered, we don't have to choose between standing idly by or acting on our own. Instead, we must rally international action, which we're doing in Libya, where we do not have a single soldier on the ground, but are supporting allies in protecting the Libyan people and giving them the chance to determine their own destiny.

In all that we do, we must remember that what sets America apart is not solely our power — it is the principles upon which our union was founded. We're a nation that brings our enemies to justice while adhering to the rule of law, and respecting the rights of all our citizens. We protect our own freedom and prosperity by extending it to others. We stand not for empire, but for self-determination. That is why we have a stake in the democratic aspirations that are now washing across the Arab world. We will support those revolutions with fidelity to our ideals, with the power of our example, and with an unwavering belief that all human beings deserve to live with freedom and dignity.

Above all, we are a nation whose strength abroad has been anchored in opportunity for our citizens here at home. Over the last decade, we have spent a trillion dollars on war, at a time of rising debt and hard economic times. Now, we must invest in America's greatest resource — our people. We must unleash innovation that creates new jobs and industries, while living within our means. We must rebuild our infrastructure and find new and clean sources of energy. And most of all, after a decade of passionate debate, we must recapture the common purpose that we shared at the beginning of this time of war. For our nation draws strength from our differences, and when our union is strong no hill is too steep, no horizon is beyond our reach.

America, it is time to focus on nation building here at home.

In this effort, we draw inspiration from our fellow Americans who have sacrificed so much on our behalf. To our troops, our veterans and their families, I speak for all Americans when I say that we will keep our sacred trust with you, and provide you with the care and benefits and opportunity that you deserve.

I met some of these patriotic Americans at Fort Campbell. A while back, I spoke to the 101st Airborne that has fought to turn the tide in Afghanistan, and to the team that took out Osama bin Laden. Standing in front of a model of bin Laden's compound, the Navy SEAL who led that effort paid tribute to those who had been lost — brothers and sisters in arms whose names are now written on bases where our troops stand guard overseas, and on headstones in quiet corners of our country where their memory will never be forgotten. This officer -- like so many others I've met on bases, in Baghdad and Bagram, and at Walter Reed and Bethesda Naval Hospital — spoke with humility about how his unit worked together as one, depending on each other, and trusting one another, as a family might do in a time of peril.

That's a lesson worth remembering — that we are all a part of one American family. Though we have known disagreement and division, we are bound together by the creed that is written into our founding documents, and a conviction that the United States of America is a country that can achieve whatever it sets out to accomplish. Now, let us finish the work at hand. Let us responsibly end these wars, and reclaim the American Dream that is at the center of our story. With confidence in our cause, with faith in our fellow citizens, and with hope in our hearts, let us go about the work of extending the promise of America — for this generation, and the next.

May God bless our troops. And may God bless the United States of America.

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White South Africans grapple with apartheid's legacy

By Aubrey Whelan

McClatchy Newspapers, June 21, 2011

Students cross the quad at Stellenbosch University. | Aubrey Whelan/Penn State University



STELLENBOSCH, South Africa — Along the wide, tree-lined avenues of Stellenbosch University, a quiet war is being waged. At this bastion of the Afrikaner people — the white South Africans blamed for the horrors of race-based apartheid rule — a generation of students too young to remember the racial strife that nearly tore their country apart is struggling to define itself.

You can hear it in the angry Afrikaans-language music on the campus radio station, in the

lecture halls where professors still teach primarily in Afrikaans, in the frustrated voices of graduating students who say the tarnished legacy of their elders makes it impossible for them to find jobs.

Here in the countryside east of Cape Town, full of rolling vineyards and sprawling white mansions, rebellious Afrikaner youth rub shoulders with the old guard who grew up in the apartheid era, who say they can't see why their young people have no interest in their culture. Many young white South Africans here still struggle with the effects of apartheid 17 years after the system was abolished and a government led by the country's black majority took power.

"If you want to talk about apartheid — then yes, our parents and grandparents made mistakes," said Gerhard Raal, who's pursuing a postgraduate degree in education. "But we don't know what actually happened. It's hard for the people who weren't a part of it to move on."

Descendants of Dutch colonists who arrived in South Africa in the mid-1600s, Afrikaners prized individualism and their ties to the land they conquered — fighting two bloody wars against the British to keep it. Over the years, they developed a unique, insular culture that revered religion, rugby and Afrikaans, a dialect that incorporated elements of African tribal languages and their native Dutch.

Most prominent positions in the government under the apartheid years were filled by Afrikaners. They established Afrikaans as the official government language, ensuring that it became one of the most tangible symbols of racism, violence and oppression in a country riven by discord. In 1976, black schoolchildren in the slums of Johannesburg staged mass protests over forced Afrikaans-language instruction, setting off a two-day riot where police shot at protesters, killing nearly 200.

"I felt embarrassed to speak Afrikaans (under apartheid). I wasn't right-wing and I didn't like the apartheid government," said Anne Kruger, the editor of the Paarl Post, an Afrikaans-language newspaper based about an hour outside Cape Town.

"In the 1970s, there was a sort of shame attached to being Afrikaner. I was at university — it was the heyday of the apartheid government — and half of the thinking student body hated it."

<http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2011/06/21/116067/white-south-africans-grapple-with.html>

Kruger views the frustrations of the generation below them with a sort of perplexity.

"It's more of a rebellion against their parents — the affluence, the materialism," she said. "Most grew up quite privileged."

Compared with the tin shacks and abject poverty just half an hour away in the overwhelmingly black Khayelitsha township — one of the largest slums in South Africa — Stellenbosch University is a fairytale world, with its stately white buildings and wide brick plazas.

