

DEOMI News Highlights

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Army says number of medically unfit GIs on rise [Patricia Kime, *The Army Times*, 10 October 2011]

- As the Army faces a prospective drawdown, it is grappling with a growing percentage of soldiers who aren't medically fit for duty, Army Surgeon General Lt. Gen. Eric Schoomaker said Monday.
- About 15 percent of the active forces aren't able to deploy for medical reasons--a growing problem that has "begun to erode the readiness of the Army as a whole," Schoomaker said during a forum on soldier resilience at the Association of the U.S. Army conference in Washington.
- The Army aims to start addressing the issue at the point of entry into service, panel members said. Among the initiatives, the Army will continue the comprehensive soldier fitness program and implementation of an electronic health profiling system that better monitors soldier fitness and improved diet initiatives.

[Army says number of medically unfit GIs on rise](#)

Explicit messages, images put careers at risk [Joe Gould and Gina Cavallaro, *The Army Times*, 10 October 2011]

- With growing frequency, soldiers are using cellphones and other digital media to swap sexually explicit images and messages as they conduct relationships... that the Army frowns on.
- The Army has no specific policy on sexting. Nor does it maintain data on incidents in which soldiers are investigated or disciplined for sexting.
- The temptation for sexting can be hard to resist. People engage in sexting because it's easy and instantaneously gratifying, according to behavioral health experts.

[Explicit messages, images put careers at risk](#)

Marine recruiters reach out at gay pride event in Pasadena [Martha Groves, *Los Angeles Times*, 9 October 2011]

- The Marines set up a booth at San Gabriel Valley Pride's Community Unity Day at Pasadena City College. They were the only military branch to attend.
- With the official repeal last month of the military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy, the Marine Corps, the service that was most opposed to ending the policy, appears to be leading the charge into new recruitment territory.
- Tom Carpenter, a former Marine fighter pilot and a member of the board of the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network, said... the move would improve the pool of candidates strained by two wars.

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Diversity

Bilingual voting ballots ordered in 25 states

By HOPE YEN

Associated Press/ , 12 October 2011

WASHINGTON (AP) -- In the run-up to the 2012 elections, the federal government is ordering that 248 counties and other political jurisdictions provide bilingual ballots to Hispanics and other minorities who speak little or no English.

That number is down from a decade ago following the 2000 census, which covered 296 counties in 30 states. In all, more than 1 in 18 jurisdictions must now provide foreign-language assistance in pre-election publicity, voter registration, early voting and absentee applications as well as Election Day balloting.

The latest requirements, mandated under the Voting Rights Act, partly reflect second and third generations of racial and ethnic minorities who are now reporting higher levels of proficiency in English than their parents. Still, analysts cite a greater potential for resistance from localities that face tighter budgets, new laws requiring voter IDs at polls and increased anti-immigration sentiment.

Effective this week, Hispanics who don't speak English will be entitled to Spanish-language election material in urban areas of political battleground states including Pennsylvania, Virginia, Wisconsin, Utah and Florida. For the first time, people from India will get election material in their native language, in voting precincts in Los Angeles, Chicago and New York, due to their fast population growth.

More American Indian tribal languages will be made available in many parts of Alaska, Arizona and Mississippi, while Vietnamese and Taiwanese will get their own voting assistance in several new areas, including parts of Washington state, Texas, Massachusetts and California.

"We would like to be in a society where everyone has equal opportunities to vote, but that's not the reality we're living in today," said James Thomas Tucker, a former Justice Department attorney who is now a voting rights lawyer in Las Vegas. Tucker said the law has been key in the election of new Hispanic and Asian officials in many places, even as he noted that a vocal English-only language movement and new budget constraints on local governments could stir fresh tensions.

"Some jurisdictions will see pushback," he said.

The Voting Rights Act provision, first approved by Congress in 1975, requires states, counties and political subdivisions to supply versions of ballots and election materials in other languages if a Latino, Asian-American, American Indian or Alaskan minority group makes up more than 5 percent of the voting-age population or at least 10,000 citizens.

The minorities must be unable to speak or understand English well enough to vote in elections, a proficiency level determined by those who indicate in census surveys that they don't speak English "very well." The minority group also should have literacy rates ranking below the national average.

In all, 248 counties and other political divisions must provide election materials involving 68 covered languages, according to the list released Wednesday by the Census Bureau. The agency puts together the list based on its review of survey data on minority population growth, educational attainment and English proficiency.

It was the first decline in the total number since the bureau began compiling the list with English-proficiency criteria in the 1980s.

http://www.forbes.com/feeds/ap/2011/10/13/business-us-census-bilingual-ballots_8732595.html
Under a separate provision of the Voting Rights Act, some 200 other jurisdictions are already required to provide bilingual material, including the entire states of Alaska, Arizona and Texas. With the newest additions this week, the total number of counties or subdivisions with requirements is more than 1 in 18.

The language requirements already have drawn fire from some Republicans, who complain they are too burdensome on local governments.

In a letter in August, Reps. Trent Franks, R-Ariz., who chairs a Judiciary subcommittee, and Trey Gowdy, R-S.C., who heads the House oversight panel on the census, asked the Census Bureau to delay release of the list to reexamine its criteria, given state and local budget crises they said will make it harder for localities to comply. They cited the case of Cuyahoga County in Ohio, which spent more than \$100,000 on bilingual ballots in a light-turnout primary election last May.

Localities have struggled in the past with compliance, since they are left to figure out the best ways to provide bilingual materials at a reasonable cost. Shortly before the Voting Rights provisions were reauthorized in 2006, a Pew Center on the States study found that elected officials often would "ponder the impact of implementing - or in some cases sidestepping - the federal requirements."

It cited some confusion over how many bilingual ballots to print, or what types of election materials are covered. But Pew and separate government studies said compliance often could be achieved at lower cost by hiring bilingual poll workers who perform dual functions of translation and other Election Day tasks, as well as printing sample bilingual ballots that minorities could refer to.

The continuing demands for bilingual balloting come at a time when residents in the U.S. are increasingly likely to speak a language other than English at home, but who are also now more likely have lived in the U.S. for at least a decade and be naturalized citizens who vote.

Eugene Lee, voting rights project director at the Asian Pacific American Legal Center, noted the significant impact that language assistance has had on voting and the election of Asian-Americans in places such as California. In Los Angeles County, officials will now be required to offer materials in Cambodian and Asian Indian languages in addition to Spanish, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese.

Associated Press writer Amy Taxin in Orange County, Calif., contributed to this report.

Human Relations

Monument honors U.S. 'horse soldiers' who invaded Afghanistan

By Alex Quade, Special to CNN
CNN.com, October 6, 2011

Editor's note: Freelance war correspondent Alex Quade spent nearly 18 months in Iraq and Afghanistan covering U.S. special operations forces on combat missions, including for CNN.



Artist Douwe Blumberg puts final touches on a clay sculpture that will honor U.S. special operations forces

Demossville, Kentucky--The U.S. special operations teams that led the American invasion in Afghanistan a decade ago did something that no American military had done since the last century: ride horses into combat.

"It was like out of the Old Testament," says Lt. Col. Max Bowers, retired Green Beret, who commanded the three horseback teams.

"You expected Cecil B. DeMille to be filming and Charlton Heston to walk out."

Bowers spoke while sitting in the rural Kentucky studio of sculptor Douwe Blumberg, along with three of his former "horse soldiers."

They, along with 30 fellow commandos on horseback, are the inspiration for a new monument that Blumberg is creating, dedicated to the entire U.S. special operations community.

