

DEOMI News Highlights

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

All-female team launches historic mission over Afghanistan [TSgt Michael Voss, *Official USAF Website*, 31 March 2011]

- The first combat sortie on record to involve only female Airmen from the pilots and weapons officers to the mission planners and maintainers occurred on March 30th
- The mission originated at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan, and required the pilots to travel to the Kunar Valley just west of the Pakistan border in order to support a large Army operation that was underway
- This event will go down in history along with Lt. Jeannie Flynn as the first female F-15E pilot and first female fighter pilot to graduate from the U.S. Air Force Weapons School

[All-Female team launches historic mission over Afghanistan](#)

Cost of ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ repeal lower than expected [Rick Maze, *Army Times/USA Today*, 2 April 2011]

- Rep. Austin Scott R-Ga., a member of the House Armed Services Committee, said he wanted to know how much money that could have been spent on readiness and capabilities had instead been spent on the training and education program to better prepare current service members for openly gay troops joining the ranks
- The answer: about \$10,000 for training materials, according to Clifford Stanley, Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness
- Stanley and Vice Adm. William Gortney, Director of the Joint Staff, told lawmakers that they have seen no problems as the services train active and reserve personnel on what is expected

[Cost of ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ repeal lower than expected](#)

Army atheists seek ‘faith’ privileges [Associated Press, 1 April 2011]

- Atheists, agnostics, humanists, and others have united at Fort Bragg and formed an organization in an effort to win recognition and ensure the fair treatment of nonbelievers in the overwhelming Christian U.S. military
- The group is going through the bureaucratic process to win official recognition from the Army as a distinct “faith” group
- It is difficult to pin down how many nonbelievers are in the military, in part because some soldiers lose their faith or convert to a different one

[Army atheists seek ‘faith’ privileges](#)

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Discrimination

E.U. Lays Out Plan to Improve the Lives of the Roma

By STEPHEN CASTLE

New York Times, April 5, 2011

BRUSSELS — Calling for better integration of its 10 million to 12 million Roma citizens, the European Union conceded on Tuesday that its 27 member states were doing too little to tackle discrimination, prejudice and intolerance against the minority group.

“There is no evidence that strong and proportionate measures are in place to tackle the social and economic problems of a large part of the E.U.’s population,” Viviane Reding, vice president of the European Commission, said as she outlined a strategy to improve the plight of the Roma.

Ms. Reding, also the European Union’s justice commissioner, was at the center of a furious dispute last year when she criticized France’s expulsion of Roma and likened French tactics to those used in World War II. On Tuesday at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, she described that episode as a “very necessary wake-up call.”

Laszlo Andor, European Union’s commissioner for social affairs, condemned attacks on Roma in his own country, Hungary, where the far-right party Jobbik has been accused of harassing minorities. Xenophobic and racist tendencies must be confronted, Mr. Andor said.

The plans outlined on Tuesday focus on improving access to education, jobs, health care and housing. The 27 member states would set individual goals to integrate Roma, in proportion to the population on their territory and tailored to their circumstances. These would then be monitored in Brussels.

But the European Roma Policy Coalition, a collection of nongovernmental organizations, said that, while the announcement was welcome, it did not go far enough.

“E.R.P.C. is deeply disappointed that while the framework recognizes the need to fight discrimination against Roma and ensure their equal access to all fundamental rights, it fails to specify measures to combat discrimination, intimidation, anti-Gypsyism, hate speech or violence against Roma,” it said in a statement.

The coalition lamented the lack of clear guidance, noting “the general failure of existing Roma inclusion policies” and the lack of experience of many European states with such programs.

One problem highlighted on Tuesday was that about 70 percent of the money allocated by the European for Roma integration is not spent. Under the bloc’s rules, national governments need to find matching funds to be able to spend the E.U. cash. During the financial crisis, some had struggled to do so, Mr. Andor said, adding that in some cases the impediments were political as well as technical.

According to the European Commission, the Roma form about 10 percent of the population in Bulgaria, 9 percent in Slovakia, 8 percent in Romania, 7 percent in Hungary, and 1.5 percent to 2.5 percent in Greece, the Czech Republic and Spain. Of those countries, only Spain enjoys a reputation of having some success in integrating Roma.

Diversity

<http://www.af.mil/news/story.asp?storyID=123249387>

All-female team launches historic mission over Afghanistan

by Tech. Sgt. Michael Voss, 455th Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs
The Official U.S. Air Force web site, 31 March 2011

3/31/2011 - **BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan (AFNS)** -- A team of female Airmen made history here March 30 when the F-15E Strike Eagles of "Dudette 07" blazed down the runway to provide close air support for coalition and Afghan ground forces.

The two-ship formation consisted of all females, two pilots and two weapons system officers, but more importantly, it marked the first combat mission flown from Bagram to be planned, maintained and flown entirely by females.