Street signs, classroom buildings and the student center are labeled in Afrikaans with no translations. There's barely an English word to be heard on campus.

At MFM 92.6, the Stellenbosch University radio station, Willem Stemmet, the morning sports announcer, is laying down tracks for the next show. He leans over and pulls up a song on the morning's playlist by an Afrikaner band called Fokopolisiekar, which translates to, "(Expletive) Off Police Car."

"They started making Afrikaans rock music really popular," Stemmet said. "For us, Afrikaans music is more to express ourselves. We use it to tell our parents, '(expletive) off.' "

When it burst onto the South African music scene in 2003, the band's politically charged rock music and sneering disdain for authority resonated with youth.

The band, whose name is commonly abbreviated on South African radio as Polisiekar, "shows a lack of respect for authority figures," said A.M. Grundlingh, the head of the history department at Stellenbosch University and an expert on Afrikaner culture. "It's very inventive — searching in terms of where Afrikaner culture must go. It's become a survivor culture."

Some of the rage isn't unfounded, experts say. Seventeen years after the end of apartheid and the start of what South Africans call their "Rainbow Nation," students say things aren't exactly as equal as they'd like.

"There's definitely a feeling, particularly among white Afrikaner males, that they can't find jobs," said Justin Sylvester, a political analyst from the Institute for Democracy in Africa, a research group.

Beginning in 1994, employment policies like Black Economic Empowerment — a system similar to affirmative action — were enacted to ensure that those neglected, abused and underserved by the apartheid government could take their place in a de-racialized society.

But corruption has undermined the policies' good intentions, Sylvester said, and now it's political connections, not race, that make a difference in hiring practices these days. Many South Africans of all races chafe at what they describe as elitism and fraud within the ruling African National Congress, the political party of Nelson Mandela that helped lead the struggle against apartheid.

"BEE has been narrowly abused to help the elite. What has it done for people living in the townships?" he said. "I don't think it alienates just white people. Inequality's higher now than it was before."

(Whelan, a graduate of Penn State University, reported this story from Cape Town for a class in international journalism.)

Miscellaneous

For Soldiers, Death Sees No Gender Lines

By Rod Nordland

New York Times, 21 June 2011

MEHTARLAM, Afghanistan — When Specialist Devin Snyder, a 20-year-old from the Southern Tier of New York State, was killed by a bomb planted on a highway near this town in eastern Laghman Province on June 4, she became the 28th female American soldier to die in Afghanistan.

Servicewomen have died in all of America's wars, but usually they were support personnel such as nurses and clerks. In Afghanistan, most women who have died were killed in combat situations, as Specialist Snyder was, despite the military's official prohibition on women in combat jobs.

The same has been true in Iraq, where 111 female soldiers have died, according to data compiled by icasualties.org, an independent organization that tracks military fatalities. In both wars, 60 percent of those deaths are classified by the military as due to hostile acts.

Wars with no clear front lines have put women in harm's way more than ever before, blurring the boundaries between combat jobs that are outlawed for women, and support jobs that are often as dangerous and in some cases even more so.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about Specialist Snyder's death, however, was how little anyone noted that there was anything unusual about it.

"Out here, there is no male gender and no female gender," said Staff Sgt. Vincent Vetterkind, one of her fellow platoon members. "Our gender is soldier."

While there is still a debate back home about the role of women in the military, here on the ground that battle seems to have been largely, if quietly, won during nine years of deployments where women have increasingly shared the same risks as men.

"To tell you the truth, I didn't even think about that issue," said her platoon commander, also a woman, First Lt. Riannon Blaisdell-Black, 24, of Virginia Beach. "Out here we don't see gender, we don't see race."

Lieutenant Blaisdell-Black, whose Third Platoon of the 164th Military Police Company arrived in Afghanistan only in April, has seen her unit lose an eighth of its strength from two bombs in the first couple of months of their deployment. In addition to Specialist Snyder, three other M.P.'s, from the Third Platoon died from the same bomb, along with an American civilian contractor. An earlier bomb, on the sixth day of the Third Platoon's deployment here, sent one of the other women in the force home with serious injuries, and wounded two men as well.

"There were five of us, sharing the same B-Hut," Lieutenant Blaisdell-Black said, using the term for barracks here that normally sleep eight soldiers each. "Now there are three."

Specialist Snyder was a high school track star in Cohocton, N.Y., from a military family; her father had been in the Navy and her sister is, while a brother is in the Army. She enlisted straight after graduation, choosing the military police, because, as one of her platoonmates put it, "We had the best and biggest guns."

With sleeve tattoos down both arms, Specialist Snyder toyed with the idea of becoming a tattoo model, and also expressed interest in becoming a deception analyst in what is known as the military's psychological operations. Her physical fitness scores often exceeded the Army's perfect 300, and she was determined to become a sergeant — an honor awarded to her now posthumously.

At the same time, on deployment she carried a hot pink pocket knife and pink duct tape, and at her unit's base in Fort Richardson, Alaska, she kept an off-road vehicle, also painted pink. "She

http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/22/world/asia/22afghanistan.html?pagewanted=1&_r=2 definitely had her feminine side,” said Lieutenant Blaisdell-Black. “Even her tattoos were all flowers and girly things.”

The military police is a common job choice for women who want to get into combat, but not the only one. Nowadays combat arms specialties in the infantry and armor units are the only major specialties closed to women — although even there they can go into combat as medics or combat logistics specialists.