The statue is scheduled to be erected across from the World Trade Center site in New York on November 11, Veterans Day. The artist rounded up these "horse soldiers" to share their personal stories and mission photos as inspiration for the 18-foot, bronze monument. "It was unbelievable in 2001," Master Sgt. Bart Decker says to Blumberg.

Decker, the team's Air Force Special Operations combat controller, who is now retired, sports a Fu Manchu-style mustache. "We all looked at each other [and said] 'We're witnessing a cavalry charge!'" he said.

Blumberg listens in awe to the elite fighters in his art studio. He says he felt compelled to sculpt the monument after then-Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld first held up a photo of these special operations forces on horseback in northern Afghanistan during a 2001 news conference. "The image, I think, typifies the special operations mission of get the job done, however you have to do it, adapt, overcome," the artist tells Bowers and his fellow fighters.

That image has also captured the imagination of Hollywood blockbuster producer Jerry Bruckheimer, who's making a movie based on the mission as told by Doug Stanton in his New York Times best-selling book, "Horse Soldiers: The Extraordinary Story of a Band of U.S. Soldiers Who Rode to Victory in Afghanistan." Blumberg learns that the inspirational photo was shot by one of the "killer elite" sitting casually in front of him in his art studio.

The horse soldiers' stories

"If we wanted to move, horses were the only way," said Master Sgt. Chris Spence, the team's communication sergeant, who serves with 5th Special Forces Group. "Nobody will believe this! (So) I take my camera and (shoot) that photo."

<http://www.cnn.com/2011/10/06/us/afghanistan-horse-soldiers-memorial/index.html>

Bowers points at that famous photo, explaining to Blumberg: "The Afghans and intelligence officers (CIA) are clotted up in front together, and all our guys are spread out in a wedge behind them."

For most of the Americans, it was their first time on a horse. But, their mission was critical: synchronize tribal warfare against Taliban and al Qaeda enemies by riding with, and advising, rival Northern Alliance warlords.

The artist touches a bridle and an Afghan saddle the team brought from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, which are registered with the Smithsonian Museum. One of the nation's leading equestrian sculptors, Blumberg is fascinated with the little-known details of these special operators' horseback mission in the steep, mountain terrain of Northern Afghanistan.

"Were you worried about the footing of the horse?" the sculptor asks the team. "Absolutely," replies Decker, the Air Force combat controller. "They were trying to scramble up the rocks, and their hooves, their shoes were sparking. You were worried about sliding off anytime, but you had to keep going."

In the male-dominated Afghan culture, all war horses are stallions; there were no mares. The team tells the artist the stallions were constantly biting, kicking and rearing. "It was like riding a bobcat," Bowers says. "That's another big reason we separated, especially at night, when we're walking on that ledge, because you put two horses together, all they wanted to do was fight. You look down at the left side, there's a 500-foot drop-off," Decker adds.

"It was a sheer cliff," explains Sgt. 1st Class Joe Jung, the team's Green Beret medic and sniper, who currently serves at U.S. Army Special Operations Command. "If someone would have fallen off, we would not have known," Master Sgt. Chris Spence says.

That almost happened to Jung. When his horse slid backward, he jumped off, and the horse landed on him. "It was the first week. Winded up breaking my back," Jung says quietly.

The sculptor's eyes are wide; his hand rubs his chin. "So, you rode the rest of the mission with a broken back?" Blumberg asks.

"Correct," Jung answers, "Two shots of morphine to relieve the pain, and get back on the horse. I would not allow myself to be the weak link. It's not in my nature, and it's not in any Green Beret's nature."

Jung and the others were each handpicked for this special operation by Bowers, who carried a piece of the World Trade Center during their entire mission advising the rival Northern Alliance warlords.

"There were suspicions about our motives," Bowers says to the artist. "I pulled the bent piece of steel out and showed it to them [and said,] 'This is why we're here: We simply want to ensure that it's not a sanctuary for terrorist forces that have attacked the United States.'"

Blumberg looks through the men's photos of the aftermath of a major battle in Mazar-e Sharif showing bodies and rubble from Air Force bombs. He realizes at that point just how tough the special operations forces' mission was, right after the September 11 attacks.

The battlefield is far removed from his studio, littered not with the carnage of war but with the dust and scraps from his sculpture.

After that Mazar-e Sharif battle, as Green Beret medic Jung was treating wounded prisoners at a prison camp, he recalls hearing an odd voice nearby. "The accent was not there. Something just didn't sound right, it just didn't add up," he says.

He got up and told the American intelligence agents who were questioning other prisoners. A linguistics specialist came over to help Jung treat another patient.

"He was listening to the conversation [and] immediately scooped him up," Jung recalls. "It turned out to be Walker."

<http://www.cnn.com/2011/10/06/us/afghanistan-horse-soldiers-memorial/index.html>

It was John Walker Lindh, the so-called American Taliban from California. Blumberg sits forward in his chair. To him, the idea that an American was fighting alongside the men who helped carry out the 9/11 attacks is unthinkable.

Months later, after the Taliban regime had fallen, the special operations teams chose Mazar-e Sharif -- the site of one of their fiercest battles and where CIA officer Mike Spann became the first American killed in action in Afghanistan -- to bury the piece of the World Trade Center that Bowers had carried their entire mission.

"We took this piece of steel, put it in a body bag, folded American colors over it as when we lay our heroes to rest at Arlington," Bowers explains to Blumberg.

"We thought that this piece of the World Trade Center [should] be buried in a spot that was full of al Qaeda terrorists and memorialized."

The monument takes shape

Ten years later, these horse soldiers' stories will be memorialized in Blumberg's monument across from the World Trade Center site.

It will be unveiled during the November 11 Veterans Day parade, with the help of New York City firefighters, police officers, other emergency responders and Port Authority members.

"It will pay tribute to all U.S. special operations forces," Blumberg tells the team. "It will give New Yorkers an opportunity to honor the veterans who, worldwide, acted as New York's 'second responders' directly after the attack."

Members of Wall Street banking firms, who were personally affected by the attack at the World Trade Center, commissioned the artist. They ask to remain anonymous, so the focus stays on the meaning of the monument.

"They are an ad hoc group of grateful Wall Street bankers who personally survived and lost friends and many associates in the 9/11 attacks," Blumberg says. "They, and their community surrounding the World Trade Center, were permanently affected by the event. No public funds are being used."

In a Manhattan office, two of those individual supporters are helping organize this at a grass-roots level. They say that after the attacks, and the years of war that followed, their families and friends across the country asked them: Where could they go to remember the U.S. troops overseas who are trying to tackle potential terrorist threats, every day?

"We wanted to do something for the special operations community and all military service branches, because every day since 9/11, we've had to look at that hole in the ground," one of the private backers says. A piece of World Trade Center steel may be embedded in the monument's base. The statue will be installed on private property, owned by a supportive firm, close to ground zero.

Back in Kentucky, Blumberg asks the horse soldiers assembled in his studio if they are concerned about whether anti-military groups, or detractors, will criticize the monument as glamorizing warfare.

"It's just not about the soldiers that have fallen, it's about those that were in the towers, those that were on Flight 93, and the Pentagon; the children that lost their mothers and fathers and brothers and sisters," medic Jung tells the sculptor. "What everyone needs to know is: There are people out there like this team, like the Green Berets, that are willing to sacrifice at all costs for them."

Spence, the communications sergeant who shot the photo that originally compelled the artist, agrees.