This mission represents the first combat sortie on record to involve only female Airmen from the pilots and weapons officers to the mission planners and maintainers, said Lt. Col. Kenneth Tilley, the 455th Air Expeditionary Wing historian.

Although the call sign for the mission may have been lighthearted, the sortie was all business calling for the pilots to travel to the Kunar Valley just west of the Pakistan border in support of a large Army operation that was underway. "I have flown with female pilots before, but this was the first time I have flown in an all female flight," said Maj. Christine Mau, a 455th AEW executive officer. "This wasn't a possibility when I started flying 11-years ago."

While planning of the mission required support from women at all levels such as Capt. Kristen Wehle, the F-15 liaison officer at the combined air operations center, those involved evoked memories of legendary Women's Army Corps pilots and others for inspiration.

"Women's history means a celebration of the equality we have today in the military," said Capt. Jennifer Morton, a 389th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron weapons officer. "It makes me think back and find inspiration from heroes like Col. Jeannie Flynn."

In 1993, then 2nd Lt. Jeannie Flynn became the first female F-15E pilot. Although the Air Force permitted female pilots to enter pilot training in 1976, Lieutenant Flynn went on to become the first female fighter pilot to graduate from the U.S. Air Force Weapons School.

"Since 1993 we have had Air Force female pilots in combat positions, and because of that today I feel as a woman I can have whatever job I want," Morton said.

While Dudette 07 was set up to as an all female mission in honor of Women's History Month, Major Mau said inspiration for today's Airmen aspiring to great heights can come from many different places.

"I think I get a great deal of inspiration from my grandmother (who was a mother seven kids), but many of my role models today are males," she said.

In addition, the pilots never forget the contributions of the maintainers on the ground, maintainers like Airmen 1st Class Casiana Curry, who enlisted Sept. 11, 2009, and enables the continued support of the warfighters on the ground.

<http://www.af.mil/news/story.asp?storyID=123249387>

"The four women officers represents only a portion of the women who supported this mission making it the first all female from tasking to completion combat sortie to date," said Capt. Leigh Larkin, 389th EFS weapons systems officer.

"I thought it was kind of cool and something that I have never seen before," said Staff Sgt. Tamara Rhone, a 455th Expeditionary Aircraft Maintenance Squadron crew chief. "The women throughout time have paved the way for us today and they made it possible for us to be equal as well as respected as individuals. Females are a rare breed on the flight line. It is my hope that more females step up and join the maintenance career field."

<http://www.smh.com.au/national/look-to-nsw-for-multicultural-utopia-hatzistergos-tells-federal-inquiry-20110404-1cym1.html>

Look to NSW for multicultural utopia, Hatzistergos tells federal inquiry

**Kirsty Needham (New South Wales NSW)
The Sydney Morning Herald, 5 April 2011**

NSW is a world model for multiculturalism and the federal government should follow its lead and enshrine multiculturalism in law, the former Labor government told a federal inquiry.

Amid a debate on the success of multiculturalism, the former NSW attorney-general John Hatzistergos called on the Commonwealth to give "serious consideration" to the NSW law that enshrined the right to maintain language, religious practice and diversity, as it was "the bedrock of positive community relations in the state".

"I am proud to claim that NSW has developed the longest lasting and arguably the most sophisticated framework for multicultural governance in the world," he wrote.

Advertisement: Story continues below

The inquiry heard from the Islamic Council of Victoria that Australian society did not respect religious diversity and that Muslim migrants congregated in suburbs such as Lakemba because of fear of racism and housing affordability, not to create enclaves.

The submission called on the government to address religious intolerance and job discrimination against Muslim migrants.

Submissions to the parliamentary inquiry close this week. The parliamentary secretary for multiculturalism, Kate Lundy, said the government had strengthened the Anti-Discrimination Act and it would listen to advice from a new multicultural council on how to improve equity.

The Immigration Minister, Chris Bowen, released revised rules for citizenship ceremonies yesterday that spell out that holy books, including the Bible and Koran, may be distributed at ceremonies if supplied by a religious organisation but cannot be forced on candidates.

The revised code states ceremonies "must not be used as forums for political, partisan or religious expression".

Holy books should be left on a table "in a way that candidates are clearly able to choose whether or not to take one".

Miscellaneous

Cost of 'don't ask, don't tell' repeal lower than expected

By Rick Maze

Army Times/USA Today, 2 April 2011

WASHINGTON — A Republican lawmaker trying to make a case that the military is spending scarce dollars putting in place a controversial policy to allow gays to serve openly in the military was not prepared for the [Defense Department's](#) answer .

Rep. Austin Scott, R-Ga., a member of the House Armed Services Committee, said he wanted to know how much money that could have been spent on readiness and capabilities had instead been spent on the training and education program to prepare current service members for openly gay troops joining the ranks.