The infantry battalion that the M.P.’s Third Platoon was attached to here, First Battalion, 133rd Regiment, has 40 women among its 600-plus soldiers. “To the average soldier who’s out there on a mission, it doesn’t make a difference,” said the battalion commander, Lt. Col. Steven Kremer. “Can that person on my left or right shoot is what matters. I got to tell you the females in my battalion are absolutely amazing.”

“Really the only time it’s an issue is when you’re out on a three-day patrol, and you need to find a place to pee,” Lieutenant Blaisdell-Black said. The Army has a solution even for that, a device that enables women to urinate standing up, which the women have nicknamed She-wees.

The night before Specialist Snyder and her comrades were killed, Specialist Shakira Lamb, the platoon’s medic, said she had a dream: “Someone came in to my hooch, blood and chunks all over her.”

When the squad went out the next morning, “I knew something was going to happen,” Specialist Lamb said. They were headed to a mentoring session at an Afghan police station in Alingar, and had to pass a choke point on Route Iowa through the village of Khandah, where on the platoon’s sixth day in Afghanistan three of its members had been wounded by a bomb.

As Specialist Lamb watched, a buried bomb in the same spot exploded under the first vehicle in their convoy, with such force that the blast killed three of the four soldiers inside instantly, Specialist Snyder among them. One soldier, Pfc. Robert L. Voakes Jr., lived long enough to be medevaced, but died shortly later.

Private Voakes, 21, an American Indian from the Keweenaw Bay tribe in upper Michigan, was proud that he and his brother were the first members of their tribe to serve in Afghanistan. Killed with him was Sgt. Christopher R. Bell, 21, of Golden, Miss., who had a 1-year-old daughter, a girl so perfect, he told his fellow platoon members, that he and his wife, Sam, had no need for any more children.

Also killed was Sgt. Joshua D. Powell, 38, a Texan with a perpetual wad of chewing tobacco and a thick drawl, who was on his second tour in Afghanistan — the first earned him a Purple Heart and an award for valor.

He had been in the Third Platoon only a few weeks, having volunteered to replace one of the soldiers wounded earlier. The fifth victim was Brett Benton, 37, a veteran policeman from Kentucky, one of two DynCorp contractors who accompanied the platoon on their mentoring missions.

“It was likely they didn’t feel anything, didn’t even know what happened,” said the squad leader, Sgt. Jonathan Enlow. “The medic was having a hard time letting go.”

“There wasn’t much I could do for them and that was hard,” said Specialist Lamb, the medic. “Bell looked surprised. Voakes, he looked the same as he always does. Snyder, I could see her eyes, and her smile.”

Four days later, Lieutenant Blaisdell-Black said, the platoon sent another squad back up Route Iowa again, on the same mission. “All the guys are really determined to carry on,” said Sergeant Enlow, adding, “It’s not like it was a waste or anything.”

<http://atwar.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/06/20/general-says-shorten-army-combat-tours-to-9-months/>

General Says Shorten Army Combat Tours to 9 Months

By Thom Shanker

New York Times, 20 June 2011, 2:53 pm

WASHINGTON – To fight the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the Army has sent its troops on 12-month deployments to the combat zones, sometimes with not even a full year back home before being ordered off to fight again. Some soldiers even served 15-month stints.

Acknowledging that an exhausted ground force needs time to rest, retrain — and re-examine its mission and core values — the Army's top officer has pledged that the service will develop plans to shorten combat tours to nine months, with 18 months between missions. That initial ratio of deployment-versus-dwell time would be a way-point toward a goal of nine-month combat tours followed by 27 months back home.

The statement is contained in a new pamphlet, "Thoughts on the Future of the Army," now being circulated across the service by [Gen. Martin E. Dempsey](#), the chief of staff. Though General Dempsey has been [nominated to be chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff](#), the document is an official Army publication and thus enters the service's library of current doctrinal thinking despite General Dempsey's pending departure from the job. Implementation of the goals would be up to his nominated successor, [Gen. Ray Odierno](#).

The pamphlet is filled not only with General Dempsey's assessments on the role of the Army, but also goes to much broader themes: the relationship between the military and the nation and how to develop leaders from the upper ranks down to the squad level. A special note is made of the importance of caring for Army families.

The articulation of those views on military management and the expression of his martial philosophy might offer insights into his priorities if he is confirmed to the top job in the American military. The document opens with a statement of confident bravura: "Our Army must accomplish any assigned task. Stated more precisely, we must WIN. Ours is a profession in which we cannot and will not accept anything less."

General Dempsey then describes important "focus areas" for the Army. Underscoring the historic principle of civilian control over the military, he stresses that "the Army exists to serve the nation." This requires not only preparations to fight and win, General Dempsey writes, but also the need to "provide our nation's leaders with the broadest possible number of options in dealing with a complex 21st-century security environment." (As a philosophical document and not combat planning guidance, the pamphlet contains no specific comments on the way ahead in Afghanistan or Iraq, for example.)

In a nod to deficit worries and orders to shrink defense spending, the document orders Army personnel to operate as "good stewards" of the giant budgets approved by Congress.

The pamphlet also underscores the need for the Army to cooperate in joint operations with the other services. In issuing a deep professional challenge to the force, the pamphlet calls for an intense examination of Army policies, strategies and even ethics after a decade of nonstop conflict, the longest in American history by an all-volunteer military.

"The Army is a profession in a unique and important trust relationship with each other and with the nation," General Dempsey writes. "We are currently in a campaign of learning about the skills, knowledge, attributes and behaviors that should define us as a profession," he adds. "We will work to understand the impact of the past 10 years of war on us."