"These are the guys that have your back. These are the guys that are now watching an eternal vigil over ground zero. The falling of these towers launched us off on horseback. Now, we're watching over you, and we have your back. That's what this statue is symbolizing."

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/08/world/nobel-peace-prize-johnson-sirleaf-gbowee-karman.html?scp=1&sq=nobel%20peace%20prize%202011&st=cse>

Nobel Peace Prize Awarded to Three Activist Women

By Alan Cowell, Laura Kasinof and Adam Nossiter
New York Times, October 7, 2011



(Photo's by: Left: Chester Higgins Jr./The New York Times; center: Jane Hahn for The New York Times; right: Yahya Arhab/EPA)

Left, Leymah Gbowee in September; center: Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the Liberian president, on Friday; right: Tawakkol Karman in Sana, Yemen, on Friday.

LONDON — The Nobel Peace Prize for 2011 was awarded on Friday to three women from Africa and the Arab world in acknowledgment of their nonviolent role in promoting peace, democracy and gender equality. The winners were President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia — the first woman to be elected president in modern Africa — her compatriot, the peace activist Leymah Gbowee, and Tawakkol Karman of Yemen, a pro-democracy campaigner.

They were the first women to win the prize since Wangari Maathai of Kenya, who died last month, was named as the laureate in 2004. Most of the recipients in the award's 110-year history have been men, and Friday's decision seemed designed to give impetus to the fight for women's rights around the world.

"We cannot achieve democracy and lasting peace in the world unless women obtain the same opportunities as men to influence developments at all levels of society," said the citation read by Thorbjorn Jagland, a former Norwegian prime minister who heads the Oslo-based Nobel committee that chooses the winner of the \$1.5 million prize. In a subsequent interview, he described the prize as "a very important signal to women all over the world."

Sitting inside her blue tent at the antigovernment sit-in where she has lived since late February, Ms. Karman, the Yemeni human rights activist, said "I didn't expect it," her eyes growing wide, a red flowered veil around her head. "It came as a total surprise." Ms. Karman, 32, a mother of three, took to the streets of the capital along with about 50 other university students in January, demanding the resignation of President Ali Abdullah Saleh. "This is a victory for Arabs around the world," she said of the prize, adding "and a victory for Arab women."

In Liberia, Mrs. Johnson Sirleaf said that she and Ms. Gbowee accepted "this honor on behalf of the Liberian people, and the credit goes to them." "For we are now going into our ninth year of peace, and every Liberian has contributed to it," she said. "We particularly give this credit to Liberian women, who have consistently led the struggle for peace, even under conditions of neglect." Mrs. Johnson Sirleaf is nearing the end of a heated re-election campaign, and as the world absorbed the news of her

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/08/world/nobel-peace-prize-johnson-sirleaf-gbowee-karman.html?scp=1&sq=nobel%20peace%20prize%202011&st=cse>

prize, her nation's capital, Monrovia, was virtually shut down by a previously scheduled rally intended to energize the opposition before the vote on Tuesday.

Mr. Jagland said the election had not influenced the committee's decision, calling the ballot there a "domestic consideration." Analysts in Liberia have described the president's re-election prospects as uncertain, though the Nobel announcement could change that. The Nobel committee's decision underscored the gap between local perceptions of her — it is not hard to find critics of the president in Liberia — and the view from abroad.

Indeed, while Liberians widely acknowledge that peace and security have improved markedly during her tenure, Mrs. Johnson Sirleaf's success in securing forgiveness for billions of dollars worth of Liberian debt and the change she has effected in the nation's once brutal international image are often less appreciated in Monrovia than among outsiders. Unemployment is daunting, and the country is still mired in poverty.

But some residents took obvious pride in the decision. As the prize was announced, Bushuben Keita, a spokesman for Mrs. Johnson Sirleaf's Unity Party, declared: "We are dancing. This is the thing that we have been saying: progress has been made in Liberia. We've come through 14 years of war, and we have come to sustained peace. "This is proof that she has been doing well; there's no cheating in this, this comes from other people. She's doing very, very well. Her progress has been confirmed by the international community."

In Yemen, Ms. Karman called the prize "the victory of our peaceful revolution. I am so happy, and I give this award to all of the youth and all of the women across the Arab world, in Egypt, in Tunisia." "We cannot build our country or any country in the world without peace," she said.

In an op-ed piece published in The New York Times on June 18, Ms. Karman, whose first name in Arabic has been spelled as both Tawakkol and Tawakul, characterized President Saleh's regime as a corrupt failure, and she urged the United States to quit supporting him even though he has portrayed himself as indispensable to the American effort to eliminate Al Qaeda operatives in Yemen. American officials have been pressing Mr. Saleh to relinquish power in a peaceful transition.

In Washington, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, one of the world's most powerful women, praised the award recipients. "The unflinching courage, strength and leadership of these women to build peace, advance reconciliation and defend the rights of fellow citizens in their own countries provide inspiration for women's rights and human progress everywhere," Mrs. Clinton said in a statement.

In Egypt, several activists who had been rumored to be in contention for the prize for their roles in the Egyptian revolution — the Google executive Wael Ghonim, the online organizer Esraa Abdel Fatah and the members of the April 6 Youth Movement — expressed pride that a young Arab had won the Nobel. They declared that the true prize they sought was the fruition of the Egyptian revolution in the development of democracy in Egypt and the region. "We will work hard even if we didn't get the Nobel prize," Waleed Rashed, a spokesman for the April 6 group, said in an Internet posting.

More than 250 people were nominated for the prize this year, and there had been speculation that the committee would reward bloggers or other activists from the Middle East who used social networking sites and other Internet platforms as they challenged entrenched dictatorships, particularly in Tunisia and Egypt. But if the committee had singled out the Arab Spring, it could have courted criticism that, far from rewarding efforts toward peace, it had chosen a phenomenon whose final outcome in Egypt and Tunisia is far from clear, and which has provoked bloodletting and strife in Libya, Syria, Yemen and Bahrain. Mr. Jagland said the 2011 prize recognized those "who were there long before the world's media was there reporting."

The announcement in the Norwegian capital followed intense speculation that the prize would be awarded variously to a figure from the Arab Spring, the European Union or exclusively to Mrs.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/08/world/nobel-peace-prize-johnson-sirleaf-gbowee-karman.html?scp=1&sq=nobel%20peace%20prize%202011&st=cse>

Johnson Sirleaf, 72, a Harvard-educated economist, who has often been cast as a pioneer in African politics. In a recent interview with the Paris-based monthly magazine *The Africa Report*, Mrs. Johnson Sirleaf said she did not “want Africa to return to the men’s club” and forecast that women would take over in more African countries.

“It will definitely happen in other countries because many women are now vying for the presidency, which didn’t happen much in the past,” said Mrs. Johnson Sirleaf, who was inaugurated in January 2006. She was broadly perceived as a reformer and peacemaker when she took office after several years in exile, during which she worked as a World Bank economist.

In Yemen, Ms. Karman has been widely known as a vocal opponent of the pro-American regime of Mr. Saleh since 2007, leading a human rights advocacy group called Women Journalists Without Chains. But it was only earlier this year — before the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt had gained momentum — that her readiness to take to the streets inspired thousands more in Yemen to do the same. Her brief arrest by the authorities in January incensed many people and is credited by some analysts in Yemen with starting the widespread protests that have convulsed the impoverished land since. Some of her supporters have labeled her “the Mother of Revolution.”