The answer: about \$10,000 for training materials, according to Clifford Stanley, undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness. The Pentagon also have some transportation costs and expenses for missed training, but the price tag has been low, Stanley said in Friday testimony before the armed services committee's military personnel panel.

"If something was done at [DoD](#) for \$10,000, I would like to know what it was," said Scott, who was clearly expecting a higher price tag.

The full armed services committee will have a hearing next week in which the four-star service chiefs will be called to testify about whether they have any doubts about moving ahead with repeal of the military's ban on open service by gays. Republicans will be looking for chinks in implementation plans to help make their case to go more slowly.

Stanley and Vice Adm. William Gortney, director of the Joint Staff, told lawmakers that they have seen no problems as the services train active and reserve personnel on what is expected.

"Thus far, no surprises," Gortney said.

Stanley said training will be completed this summer, and almost 90 rules and regulations are being changed in preparation for repeal of the ban on service by openly gay troops.

Under the law, signed by President Obama in December, the ban won't be lifted until 60 days after the president, defense secretary and chairman of the Joint Chiefs certify to Congress that the services are prepared and that readiness, unit cohesion, recruiting and retention will not be harmed in allowing gays to openly serve.

Military recruits' quality on rise

Services choosier about applicants

**By Jim Michaels,
USA Today, April 8, 2011 Pg. 1**

The quality of military recruits has increased to its highest level in almost two decades partly because of a tough civilian job market and a more stable Iraq.

Last year, 99% of recruits had a high school diploma before entering the service, up from 91% in 2006, when fighting in Iraq was near its peak and the economy was stronger.

The increased interest in the armed forces means recruiters can be choosier about whom they let into the military.

"We turn away a lot more people than we have in years past," said Army Staff Sgt. David Harris, a recruiter in Roswell, Ga.

The military has dramatically cut the number of "waivers," which allowed people to join the military despite past misconduct or medical reasons.

The Army granted waivers to 8.7% of the recruits entering the service last fiscal year, down from 15.6% the previous year. Most of those waivers were for medical reasons.

The services said waivers allowed recruiters to make exceptions if they thought a recruit deserved a second chance for a youthful indiscretion or minor health issue.

But the decrease in waivers is an indication that demand among young people for the military has increased so that recruiters are less willing to make exceptions for recruits who don't meet standards.

"When I started (recruiting) in 2006 ... we still had restrictions, but not nearly to the extent we have now," Harris said.

The Army this year also returned the maximum age for enlisting to 35. It had been raised to 42 in 2006. The money available for bonuses has declined in recent years.

Officials say recruits join the military for many reasons, but a lack of jobs has forced many young people to take a harder look at the armed forces.

"That has played a significant role," said Curtis Gilroy, a Pentagon personnel official.

Brett Miles, a 26-year-old from Indianapolis, has a college degree but decided to enlist because it would get him in the service faster than if he had gone through officer training school. "It's something I always wanted to do," he said.

La'Bianca Stitt, 20, said she joined the military for the opportunities. "I'll be traveling the world, learning different languages," she said. "You don't get to see stuff like that every day."

"My mom, of course, really doesn't like it at all," she said.

Pentagon brass talk of end to gay ban

**By Donna Cassata, Associated Press
Washington Post April 8, 2011 Pg. 14**

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates reassured U.S. war fighters in Iraq on Thursday that allowing gays to serve openly in the military will have little impact on the armed forces, an argument largely echoed by the top leaders of the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps.

Visiting troops at Camp Liberty in Baghdad, Gates was asked when repeal of the 17-year-old policy known as “don’t ask, don’t tell” would occur and what its effect would be.

“My guess is you won’t see much change at all, because the whole thrust . . . is you’re supposed to go on treating everybody like you’re supposed to be treating everybody now, with dignity, respect and discipline,” Gates told the troops. “And the same kind of military discipline that applies to — and regulations that apply to heterosexual relationships — will apply in terms of homosexual relationships.”

In Washington, leaders of the four services testified before the House Armed Services Committee on the implementation of the new policy. Several expressed reservations last December, when a divided Congress voted to repeal the law and President Obama signed the legislation.

The repeal did not occur immediately, as training and certification by the Defense Department are required before the ban is lifted. Training for service members began about March 1 and is slated to be finished by the end of the summer.

Gen. James F. Amos, commandant of the Marine Corps, had testified last year that permitting gays to serve openly could disrupt smaller combat units and distract leadership from preparing Marines for combat. On Thursday, Amos said that during a recent trip to Afghanistan, he was specifically looking for potential problems. “There hasn’t been the recalcitrant push-back, not been the anxiety of the forces in field,” Amos told the committee. He said one commander told him troops are focused on the enemy.