Historic Marine base gets 1st-ever female general

By SUSANNE M. SCHAFER

Associated Press/NRP.org, 21 June 2011

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) -- For the first time in its 96-year history, a female general is taking charge at the famed Marine Corps training depot at South Carolina's Parris Island.

Brig. Gen. Loretta Reynolds, who is also known as the first female Marine to ever hold a command position in a battle zone, takes charge Friday at the installation south of Beaufort.



AP Photo/Cpl. Jenn Calaway

Parris Island graduates about 20,000 Marines annually and is the only site where female enlisted Marines are trained to enter the service.

Reynolds is a native of Baltimore and a 1986 graduate of the Naval Academy. She has worn the Marine Corps uniform for 25 years.

She is taking over from Brig. Gen. Frederick Padilla, who is taking charge of the 3rd Marine Division in Okinawa, Japan.

In her new position, Reynolds also will be in charge of the Marines' Eastern Recruiting Region, which covers the 23 states east of the Mississippi River.

As a one-star general, Reynolds becomes only the third female general officer in the more than 200,000-member Marine Corps. The service has two two-star female generals, one in the active duty ranks and another in the Marine Corps Reserve.

Overall, there are 12,339 enlisted females in the Marines, 108 warrant officers and 1,224 officers, according to Marine Corps figures. On its Parris Island website, the service said training for men and women is identical, and that roughly 2,400 female recruits go through it every year.

Reynolds trained as a communications officer and commanded Marines from platoon to battalion levels in her more than 20 years in uniform.

She has been posted in Okinawa, Japan; Quantico, Va., Iraq and Afghanistan, and was in command of the Marine Recruiting Station in Harrisburg, Pa.

She also worked with at the headquarters of the Marine Corps in its communications and computer division in Washington, D.C.

Reynolds' last posting was in charge of the Headquarters Group for the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force based at Camp Pendleton, Calif.

While serving a yearlong tour of duty in Afghanistan, she oversaw five Marine battalions and military company from Bahrain. While there, she took a base that had "fed, housed and equipped more than 10,000 Marines and expanded the base to handle an additional 10,000 Marines and sailors," the website for the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force said. The site added that the command slot position meant she was "recognized as the first female Marine to command battle space."

Before her time at Camp Pendleton, Reynolds was a division chief with the Joint Staff at the Pentagon.

Reynolds also has attended the Marine Corps University in Quantico, Va., the Naval War College in Newport, R.I., and the Army War College in Carlisle, Pa.

Out of uniform means out of work for many new vets

BY Gregg Zorogy

USA Today, 17 June 2011

Unemployment payments to servicemembers fresh out of the military have doubled since 2008, a sign that veterans are returning from war to an increasingly tough job market.

The military paid \$882 million in unemployment benefits last year, up from \$451 million in fiscal 2008. The 2011 figures are trending even higher.

Veterans are having a particularly tough time finding jobs. The estimated jobless rate among male veterans ages 18-24 was more than 30% in May, compared with 18% among male civilians of the same age group, according to the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#).

With some exceptions, troops honorably discharged are eligible for unemployment checks if actively looking for civilian work.

"We're currently spending that much for people who are sitting home becoming more and more depressed," says Sen. [Patty Murray](#), D-Wash., chairwoman of the [Senate Veterans Affairs Committee](#). She is pushing legislation that would help troops enter the civilian workforce.

Last year, more than 90,000 veterans recently out of the service were unemployed for months, some until benefits checks were exhausted, according to the [Department of Labor](#).

State unemployment benefits now last up to 26 weeks, and the average period of unemployment compensation among these veterans last year was 21 weeks, the department says.

The weak economy is one reason for the increase in benefits, says Gay Gilbert, director of the department's office of unemployment insurance.

Each service branch reimburses states for checks written to former servicemembers struggling to find work, the department says.

Active-duty troops and former members of the [National Guard](#) or Reserve who have been on active duty for 90 continuous days or longer are eligible for benefits.

Legislation that Murray introduced in May would require troops to attend courses in finding work, building careers and improving résumé and interviewing techniques. Currently, these programs are voluntary, except for Marines.

Pentagon spokeswoman [Cynthia Smith](#) says the military already plans to expand those programs to focus on information technology and help with licensing and certification so troops can use skills learned in the military — such as work as medics or truck drivers — in civilian employment.

"They're young. They're brave. They're enthusiastic. The world's their oyster," Murray says. "They come home and it's a shock to them that six months later they don't have a job."

On the rise

Unemployment compensation for former servicemembers who recently left the military:

FY 2008 -- \$451.4 million in benefits

FY 2009 -- \$624.8 million in benefits

FY 2010 -- \$881.7 million in benefits

Source: Labor Department

<http://www.airforcetimes.com/news/2011/06/usat-veteran-trapped-in-disability-paperwork-backlog-061911/>

Wounded vet one of many in VA paperwork backlog

About 1 million disability cases await response

By Tony Leys - The Des Moines Register

Air Force Times, June 20, 2011

GREENFIELD, Iowa — Joel Klobnak still looks like a proud Marine — from his buzz-cut hair down to the red-white-and-blue prosthetic that replaced the leg he lost in Iraq in 2006. But he feels forgotten.

The Department of Veterans Affairs slashed his disability pay two years ago over what he says was a misunderstanding. The former Marine is trying to support a family of four on \$1,557 a month while he waits to hear whether the government will reinstate full disability pay for his gruesome injury and the mental anguish that accompanied it.

His appeal is trapped in a paperwork backlog that is delaying payments to injured veterans across the country. “There’s thousands of guys. It’s not just me. It’s a joke,” he said. “I just don’t understand why it takes so long.” More than thousands of veterans are in his straits. The backlog of veterans’ disability cases has been growing for years, and it now stands around 1 million despite Congress’ repeated attempts to fix the problem.