Since then, however, she has become a contentious figure, criticized even by some in the anti-Saleh opposition, and her share in the prize could stir further debate among antigovernment activists.

Among women of Yemen’s Arab neighbors, however, the choice of Ms. Karman was cause for celebration, both for women and Islam. Nadia Mostafa, a professor of international relations at Cairo University, said the prize was endowed with “political significance.” “Islam has always been associated with radical terrorism, intolerance and more,” she said. “Giving it to a woman and an Islamist? That means a sort of re-evaluation. It means Islam is not against peace, it’s not against women, and Islamists can be women activists, and they can fight for human rights, freedom and democracy.”

Ms. Gbowee, 39, was cited by the Nobel committee for uniting Christian and Muslim women against her country’s warlords. As head of the Women for Peace movement, she was praised for mobilizing women “across ethnic and religious dividing lines to bring an end to the long war” that had raged for years in Liberia until its end in 2003 and for ensuring “women’s participation in elections.” Her organization was founded in 2002 when Ms. Gbowee rallied women to sing and pray to protest fighting in a fish market.

“This whole process of three women receiving the Nobel Peace Prize is really overwhelming,” Ms. Gbowee said in a telephone interview in New York, where she had just arrived on the last stop of an eight-city tour in the United States to promote “Mighty Be Our Powers,” her new memoir describing her life in war-torn Liberia. “It’s finally a recognition that we can’t ignore the other half of the world’s population. We cannot ignore their unique skills.” Asked whom she was going to vote for when she returned to Liberia for the election on Tuesday, Ms. Gbowee said: “President Johnson Sirleaf.”

Vaiba Flomo, a women’s right activists who has worked with Ms. Gbowee since 1998, said: “What motivated Leymah was the children she saw dying from starvation; women are getting raped, receiving multiple traumas. People shared with her, made her to come to know these things.” Without such commitment, she said, “half the Liberian youth population will be amputated.”

“It’s good news for the Liberian people,” said Emmanuel Ogbodu, a teacher, standing by the side of the road in the ramshackle seaside capital, referring to Mrs. Johnson Sirleaf. “It’s a good way for peace in Liberia. Since she got in the chair, for me, we are experiencing peace. So I think she deserved it. Through her, peace came.”

Immediate reaction in Monrovia was muted as the news was slow to spread. But some who had heard expressed satisfaction. “I appreciate her highly, very well,” said Kona Ndoma, a civil servant. “She

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/08/world/nobel-peace-prize-johnson-sirleaf-gbowee-karman.html?scp=1&sq=nobel%20peace%20prize%202011&st=cse>

has done very much for developmental purposes. So now, we go for the second term, please,” said Mr. Ndoma. “She stabilized peace. There is no gunfire at all.”

A woman selling fritters by the side of the road, Christiana Sami, said: “She deserves it, because she has developed the area. She’s done some important things.” A student, Grace Kollie, 18, walking to school, said: “She increased the education system in Liberia. She also carried on good development in the country.” Forecasts of the winner are rarely accurate. In 2009, the committee stunned Nobel watchers by awarding the prize to President Obama.

Last year’s winner was the Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo — a choice that infuriated the Chinese authorities and led them to take reprisals against Norway. Mr. Liu was not allowed to leave China to receive the prize and was represented on stage at the award ceremony in December by an empty chair.

In the past the prize has not infrequently been split among several recipients, including the 1994 prize shared by the Palestinian Yasser Arafat and the Israelis Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Rabin; the 1978 award to Anwar Sadat of Egypt and Menachem Begin of Israel; and the 1973 prize to Henry A. Kissinger of the United States and Le Duc Tho of North Vietnam.

Alan Cowell reported from London, Laura Kasinof from Sana, Yemen, and Adam Nossiter from Monrovia, Liberia. Reporting was contributed by Heba Afify from Cairo, Anthony Shadid from Istanbul, Turkey, and Rick Gladstone from New York.

Miscellaneous

Army says number of medically unfit GIs on rise

By Patricia Kime - Staff writer

Army Times, Oct 10, 2011 17:33:29 EDT

As the Army faces a prospective drawdown, it is grappling with a growing percentage of soldiers who aren't medically fit for duty, Army Surgeon General Lt. Gen. Eric Schoomaker said Monday.

About 15 percent of the active forces aren't able to deploy for medical reasons — a growing problem that has “begun to erode the readiness of the Army as a whole,” Schoomaker said during a forum on soldier resilience at the Association of the U.S. Army conference in Washington.

With the elimination of stop-loss, attrition of surge forces and expansion of medical programs that better identify troops' medical needs, the pool of those who are considered medically “not ready” for duty is broadening, and the Army must act quickly to ensure the burden doesn't overwhelm the force, Schoomaker said.

Many of the soldiers involved are not those injured in combat, he added. For a variety of reasons, troops might not meet unit health standards for deployment, parameters set by the strategic commands for combat or they reside on the temporary disability retirement list awaiting discharge, under the Army fold of administrative oversight and personnel support.

“Rear detachments are getting an ever increasing amount of soldiers to take care of without the resources,” agreed Brig. Gen. Brian Lein, U.S. Army Forces Command surgeon.

The Army aims to start addressing the issue at the point of entry into service, panel members said. According to deputy surgeon general Maj. Gen. Richard Stone, roughly 25 percent of new recruits come into the service with low iron and low bone density, and recruits overall have the highest body mass indexes ever recorded — issues that can be addressed during boot camp with better nutrition, improved fitness programs and lifestyle education, Stone said.

Among the initiatives the Army will continue: the comprehensive soldier fitness program, implementation of an electronic health profiling system that better monitors soldier fitness and improved diet initiatives.

At boot camp, this includes the Army's “Go For Green” campaign, promoting healthy food choices. It also will include screening for a recruit's potential for musculoskeletal injury and training them to avoid injuries.

“We need to view soldiers at the premier tactical athletic outfit they are,” Stone said. “What's interesting is that it doesn't take large number of personnel descending on your unit to accomplish this.”

The goal, the leaders said, is to move from health care to “health.” Schoomaker praised the initiatives undertaken by first lady Michelle Obama, who has made childhood obesity one of her signature issues.

And he's asked medical commanders to start examining the body mass indexes of their communities — the BMIs of children, family members and retirees served at their military hospital or clinic.

He admits he's gotten pushback.

“I've asked for improved monitoring of BMI, and they've said, ‘How do I do that? I can't get in children's lunchboxes.’ I know. But figure it out.” Schoomaker said. “Some commanders have started teaching in schools or partnering with the local fast food chains and AFFES to see they can inject healthier foods and change behaviors, because we are all about trying to change behaviors.”

Chairman: Transition is Military's Task at Hand

By Karen Parrish

American Forces Press Service, 12 October 2011

WASHINGTON, Oct. 12, 2011 – Army Gen. Martin E. Dempsey said today his job as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff will center on leading transitions: from war to readiness, from bigger to smaller budgets, and from uniformed service members to veterans.

Speaking to an audience of several hundred at the Association of the U.S. Army's annual meeting here, the chairman emphasized that while transition already is beginning, the nation still is at war. Current conflicts developed over years, he added, and will not end quickly.

Dempsey noted today is the 11th anniversary of the attack on the USS Cole in Yemen's port of Aden, during which 17 U.S. sailors were killed and 39 others were injured when an al-Qaida suicide bomber in a small boat set off explosives near the ship.