Last year, Gen. Norton Schwartz, chief of staff of the Air Force, had recommended waiting until 2012 to implement the policy. He said Thursday that he was more comfortable with the policy now than he was in December. “We’re mitigating the risk the way we’re approaching this,” Schwartz said.

Adm. Gary Roughead, chief of naval operations, said training was going well and the “type of questions reflect the professionalism and the maturity and the decency of our people.”

Gen. Peter Chiarelli, vice chief of staff of the Army, said he met with commanders last Friday and “they indicated no issues so far.”

Nevertheless, Republicans on the committee have been critical of the policy change, with Chairman Rep. Howard P. “Buck” McKeon (Calif.) calling it a “rush to judgment.” “The one outcome that must be avoided is any course of action that would put the combat readiness of our military forces at risk,” McKeon said.

Rep. Adam Smith (Wash.), the top Democrat on the panel, countered that forcing service members out of the military based on sexual orientation is far more disruptive. “Gays and lesbians are currently serving in our armed forces, and we have the strongest military in the world,” Smith said. “Driving thousands of qualified individuals out of our armed forces under ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ undermines our military’s effectiveness.”

Rep. Loretta Sanchez (D-Calif.) said she did not believe the military was “so fragile” that it could not deal with the new policy.

<http://ebird.osd.mil/ebfiles/e20110407813441.html> or
<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-afghanistan-wounds-20110407,0,3925334.story>

U.S. troops in Afghanistan suffer more catastrophic injuries

By Tony Perry

Los Angeles Times, April 7, 2011

LANDSTUHL, GERMANY, AND HELMAND PROVINCE, AFGHANISTAN -- Grim combat statistics that one military doctor called "unbelievable" show U.S. troops in Afghanistan suffered an unprecedented number of catastrophic injuries last year, including a tripling of amputations of more than one limb.

A study by doctors at the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany, where most wounded troops are sent before returning to the U.S., confirmed their fears: The battlefield has become increasingly brutal.

In 2009, 75 service members brought to Landstuhl had limbs amputated. Of those, 21 had lost more than one limb.

But in 2010, 171, 11% of all the casualties brought to Landstuhl, had undergone amputations, a much higher proportion than in past wars. Of the 171, 65 had lost more than one limb.

Injuries to the genital area were also on the increase. In 2009, 52 casualties were brought to Landstuhl with battlefield injuries to their genitals or urinary tract. In 2010, that number was 142.

Dr. John Holcomb, a retired Army colonel with extensive combat-medicine experience, said he and other doctors involved in the study were shocked by the findings, which he labeled as "unbelievable."

"Everybody was taken aback by the frequency of these injuries: the double amputations, the injuries to the penis and testicles," said Holcomb, now a medical professor at the University of Texas Health Science Center in Houston. "Nothing like this has been seen before."

Military brass say the increase in catastrophic injuries can be attributed to the Taliban's use of improvised explosive devices, the roadside bombs that account for the majority of U.S. and NATO deaths and injuries. Last year was also the deadliest year for U.S. troops in Afghanistan, with 499 deaths, according to the Defense Department. Of these, 363 were from roadside bombings, according to icasualties.org.

Troops are increasingly vulnerable to injuries from such makeshift bombs as they mount foot patrols in an effort to win support from Afghan villagers, a key strategy in the counterinsurgency campaign.

An armored Humvee provides a measure of protection from a blast. A so-called mine-resistant vehicle provides more. But when a soldier or Marine steps on a roadside bomb, there is considerably less protection from flying shrapnel or super-heated air.

Also, rocks, dirt and other debris embedded in a blast wound can cause immediate and devastating infections.

The hospital at Landstuhl is the busiest it has been since the battle in the Iraqi city of Fallouja in late 2004, officials said. Both the number and severity of wounds have increased, said Air Force Lt. Col. Raymond Fang, a surgeon and trauma medical director at Landstuhl.

The average patient stays about three days at Landstuhl before being airlifted to the U.S. for further care. "All we're doing is clearing up the destruction done by the injury," Fang said.

<http://ebird.osd.mil/ebfiles/e20110407813441.html> or
<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-afghanistan-wounds-20110407,0,3925334.story>

In Afghanistan, some officers believe the insurgents have increased both the explosive power of their improvised bombs and their ability to place them for maximum carnage.

Some of the explosives are placed on fences and other aboveground locations so that the blast strikes directly at the legs of passing Marines, soldiers or medical corpsmen who accompany combat troops.

"It's a weapon of terror designed to inflict the most grievous wounds," said Marine Maj. Gen. Richard Mills, formerly the top Marine in Afghanistan.

The increase in catastrophic wounds has taken an emotional toll on the medical personnel at Landstuhl, said Navy Cmdr. Joseph Sheldon, one of nine chaplains at the U.S. military hospital.