The VA said earlier this month that it would comment on Klobnak’s case but then said it couldn’t come up with a timely response. Klobnak, 24, was a lance corporal who served as a gunner on an armored vehicle in a Marine reconnaissance squad in Iraq in 2005-06, one of the most volatile periods of the war there. He said he was wounded near the end of his tour, when a 25mm explosive round went off while he was cleaning and reassembling a belt of ammunition for an automatic grenade launcher. The explosion shattered his left leg, which doctors amputated above the knee. He was 19.

Klobnak spent six months at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, then returned to Iowa with \$50,000 the military gave him as compensation for his leg. He admits he wasted much of that money in bars and at restaurants. “I was lonely, I guess,” he said. “And I was stupid.” When he wasn’t partying, he was off fishing by himself. But then he met his now-wife, Danielle, and she helped settle him down. They have two children, Landon, 4, and Grace, 2.

Government doctors determined that he couldn’t work because of the pain in his leg and the post-traumatic stress disorder that troubled his mind. The determination entitled him to full disability payments, which amounted to \$3,103 a month. But in April 2009, he received a letter telling him his payments were being halved because he missed an appointment with a VA doctor.

Klobnak said he didn’t know about the appointment, which was to review his disability status, because the notice had been sent to an old address. He believes the pay cut also might have been partly from an offhand comment he made during an earlier VA interview. He told a VA worker that he would like to get back to work within a few months. He says now that he was describing a wish, not an ability, but the distinction might have been lost in the paperwork.

Klobnak appealed the pay cut, and he was granted a hearing in June 2010. He said a veterans’ appeals judge in Washington presided via a video link to the Federal Building in Des Moines. When Klobnak was done explaining his side, the judge told him she would consider the matter and get back to him. He said he was told to expect a decision in three to six months. It’s been a year. Delays plague both initial claims, appeals

A national expert said Klobnak’s frustrations are the norm. Richard Cohen, executive director of the National Organization of Veterans’ Advocates, said the VA has a backlog of 800,000 initial disability claims and 200,000 appeals.

<http://www.airforcetimes.com/news/2011/06/usat-veteran-trapped-in-disability-paperwork-backlog-061911/>

The agency has been focusing on the mountain of initial claims, which means appeals are taking even longer, Cohen said. Appeals can be batted back and forth among regional offices, the national appeals board and the courts. “You keep getting another ride on what we call ‘the hamster wheel,’” he said with some cases that can drag on for a decade or more.

Most VA employees seem to be decent people who want to do the right thing, he said, but they are hobbled by poor training and inadequate oversight. “The system is broken. Everyone who works with it or who has contact with the VA knows it’s broken. But the VA is like the Titanic trying to change course,” Cohen said. The problem has received national attention, he said, “but it has not gotten better.”

Congress has tried to fix it with money.

They’ve tried to fix it with supervision.

One thing Congress managed to accomplish was to change the law in 2008 so claims wouldn’t expire if a veteran died, Cohen said. But even after the law changed, he said his group had to sue to make the VA revise its rules so a veteran’s survivors could collect back pay if an appeal succeeded.

Rep. Bruce Braley, D-Iowa, who is the only Iowan on the veterans’ affairs committee, said the national problem has gone on for years. “It’s a shame on this country when people who have given so much and are struggling to get by and put food on the table for their families are caught in this purgatory of the disability claims process,” he said. “It’s outrageous.”

Braley noted that Congress’ 2009 economic-stimulus package included \$150 million for the VA to add staff members to help clear the backlog of disability claims, and the agency is trying to improve. He said the House last year voted to add even more money, but the proposal was part of an overall budget that failed to pass the Senate. Braley’s office said the VA spends more than \$1.6 billion annually processing disability and retirement claims.

Sen. Charles Grassley, R-Iowa, expressed his frustration in a letter last year to VA Secretary Eric Shinseki, who is a retired general. Grassley noted that initial denials of disability claims often are overturned on appeal, signaling that mistakes are contributing to the paperwork tangle.

Shinseki said the president had recommended budget increases to help the VA’s current effort to switch from paper documents to a computerized system.

Veteran turns to family members

Klobnak sought assistance this spring from his congressman, Republican Steve King, whose staff contacted the veterans appeals board. Someone from the board called Klobnak and told him a judge was reviewing his file. How long will that take? Klobnak laughed bitterly at the question. “Who knows?” he said. While they wait, Klobnak, his wife and their two kids live in a house her grandparents own. The couple is supposed to be paying rent, but they’ve lost track of how many months behind they are.

Her family also bought them a sport-utility vehicle, and his family has pitched in with support. Klobnak said he appreciates the help but hates being so dependent on relatives. He’s sold off many of his possessions, including guns and other hunting equipment, and he returned a pickup on which he could no longer make payments.

Meanwhile, he said he continues to have problems with his leg. His stump aches when he stands on it, and it swells when he sits too long. Last winter, he developed a hematoma, which is a pooling of blood, on the stump. The problem caused excruciating pain, but he said he couldn’t get anyone at the VA hospital in Des Moines, Iowa, to call him back about it. So he went to the

<http://www.airforcetimes.com/news/2011/06/usat-veteran-trapped-in-disability-paperwork-backlog-061911/>

emergency room at the hospital here, where a doctor performed minor surgery to remove the hematoma and ease the pain. The local doctor also wrote a “to whom it may concern” letter about Klobnak. “In my opinion, he is not currently capable of maintaining full-time employment,” she wrote.