"At the time, it appeared to be kind of a one-off attack," Dempsey said, noting that only in hindsight did the Cole bombing appear as part of a continuum including the 1993 attack on the World Trade Center, the 1996 Khobar Towers bombing, the 9/11 attacks and attacks in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in 2003.

"It took us about a decade to realize we were at war," the chairman said. "Make no mistake about it, it will take us about a decade ... to overcome that challenge."

America's military success is based in part on trust, Dempsey said. He displayed on the room's large screens the image of a squad leader, speaking on a radio in the middle of combat in Afghanistan.

"The squad leader -- you can tell by his eyes -- is going through the conflicting emotions of courage and fear, confidence and uncertainty," the chairman said.

The soldier is calling for something he needs, perhaps medical evacuation, close air support, guidance or any number of other capabilities, Dempsey said. "Here's what sets us apart: he knows he's going to get it," the general said. "In this country, when we send our soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines to war, if they need something, they're going to get it."

Whatever challenges lie ahead, the chairman said, the nation and the military cannot afford to break that "sacred bond of trust." "I say 'afford' because it really comes down to the resources the nation will commit to supplying to its men and women in uniform," he said.

As combat levels keep declining and more troops leave the military, veterans' issues, including medical care and employment, will become more challenging, Dempsey said. "We will reach out to partners and stakeholders across the government and in industry to try to help with that transition," he added.

Dempsey said reducing the defense budget is not a new phenomenon. "We've been down this road before," he said. "We'll go back again. It's our responsibility to articulate the opportunities and the risks, to manage those risks, and to provide our nation's leaders and our fellow citizens with as many options as possible."

Those transitions are "the task at hand," the chairman said. The existing and potential partnerships linking service members, civilians, the Defense Department, other government agencies and the nation as a whole make him confident "we're going to be OK," he added.

"We'll do it," he said. "We'll figure it out together."

Marching in King's Shadow

By Diane McWhorter

New York Times, October 6, 2011

Cambridge, Mass.: IF you recognized the name of only one of the two greats who succumbed to cancer on Wednesday, that's perhaps because the work of the Rev. Fred L. Shuttlesworth, who died at 89 in a hospital in Birmingham, Ala., was about as low-tech as it gets.



Barack Obama with reverend Joseph Lowery(L), reverend Fred Shuttlesworth (front) and Joann Bland (R) walk over the Edmund Pettus Bridge during a march commemorating the 1965 Selma-Montgomery Voting Rights March in Selma, Alabama, March 4, 2007 Credit: Reuters/Tami Chappell.

Using an operating system of unadorned bodily witness, backed by a headlong courage that

often tested the grace of his God, Mr. Shuttlesworth was the key architect of the civil rights revolution's turning-point victory in Birmingham, the mass marches of 1963. Their internationally infamous climax, the showdown between the movement's child demonstrators and the city of Birmingham's fire hoses and police dogs, gave President John F. Kennedy the moral authority he needed to introduce legislation to abolish legal segregation, passed after his death as the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

True, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the reluctant leader whom Mr. Shuttlesworth virtually goaded into joining him in Birmingham, got the credit — and the Nobel Peace Prize — for their accomplishment. But that's partly because Mr. Shuttlesworth was the un-King, the product not of polished Atlanta but of rough, heavy-industrial Birmingham. As the public face of the movement, King was its ambassador to the white world, while Mr. Shuttlesworth was the man in the trenches. But without Mr. Shuttlesworth's strategic acumen and troops, justice would have been dramatically delayed. And his failure to get his due may be yet another example of the country's reluctance to face up to the "class warfare" that not only animates the current Occupy Wall Street demonstrations (yet another variation on the Birmingham template), but has long roiled the black community as well.

Among his movement colleagues, Mr. Shuttlesworth was known, with exasperation and admiration, as the Wild Man from Birmingham. He had been a lonely pioneer of nonviolent direct action in the 1950s, dispatching his followers to illegal seats in the front of Birmingham's buses the day after the Ku Klux Klan bombed his bed out from under him on Christmas night in 1956. ("And this," Mr. Shuttlesworth would later say, "is where I was blown into history.")

http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/07/opinion/fred-shuttlesworth-marching-in-kings-shadow.html?_r=1

He became increasingly frustrated trying to prod King, with whom he and two other black ministers founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in 1957, to fulfill their organization's pledge to "redeem the soul of America." If King was Hamlet, not quite able to make up his mind and break away from the ceremonial demands of his role, Mr. Shuttlesworth sometimes resembled the Road Runner. "I literally tried to get myself killed," he said. He was involved in more bodily attacks, arrests, jail sentences and Supreme Court test cases than any other member of the S.C.L.C.

Mr. Shuttlesworth, born to young, unmarried parents and raised in hardship, had a long history of challenging not just white privilege but the prejudices of what he called the "tea sippers" of his own race, who had shunned his largely working-class movement until its success appeared inevitable, thanks to his efforts.

It was that experience that drove his often-tense relationship with King during the Birmingham protests. At one point the S.C.L.C.'s "Atlanta crowd" had tried to call off the demonstrations while Mr. Shuttlesworth was in the hospital recovering from injuries inflicted by one of the fire hoses of his equally determined nemesis, the arch-segregationist police commissioner Eugene (Bull) Connor. Mr. Shuttlesworth, who readily acknowledged being a "cussing preacher," used some hurtful profanity in letting King know what he thought of this capitulation — and overruled him, declaring the demonstrations back on.

When King traveled to Oslo the next year to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, won mainly because of the success in Birmingham, Mr. Shuttlesworth was not included in the sizable entourage that accompanied him. There is a sense that he was paying the price for being the first S.C.L.C. leader to buck King's authority — with the added insult of being right.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, the man forever being eased out of the limelight had his own passing superseded within hours by the head-of-state mourning that greeted the death of Steven P. Jobs. Mr. Jobs is being remembered as the "the man who invented our world," in the words of one headline, celebrated for creating objects to which their owners relate as though they were human. Mr. Shuttlesworth's legacy, though, reminds us of the not-so-distant era when the task of our heroes was to persuade society to regard as human a class of people who had long been treated as things.

A few years ago, after Mr. Shuttlesworth had survived a house fire, I teased him about his continuing record of close calls, saying that even though the segregationists hadn't done him in, somebody was going to get him one way or the other. "Yeah, and when they do," he replied, "God's going to say, 'They got a man.'"

Diane McWhorter is the author of "Carry Me Home: Birmingham, Alabama, the Climactic Battle of the Civil Rights Revolution."

<http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-1009-gay-pride-marines-20111010,0,2982377.story>

Marine recruiters reach out at gay pride event in Pasadena

By Martha Groves

Los Angeles Times, 9 October 2011

The Marines set up a booth at San Gabriel Valley Pride's Community Unity Day at Pasadena City College. They were the only military branch to attend.



Kenny Clark, 17, struggles to complete the last of many pull-ups as Marine Corps recruiter Staff Sgt. George Garcia looks on at the San Gabriel Valley Pride festival at Pasadena City College. (Robert Gauthier, Los Angeles Times)

Marine Corps recruiters at the San Gabriel Valley Pride event at Pasadena City College on Saturday didn't care whether the young men who lined up to test their strength

were gay or straight.

The Marines just wanted to see some pull-ups done properly: Place hands about shoulder width apart, palms facing away; pull upward until chin is over the bar and then slowly return to the hanging position. Repeat until the feet feel like concrete blocks and the biceps like rubber bands about to snap.