Sheldon and the other chaplains are also present when patients awake to learn of the extent of their battlefield injuries. He remembers sitting with a wounded Marine on Christmas Eve.

"There was a lot of silence and a lot of tears, for both of us," Sheldon said. "Everybody wants their life to be the way it was, but it's not. Coming to grips with that is hard."

After the Landstuhl study was first reported in the Washington Post, Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) asked Army Gen. David H. Petraeus, the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan, for an explanation of the increase in amputations and what the military was doing to protect front-line personnel.

The Camp Pendleton-based 3rd Battalion, 5th Regiment, has been particularly hard hit, with 24 Marines killed and more than 175 wounded while deployed in the Sangin district of Helmand province.

More than a dozen Marines from the battalion have lost two or more limbs. One of them is 1st Lt. James Byler, 25, of Long Island, N.Y., who was leading a patrol in early October when an explosion severed his legs and snapped off the ends of several fingers.

Byler's patrol was walking slowly, carefully, in what is called "ranger style," with each man following in the footsteps of the man in front of him.

"Everyone had gone over that spot," said Byler, now recuperating in the U.S. "I was just the one who stepped on it when it exploded.

"It wasn't a big one, but it was enough to blow my legs off."

Religion

http://www.usatoday.com/news/religion/2011-04-01-atheists_Army_religion_01_ST_N.htm?csp=34news

Army atheists seek 'faith' privileges

By Associated Press, 1 April 2011

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — The cliché notwithstanding, there are atheists in foxholes. In fact, atheists, agnostics, humanists and other assorted skeptics from the Army's [Fort Bragg](#) have formed an organization in a pioneering effort to win recognition and ensure fair treatment for nonbelievers in the overwhelmingly Christian U.S. military.

"We exist, we're here, we're normal," said Sgt. Justin Griffith, chief organizer of Military Atheists and Secular Humanists, or [MASH](#). "We're also in foxholes. That's a big one, right there."

For now, the group meets regularly in homes and bars outside of Fort Bragg, one of the biggest military bases in the country. But it is going through the long bureaucratic process to win official recognition from the Army as a distinct "faith" group.

That would enable it to meet on base, advertise its gatherings and, members say, serve more effectively as a haven for like-minded soldiers.

"People look at you differently if you say you're an atheist in the Army," said Lt. Samantha Nicoll, a [West Point](#) graduate who in January attended her first meeting of MASH. "That's extremely taboo. I get a lot of questions if I let it slip in conversation."

The decision on recognition goes first to an Army agency called the Installation Management Command and may be reviewed after that by the Army Chaplain Corps. Neither agency returned calls for comment. MASH members said chaplains at Fort Bragg have been supportive of their effort.

Similar groups of non-theists at about 20 U.S. military bases around the world are watching the outcome at Fort Bragg in hopes it will lead to their recognition, too, said Jason Torpy, president of the Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers.

MASH, whose name conjures the 1970s movie and sitcom about an Army field hospital in the [Korean War](#), formed in January, partly in reaction to a concert called Rock the Fort that was sponsored by an evangelical Christian organization and held on base last fall. Griffith, an atheist when he joined the Army 4 1/2 years ago, said he tried to organize an atheist festival but called it off because higher-ups were not providing the same support they had for the Christian event — a claim Fort Bragg officials deny.

Griffith said MASH has about 65 members among more than 57,000 active service members who live on and off the post. Bragg is the home of the [82nd Airborne Division](#) and headquarters of the Army's Green Berets.

Fort Bragg Garrison Commander Col. Stephen Sicinski disputed Griffith's account of how the atheist concert came to be canceled but said the post is doing what it can to help Griffith win recognition for MASH. "He knows the procedures, he knows what the paper trail needs to look like, and we're guiding him along in the process to see where that goes," Sicinski said.

Meetings of military personnel who are non-theists — an umbrella term for the many varieties of nonbelievers — have been held at MacDill Air Force Base in Florida and aboard the aircraft carrier USS [Abraham Lincoln](#). But groups of any kind are prohibited from meeting on Army bases without official recognition.

If the Fort Bragg group succeeds, it will be overseen by the Chaplain Corps. That might seem contradictory for a group defined by its lack of belief, but it means MASH's literature would be

http://www.usatoday.com/news/religion/2011-04-01-atheists_Army_religion_01_ST_N.htm?csp=34news

available along with Bibles and Qurans. It could raise funds on base and, its members say, they could feel more comfortable approaching chaplains for help with personal problems. Recognition would also be an official sign that not believing in God is acceptable, something members say is lacking now.

"They call it 'coming out of the atheist closet,'" Griffith said. "There are people who won't say anything to anyone outside of their own close-knit group. They don't want Grandma to find out, or whoever. People feel like they have to lie about it."