Klobnak recently received a letter from the VA saying it would not pay for the surgery because he could have had the procedure done at the VA hospital. He’s now worried that his local hospital will send him a big bill. Klobnak recently pulled out the VA letter and read it over. “If you do not agree, you have the right to appeal,” the letter says.

The veteran shook his head.

“Yeah, right,” he said. “And, what, wait two years?” His mother, Lisa Klobnak of Norwalk, Iowa, has tried in vain to help him deal with the VA. “You’ve got this veteran who fought for us — who lost his leg for us — who is going bankrupt,” said Lisa Klobnak, who has another son in the Marines and a stepson in the Army. She said she’s been stunned at the runaround Joel Klobnak gets. “The most frustrating thing is all the promises,” Lisa Klobnak said. “‘We’ll send a check. We’ll do this. We’ll do that.’ And it never happens.”

Taking classes, hoping to work someday

Danielle Klobnak, his wife, makes a bit of money teaching dance classes. But she doesn’t want to seek a full-time job because her husband soon will need more surgery on his leg. Then he’ll be laid up and unable to help much with the kids for a few months.

Joel Klobnak is taking online community-college classes — for which the VA is paying — and he hopes eventually to earn a bachelor’s degree and maybe someday start a small business. He doesn’t foresee staying on full disability forever.

“I’m 24,” he said. “I don’t want to not work for the rest of my life.” Although his leg still troubles him, the PTSD seems to be easing. Danielle Klobnak tells him that he doesn’t cry out in his sleep much anymore, and he gave up drinking in 2009.

Klobnak keeps his hair cropped, as if he is ready to rejoin the military at any moment. His many tattoos include the “soldier’s prayer” on his arm: “I am just a soldier, the protector of our land, a servant called to battle when my country takes a stand,” one of its verses says.

He once was so enthusiastic about the military that he rushed through high school so he could graduate a year early and join the Marines at the same time as his older brother. He misses the camaraderie of a deployed fighting unit plus the feeling he was doing something important. But his tangles with the VA have clouded his views. “If a kid coming out of high school asked me whether to join? I’d say don’t do it,” he said. “It’s a waste. You’ll be expendable.”

Misconduct

<http://ebird.osd.mil/ebfiles/e20110618826788.html> or

http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/national-security/navy-has-spike-in-commanding-officer-firings-most-for-personal-misconduct/2011/06/14/AGZJj7YH_story.html

Navy has spike in commanding-officer firings

By Craig Whitlock

Washington Post, June 18, 2011

The Navy has fired a dozen commanding officers this year, a near-record rate, with the bulk getting the ax for offenses related to sex, alcohol or other forms of personal misconduct.

The terminations, which follow a similar spike in firings last year, have shaken the upper ranks of the Navy, which has long invested enormous responsibility in its commanding officers and prides itself on a tradition of carefully cultivating captains and admirals.

Over the past 18 months, the Navy has sacked nine commanding officers for sexual harassment or inappropriate personal relationships. Three others were fired for alcohol-related offenses, and two on unspecified charges of personal misconduct. Combined, they account for roughly half of the 29 commanding officers relieved during that period.

Adm. Gary Roughead, the chief of naval operations, called the increase in firings “bothersome” but said the Navy was duty-bound to uphold strict behavioral standards, even when commanders are off-duty. He attributed the rise in part to the revolution in communications and technology, which has made it easier for sailors and their families to snoop on one another and then instantly spread the word — even from once-isolated ships at sea.

“The divide between our private and professional lives is essentially gone,” Roughead said in an interview. “People can engage in the debate — does it really matter what a commanding officer does in their personal life? We believe it does, because it gets right to the issue of integrity and personal conduct and trust and the ability to enforce standards.”

Capt. Donald Hornbeck, commander of a destroyer squadron attached to the aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson, was fired April 23 while deployed in the Arabian Sea after Navy officials said they found evidence of an “inappropriate personal relationship.” Four days later, the Navy dismissed Cmdr. Jay Wiley, the commanding officer of the USS Momsen, a destroyer, citing “misconduct,” according to a Navy statement. As a general rule, being fired as a naval commanding officer is a career-ending move that leads to retirement.

Military officials did not elaborate on the alleged transgressions. The Navy Times newspaper, citing an anonymous naval source, reported that Hornbeck was found to have had a relationship with another officer’s wife and that Wiley’s problems involved alcohol and inappropriate behavior with a sailor under his command. Neither Hornbeck nor Wiley responded to requests for comment.

April was a particularly tough month for Navy commanders. On April 11, Cmdr. Timothy Murphy, a squadron commander at Whidbey Island Naval Air Station in Washington state, was fired after he was cited by police for driving under the influence, according to a Navy statement. Two other commanders were sacked the same month for on-the-job performance woes.

None of the fired Navy commanders named in this article responded to requests for comment submitted through Navy public affairs officials.

The Navy is not the only military service dogged by poor performance in its upper ranks. The Army has relieved or disciplined three brigade commanders this year who were en route to — or returning from — war zones in Iraq and Afghanistan.

One case involved Col. James H. Johnson III, commander of the 173rd Airborne Brigade, whom the Army fired in March for “inappropriate conduct” after his wife accused him of carrying on a

<http://ebird.osd.mil/ebfiles/e20110618826788.html> or

http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/national-security/navy-has-spike-in-commanding-officer-firings-most-for-personal-misconduct/2011/06/14/AGZJ7YH_story.html

long-term affair with an Iraqi mistress and repeatedly visiting her in Europe, according to an Army statement and divorce papers. Johnson declined to comment through an Army spokesman.