Addison Arce, 23, a slight, sinewy man who ran cross-country at Burbank High School, impressed them with 13 brisk pull-ups. "I've always been fond of the military and what they do," said Arce, who described himself as bisexual. "I've thought about joining. Whether it would be the Marines, the Navy or Coast Guard, I'm not sure." These Marines, he added, "they really know how to put on a show."

With the official repeal last month of the military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy, the Marine Corps, the service that was most opposed to ending the policy, appears to be leading the charge into new recruitment territory.

The end of the hush-hush era opens up another qualified pool of applicants, said Sgt. Monique Wallace, marketing and public affairs representative for the Marine Corps' Recruiting Station Los Angeles.

Carlos Ramirez, a board member of San Gabriel Valley Pride, said he believed that his group's Community Unity Day was the first Southern California pride event to host military recruitment. San Gabriel Valley Pride is a nonprofit group dedicated to raising awareness about the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender culture. Other pride groups in the region, Ramirez said, had held events before Sept. 20, the formal end of the military's 17-year policy that barred gay men and women from serving openly in the military.

Whether the end of "don't ask, don't tell" will open recruitment floodgates remains to be seen. As soon as the policy was repealed last month, a top Marine recruiting trainer for the Southwest showed up at the biggest gay community center in Tulsa, Okla., bracing for insults and protests. Instead, he conversed quietly with a trickle of gay women who wandered in to ask about joining

<http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-1009-gay-pride-marines-20111010,0,2982377.story>
the Marines.

At Pasadena City College on Saturday, Wallace was among eight Marines at the recruitment booth. From the morning opening, the Marine contingent proved the biggest draw amid tables representing healthcare organizations, church groups and vendors of rainbow-colored garden decorations. It might have helped that the Marines handed out a lanyard, a pen or a sticker to each man who tried to do a pull-up, or to each woman who tried the flexed-arm hang. To the rare volunteer capable of performing 20 pull-ups went a navy-blue T-shirt.

Darius Clash, 19, a Pasadena City College student from Altadena, made it through 19 pull-ups with seeming ease. He had recently visited the recruitment office near campus to ask about enlisting but "I chickened out a little bit," he said. He's weighing his desire to be a film director against what he sees as a need for the sort of discipline he could get from the military. Clash, who said he is heterosexual, said it would not bother him to serve with gay or lesbian recruits.

The Marine recruiters — outfitted in dress blue uniforms with short-sleeve shirts or camouflage pants and T-shirts — offered encouragement to anyone willing to take the challenge.

"Don't stop, just one more," one young recruiter with bulging biceps said to a man who nonetheless dropped to the ground, looking exhausted.

"Just 30 more seconds," another recruiter called to a young woman attempting to hold her weight up with the flexed-arm hang.

Alan Chan, San Gabriel Valley Pride's secretary, invited military personnel in the Pasadena recruitment office across from the college to set up booths at the event. The Navy, he said, did not have adequate staffing. The Army had previously committed to another event. The Air Force did not respond. And the Marines, who alone expressed interest, nearly had to plead poverty because the branch had exhausted its funds for the fiscal year and did not have \$150 for the exhibitor fee. LA/Valley Pride covered the fee, said Executive Director Paul Waters.

Pride activists found it intriguing that the Marines were the only ones to show, given how adamantly their commandant had opposed the repeal of "don't ask, don't tell." Last December, Gen. James Amos warned that the distraction of repealing the policy could lead to risks for combat units, among other issues. But after President Obama signed the repeal into law, Amos vowed to help lead the effort and said the Marines would do the best job of implementing the change.

Tom Carpenter, a former Marine fighter pilot and a member of the board of the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network, said he was impressed "Marines are leading the charge." He said the move would improve the pool of candidates strained by two wars.

"They had tens of thousands of felony waivers, and they were taking people convicted of drug use," Carpenter said. "This will increase the pool of people available and allow people who want to serve the country to join."

Carpenter said he resigned his active-duty commission as a captain in 1976 because of a ban on gays in the military. "I couldn't live a lie," said Carpenter, now a lawyer. Because he resigned, he gets no retirement pay. Through Servicemembers Legal Defense Network, he has helped keep people who were affected by "don't ask, don't tell" in the military. "We've saved a lot of careers over the last 17 years," he said.

Misconduct

Explicit messages, images put careers at risk

By Joe Gould and Gina Cavallaro - Staff writers

Army Times, Oct 10, 2011

It began with some flirtatious text messages between an advanced individual training instructor and a young female trainee, and it quickly turned physical. The illicit relationship between the staff sergeant, who was almost 40, and the 19-year-old student was their secret, but not for long.

When the young woman, after running into some minor disciplinary trouble, turned in the instructor, the text messages between the two were used as proof of the relationship, and it was the instructor whose career was over.

With growing frequency, soldiers are using cellphones and other digital media to swap sexually explicit images and messages as they conduct relationships — adulterous, underage, violations of fraternization policies, or otherwise inappropriate — that the Army frowns on. Sexting has severed marriages, ended careers and landed some soldiers in jail. Sexting — the sharing of explicit images and messages via cellphone and other digital media — has made headlines over scandals at civilian schools and driven some states to contemplate legislation.

The Army has no specific policy on sexting. Nor does it maintain data on incidents in which soldiers are investigated or disciplined for sexting. But attorneys who specialize in military justice say they have seen a spike in inquiries from service members accused of crimes or violations stemming from it. And the digital evidence left behind is frequently undeniable — and usually ruinous.

“In all these sex cases today, they’re sending each other pictures,” said Patrick McClain, a retired major and court-martial trial judge with a civilian law practice in Dallas. His caseload involving sexting-related infractions is up noticeably over the last two years, he said. Soldiers and other troops who contact him are often trying to determine whether it’s worth paying for legal representation when the evidence against them is so damning.

Among consenting adult soldiers and civilians, sexting is legal, provided they are not exchanging lewd images of minors. Sexting among soldiers is legal as well, according to attorneys who specialize in military cases. Unlike in the civilian world, however, where compromising photos or messages might be scandalous, those same pictures and texts can cost soldiers their careers because the activity that’s connected to them may constitute fraternization or inappropriate behavior.

Many single service members and couples embrace discreet sexting as a means to maintain a romantic connection through long deployments and other times of extended separation. Others do it to cheat. And the service has a history of coming down hard on illicit activity and poor judgment.

“I would say the majority of sex offenses and adultery these days involve some form of text messages,” said attorney Greg Rinckey, a former Army judge advocate general and managing partner of the law firm Tully Rinckey PLLC. “For almost every officer or enlisted who consults me about adultery, there are text messages.”

Observers say the military has no special monopoly on illicit sexual contact of this sort. Former New York congressman Anthony Weiner, who is married, resigned his seat in scandal earlier this year after racy cellphone photos he sent to young women via Twitter became public. The apparent surge in illicit sexual activity among service members appears to have followed the proliferation of smartphones and Internet access downrange, said Jerry Powell, director of the Fayetteville Family Life Center, a faith-based counseling center near Fort Bragg, N.C.

When Powell, a former Army chaplain, was in Iraq in 2005, it was “not common at all” for deployed soldiers to have cellphones, nor was this an issue. “Everything has changed; the Internet was not that easy to access,” he said. “Now no matter what your rank, everybody has a cellphone, and it has instant email and Web access.”

<http://www.armytimes.com/news/2011/10/army-sexting-putting-careers-at-risk-101011w/>

Getting in trouble: While there's no specific mention of sexting in the Uniform Code of Military Justice, sexting is often accompanied by activities that are covered in the UCMJ. Commanders can use text messages and photos as evidence to prove an extramarital affair or other behavior deemed counter to good order and discipline. Moreover, unsolicited sexting has been highlighted in some sexual assault complaints.