Griffith said he doesn't know of any soldiers being denied promotions because of their atheism, and he and other MASH members at Fort Bragg said they have no horror stories about outright discrimination, that the reaction from their comrades has amounted to little more than raised eyebrows and lots of questions.

Instead, they said, they are largely motivated by a sense of isolation and a desire to spend time with people who not only understand the military experience but also share their views on religion.

It is difficult to pin down how many nonbelievers are in the military, in part because some soldiers lose their faith or convert to a different one. But a report last June by the Pentagon's Military Leadership Diversity Commission concluded that about 20 to 25% of military personnel have no religious preference. Up to 3.6% identify themselves as humanist — a catchall that can refer to a nonreligious ethical philosophy.

Surveys of the general population generally find the "no preference" category at between 10 and 15%, a figure that has grown steadily over the past 20 years, making the military numbers less surprising, said Phil Zuckerman, a sociology professor at Pitzer College in Claremont, Calif.

"People are increasingly much more likely to identify themselves with no particular religion, although that doesn't mean they're atheists. About half the nonreligious are still believers," Zuckerman said.

The Pentagon is studying religious diversity in part to make sure tensions in society at large don't become problems in the military.

The MASH group meets at restaurants and homes, discussing books or having dinner together. About 15 people attend regularly, but Griffith said he has received inquiries from roughly 100 soldiers at Fort Bragg, along with dozens from other bases.

"Granted, most soldiers are Christian, but I'd like to see some secular kind of spiritual and emotional support," said Sgt. [Adam Jennings](#), a Special Forces medic who has been in the Army for 11 years and served in combat in Afghanistan. "I want a place where I can go and be part of a close-knit community."

Court OKs Arizona's tax break for private schools

By Mark Sherman

Syracuse.com (Post-Standard), 4 April 2011

WASHINGTON (AP) -- A Supreme Court divided along ideological lines said Monday that ordinary taxpayers cannot challenge government programs that use tax breaks to direct money to religious activities.

The court ruled 5-4 in favor of an Arizona scholarship program for private schools that has mainly benefited religious schools in offering a dollar-for-dollar reduction in the income tax bill of people who participate.

The decision cheered supporters of school choice and dismayed civil libertarians who said it will be harder to use federal courts to claim violations of the Constitution's prohibition on direct government aid to religion.

Justice Anthony Kennedy wrote the court's majority opinion that held that the Arizona taxpayers who challenged the program have no stake in the dispute that would allow them to take their case to federal court.

For more than 13 years, Arizona has allowed residents to send up to \$500 to a tuition scholarship organization that they would have otherwise paid the state in taxes on their incomes. The state has passed up nearly \$350 million in income tax payments over the life of the scholarship program, and the bulk of that money has gone to private religious schools.

But because the program operates as a tax credit, instead of a direct appropriation of government money, "contributions result from the decisions of private taxpayers regarding their own funds," Kennedy said in an opinion that was joined by the four conservative justices.

The taxpayers who object to the program have no connection to the money involved, Kennedy said. The Obama administration argued aggressively for the outcome the court reached Monday; it also took the view that the challengers had no standing to sue.

In dissent, Justice Elena Kagan said the distinction was meaningless. "Appropriations and tax subsidies are readily interchangeable," Kagan said in her first dissenting opinion since joining the court in August. "What is a cash grant today can be a tax break tomorrow."

And she predicted that lawmakers elsewhere would adopt the "roadmap" Kennedy provided to subsidize religion without facing judicial review. The court's other three liberal justices signed on to her dissent.

Supporters of the Arizona program said they hope that Kagan is right. Monday's ruling and a 2002 decision that upheld the use of vouchers "should give state legislatures wide discretion in adopting school choice programs," said Tim Keller, executive director of the Arizona chapter of the Institute for Justice. The group represented both religious and secular scholarship organizations that receive the tax money.

"School choice programs are not about aiding religion. They're aimed at helping individual families," Keller said.

Monday's ruling has no effect on the more common voucher programs. Arizona adopted its unusual arrangement because its state constitution prohibits direct aid to private schools, a lawyer for the state told the court during arguments in November.

The American Civil Liberties Union led the challenge to the program.

http://www.syracuse.com/news/index.ssf/2011/04/court_oks_arizonas_tax_break_f.html

There is a general prohibition on taxpayer challenges to the government spending of tax revenue. But a 1968 Supreme Court decision created a narrow exception to allow for challenges to programs that promote religion.

In this case, the San Francisco-based federal appeals court agreed with the ACLU that the lawsuit could proceed under that high court ruling. Kennedy's opinion Monday said otherwise.

"It's a very disappointing decision that ignores precedent, defies logic and undermines the role of the courts in preserving the core constitutional principle that government may not subsidize religion," said Steven R. Shapiro, the ACLU's legal director.