“It would be silly to say I wasn’t concerned,” Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, the Army chief of staff, told reporters recently. He said the Army was considering amending its command selection process to rate officers based on feedback from subordinates and peers, instead of just superiors.

The Navy’s rash of firings has stirred special anxiety, however, with some officials and analysts characterizing the problem as a leadership crisis.

Since January, the Navy has booted a dozen commanding officers and temporarily removed a 13th, pending an investigation. At that pace, the Navy will match the record total of 26 commanders it fired in 2003.

“It’s a phenomenally high number,” said Norman Polmar, an Alexandria-based naval historian who has been an adviser to several top Navy officials. “There is something seriously wrong.”

He said the trend is a clear sign that the Navy’s screening process for promotion is flawed.

“Perhaps we don’t have the best and brightest,” he said. “It’s also the naval leadership’s responsibility,” he said, to ensure that commanders are qualified and to articulate appropriate standards for officers.

Navy officials said they have been consistent and rigorous in holding their commanders responsible.

In a telephone interview, Navy Secretary Ray Mabus said he didn’t think the firings illustrated a broader problem, noting that only a tiny percentage of the roughly 1,500 commanding officers in the service have been affected. About 285 of those commanders are in charge of ships and submarines; the remainder oversee various agencies in the Navy.

“We hold absolute standards of conduct, and if you breach those, you’re going to be relieved,” he said. “But I don’t see a pattern, and I don’t think it’s an epidemic in that sense.”

After the record number of sackings in 2003, the Naval Inspector General conducted a review of terminations over the previous five years. Although the review found that personal misbehavior was the largest single cause, it found “no systemic factors relating to the increase,” such as shortcomings in the Navy’s promotion system.

Some officers and analysts suggested that the rash of inappropriate relationships stemmed from the Navy’s continuing adjustment to the presence of women on ships. “Many commanding officers didn’t deal with women when they were junior officers, and now they have to,” Polmar said.

The Navy opened its entire surface combat fleet to women in 1994 and began training female officers to serve on submarines last year. Overall, women make up about 15 percent of the active-duty Navy.

But Roughead, the chief of naval operations, scoffed at the idea that gender integration was to blame. “I’ve never heard anybody say, ‘I wouldn’t have strayed if there were no women on this ship,’ ” he said.

Of the 29 commanding officers fired since last year, three have been women.

Cmdr. Mary Ann Giese, the commanding officer of the Naval Computer and Telecommunications Station in Bahrain, was relieved of command Aug. 21 after a Navy investigation found that she had engaged in “inappropriate relationships” with sailors.

<http://ebird.osd.mil/ebfiles/e20110618826788.html> or

http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/national-security/navy-has-spike-in-commanding-officer-firings-most-for-personal-misconduct/2011/06/14/AGZJj7YH_story.html

The two other female commanders were terminated for excessively harsh leadership styles.

Capt. Etta Jones, commander of the USS Ponce, was fired April 23 after a sailor called an anonymous Navy hotline to report a “hostile command climate” while the warship was in the Mediterranean Sea to support the war in Libya. Navy investigators found that Jones endangered two sailors with a loaded weapon, failed to prevent hazing and cultivated “a hostile work environment permeated by verbal abuse, fear and intimidation.”

The Navy also had to intervene on the USS Cowpens, a warship operating in the Pacific, after sailors complained that their commander, Capt. Holly Graf, was verbally abusive, forced them to take timeouts like toddlers and created an “environment of fear and hostility,” according to a Naval Inspector General report. When the Navy dismissed her in January 2010, officials concluded she had subjected the crew to “cruelty and maltreatment.”

Staff writer Greg Jaffe contributed to this report.

Racism

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/20/us/20tulsa.html?pagewanted=2&ref=us>

As Survivors Dwindle, Tulsa Confronts Past

By A.G. Sulzberger

New York Times, June 19, 2011

TULSA, Okla. — With their guns firing, a mob of white men charged across the train tracks that cut a racial border through this city. A 4-year-old boy named Wess Young fled into the darkness with his mother and sister in search of safety, returning the next day to discover that their once-thriving black community had burned to the ground.



"The Tulsa Race War of 1921"/R. Halliburton, Jr. White men with bayonet-affixed rifles escorting black m

Ninety years later, Mr. Young lives not far from where he lost his home that day. He is part of the dwindling ranks of the living who can recollect what may be the deadliest occurrence of racial violence in United States history — an episode so brutal that this city, in a bout of collective amnesia that extended more than a half-century, simply chose to forget it ever happened.

The Tulsa race riot of 1921 was rarely mentioned in history books, classrooms or even in private. Blacks and whites alike grew into middle age unaware of what had taken place.

Ever since the story was unearthed by historians and revealed in uncompromising detail in a state government report a decade ago — it estimated that up to 300 people were killed and more than 8,000 left homeless — the black men and women who lived through the events have watched with renewed hope as others worked for some type of justice on their behalf.

But even as the city observed the 90th anniversary this month, the efforts to secure recognition and compensation have produced a mixed record of success.



*Tulsa Historical Society
Buildings in the black neighborhood of Greenwood
burned on June 1, 1921. An estimated 300 people
were killed in the riot.*

The riot will be taught for the first time in Tulsa public schools next year but remains absent in many history textbooks across the United States. Civic leaders built monuments to acknowledge the riot, including a new Reconciliation Park,

but in the wake of failed legislative and legal attempts, no payments were ever delivered for what was lost.