"We see it a lot," said Grover Baxley, a defense attorney who specializes in military law. "In any rape case, you're going to see investigators, or the defense, go and say, 'Hey, can we find any contact between these two individuals either before the alleged act occurred, or even after?' For example, if we can find friendly text messages going back and forth between the complainant and the accused after an alleged nonconsensual act, that's relevant information."

Sexting, in other words, provides evidence that old-fashioned, hard-wired phone calls didn't provide — particularly in military cases.

"Five years ago, before texting became so frequent," he said, "we didn't have this ability to retrieve the actual content of conversations. Now, what were formerly 'he said, she said' cases become cases where definitive proof is available."

In July, Lt. Col. Lonnie McNair, commander of the Raleigh Recruiting Battalion in North Carolina, was suspended after a sergeant in the unit accused McNair of having an affair with his wife. A forensic exam of the wife's phone, paid for by the sergeant, revealed that McNair and the wife exchanged text messages to arrange liaisons, trade sexual talk and share photos.

The sergeant accused McNair of sending a picture of his genitals to the sergeant's wife. McNair refused to comment on the allegations.

In 2008 at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., a dozen drill sergeants and trainers were punished for having forbidden sexual contact with female trainees. According to published reports, the women in many cases initiated the relationship, often through text messages or social networking sites.

A staff sergeant with 577th Engineer Battalion had sex with a trainee and later tried to get her to delete text messages between them and to deny the relationship. He was sentenced to a reduction in rank to E-3 and five months' confinement.

In April, a Texas woman came forward to accuse a 35-year-old Army recruiter who visited her high school in 2009 of sexually assaulting her and later sending her sexually explicit text messages for weeks.

In 2009, a 27-year-old private from Fort Campbell, Ky., was arrested in the company of a 15-year-old girl and accused of sending her text messages expressing his intent to impregnate her.

According to published reports, he allegedly instructed another underage girl to send him a picture of her genital area, which she did.

Some observers note the popularity of texting, coupled with the ease of using a cellphone's camera and the ability to instantly transmit images, have ushered in an era in which people take a more casual view of once carefully calculated efforts to conceal sexually explicit behavior.

The consequences of having images and compromising messages fall into the wrong hands can cause trouble for any service member, said Jack Zimmermann, a retired Marine prosecutor and criminal trial judge based in Houston.

But for officers, held to a higher standard, the fallout can be especially severe. "Who would intentionally and willingly snap a photo of themselves by any means knowing that people who work for those officers would see it?" said Zimmermann, a retired Marine colonel. "It could detract from those officers' authority. It could easily be construed as being such poor judgment that it's conduct unbecoming."

<http://www.armytimes.com/news/2011/10/army-sexting-putting-careers-at-risk-101011w/>

The temptation for sexting can be hard to resist. People engage in sexting because it's easy and instantaneously gratifying, according to behavioral health experts.

Sexting and sexual addiction: Sexting is addictive, and a gateway to more destructive behavior, according to Michael Leahy, a self-described recovering sex addict, inspirational speaker and author of five sex books, including "Porn Nation." "Sexting is the crack cocaine of sexual addiction," Leahy said.

Leahy said he has counseled several men whose marriages were on the rocks because of the men's escalating need for more. Leahy's 15-year marriage collapsed because of his insatiable need to find sex any way he could, he said. The behavior that fuels sex addiction is a big problem in the military, he said, especially for troops downrange.

"You start as a recreational user, couple hours a week, and in a high-pressure environment, it's not unreasonable. But what happens when that becomes a couple of hours a day? One of the forms of escalation is going from looking at pictures to voyeurism or exhibition like ... peeping or exposing yourself," he said. "It's a heightened sexual experience."

Leahy and his second wife, an active-duty Army sergeant, have helped troops overcome sex addiction through a faith-based program, and they have provided counseling materials to de-ployed military behavioral health specialists. But those specialists, while acknowledging there is a problem, say few sex addicts come forward.

"I have only been approached one time in the last six months regarding porn addiction, and the soldier never followed through," said an Army behavioral health specialist working downrange who asked not to be identified. "I think the overall mentality of your average soldier prevents even those that realize they have a problem and want help with it from actually seeking it."

And the behavior is hard to stop upon redeployment. Unlike watching porn on a computer or getting it in an email, the instantaneous nature of sexting on a smartphone means soldiers can get a quick fix by looking at a picture they may have just received. Addiction, and a loss of intimacy with a spouse or significant other, may not be far behind.

"Sex addicts don't have relationships, they have serial sex acts with parts of other people's bodies," said Dr. Reid Finlayson, a practicing psychiatrist and sex addiction specialist at Vanderbilt University. "It can be compulsive." Yale University military justice scholar Eugene Fidell said wireless technology has raised the stakes. "It is such that with a few keystrokes, something like this can reach thousands of people and inflict great pain on the victim," he said.

Digital lipstick: For married soldiers, digital lipstick on the collar can have just as devastating an effect as the real thing, said Powell, the counselor and former chaplain in Fayetteville. "The great majority I've seen, one partner finds out about the affair by checking the cellphone logs, or by getting a password and checking email accounts," he said.

Powell said one Army wife he is treating did not suspect her husband at all, but idly checked his cellphone one evening and discovered calls and text messages between him and another woman. It all began while the soldier was deployed. "Lots of minutes, many times a day, and that's when it all broke," Powell said. "She was devastated."

Just as service members live on the edge at work, they can "walk on the edge emotionally" by engaging in forbidden relationships online. "When you're downrange and you're dirty and you're tired and you're hungry, and you're looking for that emotional edge, it's very easy to find on the Internet," Powell said. Æ

Staff writers Andrew deGrandpré, Mark D. Faram, Scott Fontaine, William H. McMichael and Markeshia Ricks contributed to this report.

Navy commander fired after insulting, slapping subordinates

**By Brock Vergakis, Associated Press
Norfolk Virginian-Pilot, October 8, 2011**

NORFOLK--Angry that he was not invited to a group dinner, the commander of a West Coast Navy flight squadron hurled insults at subordinates and slapped another sailor several times while they were all drinking at a bar in Bahrain, according to documents obtained by The Associated Press.

The misconduct led to a demotion for Cmdr. Karl Pugh, one of several officers who have tainted the Navy's image this year by misbehaving. In January, a carrier commander was relieved of duty after he produced videos that included simulated same-sex shower scenes, anti-gay slurs and references to prostitution in foreign ports. Other Navy officers have been dismissed for marital infidelity and not addressing hazing.

The embarrassing episodes drew a stern reminder this spring from then-Chief of Naval Operations Gary Roughead, who told prospective commanding officers that they are required to have exemplary conduct. Adm. John Harvey, head of U.S. Fleet Forces Command, has also said he'd review the screening process for commanding officers in response to the rash of dismissals.

The Navy has fired 18 commanding officers so far this year. The highest one-year total was 26 in 2003.

Pugh's actions in July violated a variety of Navy codes, including directives given to sailors intended to prevent them from embarrassing the U.S. while in foreign ports and jeopardizing international relations.

Pugh committed assault, disorderly conduct and conduct unbecoming an officer and gentleman, according to an investigative report AP obtained with a Freedom of Information Act request.