Shapiro said the only bright spot was that the court rejected a more significant outcome, overruling the 1968 decision.

Justice Antonin Scalia, in a brief opinion joined by Justice Clarence Thomas, urged the court to "repudiate that misguided decision."

The consolidated cases are Arizona Christian School Tuition Organization v. Winn, 09-987, and Garriott v. Winn, 09-991.

Sexual Assault/ Harassment

<http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Education/2011/0404/White-House-targets-sexual-assault-on-campus>

White House targets sexual assault on campus

The Obama administration announced Monday a new directive outlining schools' responsibilities when students bring complaints of sexual assault or sexual harassment on campus.

**By Amanda Paulson, Staff writer
Christian Science Monitor, April 4, 2011**

Vice President Joe Biden and the Department of Education are urging America's colleges, universities, and secondary schools to do more to prevent and address sexual assault.

For the first time, the federal government has issued guidance to schools under the umbrella of Title IX – the law normally associated with gender equity in sports – on how to address issues of sexual assault. According to a 2007 survey financed by the Justice Department, 1 in 5 undergraduate women are victims of attempted or actual sexual assault, as 1 in 16 undergraduate men.

“Students across the country deserve the safest possible environment in which to learn,” said Vice President Biden in a speech Monday at the University of New Hampshire, where he spoke passionately about the broader problems of violence against women and on-campus violence. “That's why we're taking new steps to help our nation's schools, universities and colleges end the cycle of sexual violence on campus.”

[The Monitor's weekly photo news quiz for April 2, 2011](#)

The Department sent schools a letter including reminders that:

- Title IX protects students from all sexual harassment.
- Schools need to have clear systems in place for grievances – and make sure students are aware of them.
- A criminal investigation does not relieve the school of its own need to investigate any complaint, and schools must investigate complaints promptly, rather than waiting for the conclusion of a criminal investigation, as some have done in the past.
- In evaluating cases, schools must use the “preponderance of the evidence” standard of proof in meting out punishment – the standard used in civil lawsuits – as in, was it “more likely than not” that sexual violence occurred? Currently, some schools use the stronger “clear and convincing” standard generally used by the criminal courts.
- All students who bring forward complaints must be informed that they have the right to an investigation. Schools must furthermore tell the complaining student the outcome of the investigation. In the past, some schools worried that this would violate the alleged perpetrator's privacy rights.
- At any hearing during the school's Title IX investigation, all parties must have equal opportunity to present evidence and witnesses.

The letter also recommends numerous educational steps that schools can take to prevent sexual violence and harassment, and gives specific suggestions for ways the school can help a victim feel safe and get counseling during an investigation.

“This will help schools immeasurably in understanding what their responsibilities are. There's no more shooting in the dark,” says Lisa Maatz, director of public policy and government relations for the American Association of University Women. She notes that even though Title IX became law in

<http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Education/2011/0404/White-House-targets-sexual-assault-on-campus>

1972, this is the first time the Office of Civil Rights has come out with comprehensive policy on sexual violence. “It is a critical reminder, or wake-up call, for colleges and universities that this isn’t something that can be swept under the rug, and that is happening on their campuses.”

And not only on college campuses.

American high schools see nearly 4,000 reports of sexual battery and over 800 rapes and attempted rapes each year, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said at Monday's event. More than 1 in 10 high school girls are physically forced to have sex against their will by the time they graduate, he said.

“Every school would like to think it’s immune from sexual violence,” Secretary Duncan said, “but the facts suggest otherwise.”

In his speech, Duncan said the guidance was needed not just because of the instances of assaults, but from the many examples of how schools dealt with reports improperly, including placing gag orders on the victim, not taking a complaint seriously if alcohol is involved, or dragging out an investigation until the victim withdraws from the school.

“The misplaced sense of values and priorities in some of these cases is staggering,” he said. “We have to do better, and we have to do better now.”

Though the timing is coincidental, Monday's announcement comes on the heels of a complaint from students at Yale University that the school has failed to respond adequately to sexual assault and harassment claims, and the news on Friday that Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights is launching an investigation.

Students claimed that Yale has failed to properly respond to both sexual harassment – including fraternity members holding up a sign saying “we love sluts” last fall, and chanting “no means yes” on campus – and to charges of sexual assault and attempted assault.

“When you have a university the caliber of Yale being called on the carpet for this ... it’s a great illustration that this can happen to any campus that doesn’t address these issues,” says Ms. Maatz.

Young sailors most at risk for sex assault

By William H. McMichael, Staff writer
Navy Times, 4 April 2011

Reports of sexual assault in the Navy increased by 6 percent from fiscal 2009 to fiscal 2010's total of 611 incidents, according to Navy statistics.