Before becoming president, Barack Obama once met with some who lived through the riot “to thank the survivors for surviving.” But fewer are surviving each year; today the number is about

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/20/us/20tulsa.html?pagewanted=2&ref=us>

40. And before they die, some of their most dedicated advocates continue to fight for greater awareness and compensation, even as they lament that they no longer believe the effort has sufficient momentum.

“These people are still alive,” said Reggie Turner, who has toured the country with the survivors, showing his film about the riot and the failed federal lawsuit to win reparations from the city and state governments. “And despite their dwindling numbers — in fact, because of their dwindling numbers — it should be easy for us to take care of them.”

“They are just looking for a better life as they approach death,” he added.

Some, like Otis Clark, the oldest survivor of the riot at 108 and one of those who joined a federal lawsuit seeking compensation, are at peace. “God has a whole lot of good things lined up for us when we’re by his side,” Mr. Clark said. “It ain’t going to be very long before that is going to happen.”

Others, like Mr. Young and his wife, Cathryn, worry that their passing will simply make the riot easier to forget. “I think they are trying to keep this hidden,” Ms. Young said, referring to the white residents of Tulsa. “Don’t talk about it, don’t do nothing about it until all these people are dead. Then they think it’ll be over with. But it won’t.”

All that remains of that black community of 90 years ago, Greenwood, is a block of red-brick storefronts in a neighborhood transformed by a new minor league ball field, a university campus and an elevated highway. Metal plaques set in the sidewalk describe the hundreds of businesses that were there when the area was a bustling enclave in a statutorily segregated oil town. Within the black community, it was known as the Negro Wall Street.

Long before black neighborhoods erupted in rioting in cities across the country during the 1960s and 1970s, a string of violent riots were started by whites in the years after World War I. As with some of the others, the Tulsa riot seemed to have started with the explosive accusation that a black man had sexually assaulted a white woman. (The charges were dropped after the riot.)

On May 31, 1921, hundreds of armed white men gathered outside the courthouse where the man was being held, and a group of armed black men arrived to prevent a lynching. A shot was fired. The black men fled to Greenwood, and the white men gave chase.

The battle that ensued, enabled by the Tulsa police chief, who deputized hundreds of white men and commandeered gun shops to arm them, lasted through the night and well into the next day.

About 40 blocks were destroyed, including 1,256 homes, many of which had been looted before they were set alight. The death toll, most likely never to be fully determined, was estimated in the state report at 100 to 300. Survivors were rounded up and interned by the National Guard. Many of the homeless spent the following year living in tents pitched in the ruins of the neighborhood.

A grand jury at the time blamed the black community for the riot. No one was convicted of participating in the riot; no one was compensated for lost property. Soon after, the story essentially disappeared — buried so deeply that people who lived their entire lives here, including prominent leaders like mayors and district attorneys, said they had never heard of the riot until recent decades.

Don Ross is credited with helping to break that silence. A magazine he started published the first article in decades about the riot, written by a local historian around the time of the 50th anniversary. But it was not until 25 years later when Mr. Ross was a state representative that the riot garnered nationwide attention. He pushed for the formation of the riot state commission that produced the report and became an unrelenting advocate for payments to the survivors because, he explained, there is “no money in apologies.”

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/20/us/20tulsa.html?pagewanted=2&ref=us>

Since retiring, Mr. Ross has extracted himself from those efforts, believing that neither blacks nor whites were committed to the task. He no longer even speaks to the survivors. “I cut that connection,” he said. “It was too heartbreaking.”

The issue of payments to survivors, like those paid to the survivors of a similar riot two years later in Rosewood, Fla., was always difficult.

The Oklahoma Legislature refused, saying it was constitutionally prohibited. The federal courts dismissed a lawsuit on behalf of the victims, saying the statute of limitations had expired. And efforts in Congress to remove that legal obstacle have repeatedly failed, partly because of concerns that it might open the door to reparations for slavery, though there are plans to reintroduce the bill. Charles Ogletree, a Harvard law professor who represented the survivors in the effort, called the case his “most disappointing and heartbreaking.”

Still, awareness has been growing. Three quarters of Tulsa residents in a recent survey described themselves as very or somewhat knowledgeable about the riot.

On a national level there is greater awareness, too. Of the three largest school textbook publishers, one of them, Pearson, now mentions the riot in its books; two others, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt and McGraw-Hill, do not, though Houghton Mifflin says it is planning to include the riot in future editions.

At the Greenwood Cultural Center, home to an extensive exhibit on the race riot, Mechelle Brown, the program coordinator, walks along the wall of photos of survivors and gestures despondently — almost every month another one dies.

“It seems at times that this is how it’s going to end,” she said, “with the survivors passing.”

This year, the center lost all of its state financing, which accounted for nearly half of its annual budget. Ms. Brown said it could be forced to close in a matter of months. Just blocks away is John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Park, which opened last year with state backing and has several memorials to the riot. (A center for racial reconciliation is planned for the grounds.)

But in a city still divided by those same railroad tracks, the theme of togetherness bothers Ms. Brown, who called it premature. “You can’t forgive until someone asks for forgiveness,” she said.

Sitting inside the park, Julius Pegues, head of the park’s board, defended the focus on reconciliation. He worried that in continuing to dwell on the riot — and the compensation that has not come — the black community risked settling into bitterness.

“If people have their heart in the right place, I think they could work out some fair compensation for the victims of the race riots,” Mr. Pegues said. “But that does not seem to be the case, so I’m not going to spend my life worrying about it.”

He added: “We intend to take the high road and move this city forward for both black and white.”



The Greenwood Cultural Center is home to an extensive exhibit on the race riot, including a wall of photographs of survivors.

Brandi Simons for The New York Times