Meanwhile, one in five female sailors has suffered some sort of sexual assault since joining the Navy, according to the Navy Department's top official for sex assault prevention.

The increase in overall reports is viewed as a good thing because the crime is considered to be greatly underreported, and officials say more reports mean more victims are coming forward for help. But no one is cheering; while reports are up, the top official says that according to the "best data," the actual incidence of sex assault has not changed in the past five years.

All told, officials say they've got work to do.

"Our highest-risk sailors are young, junior enlisteds, especially right after recruit training," said Jill Loftus, who reports "directly and regularly" to Navy Secretary Ray Mabus on sex assault issues. "Not in boot camp, because they're watched and they're under supervision, but right after their recruit training. And they're usually assaulted, unfortunately, by other junior sailors. And more often than not, [assaults take place] in alcohol-fueled settings.

"We think as a department that we need better tools to have a real impact on these individuals," Loftus told Navy Times. "And we're trying to come up with the right message in the right context at the right time with the right frequency."

"It's a crime that not only impacts the victim for years to come, it undermines teamwork and really has an impact on unit readiness," said Rear Adm. Michael Brown, director of the Navy Staff's Personal Readiness and Community Support Branch. "So we take it very seriously. And we think we've made some progress in adopting a more proactive and comprehensive approach."

At the same time, he said, "We recognize that we need to continue to change our culture surrounding the issue. And that's gonna take some time."

'Continued command emphasis'

One of the Navy's "challenges" noted in its portion of the Pentagon's annual report on sex assault, released March 17, is some resistance in the fleet to taking the issue seriously.

"Continued command emphasis on [the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response program] and "corrective actions to ensure program compliance" are noted. Some commands lag in appointing personnel to fill key positions, such as victim advocates, command liaisons and data collection coordinators, the report states.

While the rise in the number of overall incident reports is viewed positively, the increase in blue-on-blue assaults is another matter.

"We're always concerned about it," Brown said. "We prefer to have sailors taking care of sailors, like Marines are taking care of Marines. Blue-on-blue is exactly the opposite of that."

Brown said the percentage increase of blue-on-blue sex assaults is "pretty small"; according to Navy statistics contained in the report, it rose from 62 percent of all sex assaults in fiscal 2009 to 65 percent last year.

<http://www.navytimes.com/news/2011/04/navy-young-sailors-most-at-risk-for-sex-assault-040411w/>

“I don’t know if that’s statistically significant,” Brown said. “The overall message, and the bottom line, is any blue-on-blue is unacceptable.”

Victims are also taking longer to file reports. Only 37 percent of reports were made within three days of the assault — a significant drop from the 54 percent reported in fiscal 2009.

That’s a concern because longer waits hinder the investigation process — including evidence collection — and prosecutions become more challenging. The Navy also reports difficulty in timely movement of evidence specimens from “drug-facilitated assaults” for toxicology testing from outside the continental U.S.

The largest category of sex assaults in the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30 were alcohol-charged aggravated sex assaults — using threats or causing actual bodily harm during forcible sex.

Not all victims are female. According to Navy statistics, 15 percent of all sex assault victims in fiscal 2010 were male.

The Pentagon acknowledged that the incident totals probably fall far short of reality. “Research indicates that only a fraction of sexual assaults that occur each year are ever reported to law enforcement by victims,” the report states. “This reporting behavior is mirrored in the U.S. Armed Forces.”

In an effort to get victims to overcome any fears they may have about reporting the assault and to at least seek treatment, the military in June 2005 created a unique “restricted” reporting option, allowing victims to confidentially access medical care and counseling without initiating an investigation. Victims choosing this path can later choose the unrestricted option and allow an investigation to take place.

Of the Navy’s 611 reported sex assault cases, 170 were filed as restricted. Of the 441 that could be investigated, 155 were forwarded to commands for disposition. The remainder, officials said, were not prosecuted for reasons such as lack of jurisdiction, an unknown offender and unfounded allegation.

Of the 155, 71, or 46 percent, went to court-martial. Thirty-five, or 23 percent, were handled through nonjudicial punishment, Brown said.

The Navy Department’s prevention efforts have included a summit meeting for sex assault response coordinators, advisory council meetings and the hiring of a prevention expert as a Navy adviser. The Navy has also established sex assault investigation and prosecution training for Naval Criminal Investigative Service agents and introduced two bystander intervention training pilot programs and SAPR focus groups at nine different sites. Those groups involve sailors E-1 through E-4, considered to be the highest-risk category.

Deployable units don’t always have “sufficient numbers” of victim advocates because operational schedules and limited in-port time constrain training opportunities, the Navy said in the report. Many deployed forces also do not have a registered nurse assigned; to date, RNs have been the only personnel trained in performing a sex assault forensic exam. The Navy is planning to begin training other providers to perform the task.