Pugh declined to comment on Friday through a spokeswoman, but in a statement to Navy investigators, he said he accepted responsibility for his actions and he embarrassed himself, his family and his air wing. He said he did not meet his own expectations as an officer.

"For offending my fellow aircrew, I am truly sorry. Their job is hard enough and any act I participated in should not make it harder," Pugh wrote.

At the time, Pugh was serving aboard the Norfolk-based U.S.S. George H.W. Bush as the commanding officer of Electronic Attack Squadron 141. The squadron is comprised of EA-18G Growlers and is based at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island in Oak Harbor, Wash.

Pugh was upset that his crew didn't leave a dinner once they realized that he and his executive officer weren't there, the report said. As Pugh drank at a hotel bar filled with others in the carrier's air wing, he loudly confronted his crew about the dinner. His behavior continued to deteriorate, according to witness statements. Pugh was at the bar for about four hours until it closed.

"I didn't think much of it at first since we all joke around and give each other a hard time. But as the conversation went on, his joking and actions reached a level where I felt very uncomfortable and was in disbelief in what was occurring. He was very drunk and not making a lot of sense," according to a witness. The witnesses names were redacted in the report.

The bulk of Pugh's misbehavior started after he joined a table, uninvited, that was occupied by the crew of a helicopter squadron, several of whom he said didn't matter because they were enlisted.

"CDR Pugh said he wanted (to) tell us his philosophy of what is wrong with the Navy. He never got to a point. Instead he spewed hate talk and nonsense to us," another witness said. "When asked why he

<http://hamptonroads.com/2011/10/navy-commander-fired-after-insulting-slapping-subordinates> was saying the things he was or if he disagreed and said that is not right, he ignored us. He would flick beer at everyone sitting at the table. He then looked at me and dumped his glass of beer on me."

He pointed at the officer and said he wasn't worth anything because he's Mexican, according to the statements. Pugh eventually grabbed the officer and struck him hard on the face four to five times. He also pinched and twisted the chest of another person.

Pugh is currently assigned to the Electronic Attack Wing staff.

Racism

<http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-1012-laUSD-feds-20111011,0,4458591.story>

LAUSD agrees to revise how English learners, blacks are taught
Officials say the accord, which settles a federal civil rights probe, could be a national model. The district is not accused of intentional bias, and deciding how to make changes will be done locally.

By Howard Blume

Los Angeles Times, October 11, 2011

The Los Angeles Unified School District has agreed to sweeping revisions in the way it teaches students learning English, as well as black youngsters, settling a federal civil rights investigation that examined whether the district was denying the students a quality education.

The settlement closes what was the Obama administration's first civil rights investigation launched by the Department of Education, and officials said Tuesday that it would serve as a model for other school districts around the country.

"What happens in L.A. really does set trends for across the nation. More and more school districts are dealing with this challenge," said Russlynn Ali, the assistant secretary of education for civil rights. The agreement poses a potential financial problem for the school district, which has faced multimillion-dollar budget cuts and layoffs over the last few years.

The Education Department launched the probe last year, at first to determine if students who entered school speaking limited English, most of whom are Latino, were receiving adequate instruction. The nation's second-largest school system has more students learning English, about 195,000, than any other in the United States — about 29% of the district's overall enrollment. Later, at the urging of local activists, investigators widened the probe to include black students, who make up about 10% of the district's enrollment.

Federal authorities do not accuse the district of intentional discrimination. But the settlement requires a top-to-bottom revision of the district's Master Plan for English Learners, which is already well underway. The goal is to let the district develop the details, under continuing oversight from the Office for Civil Rights, a branch of the Education Department.

Under the settlement, the district for the first time will focus on the academic progress of students judged to have adequately learned English. Many of these students subsequently flounder academically. The district will also concentrate efforts on students who have reached high school without mastering the English skills necessary to enroll in a college-preparatory curriculum and who may be at risk of dropping out.

L.A. Unified also agreed to provide students learning English and black students with more effective teachers. Improved teaching would result from "ongoing and sustained" training, among other potential efforts, Ali said. The decision on how to improve instruction will be a local one. The district will be judged in large measure by student performance data. The ultimate sanction for not living up to the agreement would be withholding or withdrawing federal funds, Ali said.

L.A. Unified was selected for the investigation in large measure because it is an epicenter for the challenge of educating students whose native language is not English. For years, district officials insisted that L.A. Unified performed as well as or better than nearly all other school systems with this population.

Federal officials did not challenge this record. Instead, they emphasized that past efforts simply haven't succeeded as well as they must. District officials, in fact, have echoed this rhetoric. Former board member Yolie Flores consistently criticized the district's performance with English learners.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-1012-laUSD-feds-20111011,0,4458591.story>

Under federal law, discrimination can exist even when it is not intentional, based on the levels of opportunity afforded students through even well-meaning policies and practices.

On Tuesday, school board President Monica Garcia made no excuses. "It is very appropriate for the office of civil rights to come and stand side by side with our students," she said. U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan traveled to Los Angeles for the announcement and praised the district's cooperation, as did L.A. Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, who took part in a joint news conference. In a meeting later with Times reporters and editors, Duncan said of L.A. Unified: "It takes courage, and you have to make yourself vulnerable."

Black students were not part of the initial inquiry, but were added to placate activists, who pointed out that African American students were, by some measures, performing at lower levels than Latino students. For that part of the inquiry, investigators compared resources at schools that serve a substantially black enrollment with those that serve a substantially white student body. They found disparities in technology and library resources, among other things.

"We saw libraries that were woefully resourced," Ali said. "Books that weren't there that were supposed to be. Books that were there and not recorded." Addressing this issue will be complicated. Schools that serve low-income minority students typically start with more government funding than schools serving middle-class populations. But schools in more prosperous neighborhoods rely heavily on local parent fundraising and have lower costs related to security and vandalism, among other factors.

Moreover, schools of all types are suffering from steep funding reductions. Just weeks ago, the school system laid off the specially trained part-time aides who run elementary school libraries.

Federal officials are also demanding that the district address the high proportion of black students who are suspended and expelled. "I was aghast at how disproportionately African American students are disciplined in this district," Ali said, especially in middle schools.

Educational inequity is a familiar issue in L.A. Unified.

A 2001 initiative to help black students evolved into a measure to help black and Latino students, which eventually merged with general efforts to improve academic programs. In 2007, the district convened what was billed as a landmark conference of experts on students with limited English skills.

There has been progress, based on test scores and other parameters, but results indicate that most students don't reach academic proficiency — and English learners and black students are especially lagging, along with disabled students.

In L.A. Unified, 29% of students learning English are proficient in math. Among African American students, 38% are proficient in English.

Board member Marguerite Poindexter LaMotte said the real issue is follow-through. Many impressive-sounding plans have failed to yield sufficient progress, she said. "The research has been done," she said.

Others noted the lack of details available on exactly how this new settlement will lead to something different. "It's an agreement that is sweeping in scope but short on benchmarks and details on enforcement," said John Affeldt, a civil rights attorney with San Francisco-based Public Advocates, which specializes in education litigation.

"I'm very cautious, because the record is horrendous," said local activist Larry Aubry. "Political will is at the seat of this, and I hope that will be here."

Religion

Raised Catholic, soldier and wife convert to Islam

By Nancy Montgomery
Stars and Stripes, 10 October 2011

MANNHEIM, Germany — They'd both been reared Roman Catholic, she in Mannheim, Germany, he in Kissimmee, Fla.

But when Spc. Chris Tarantino deployed to Iraq in 2006, his wife began to ask questions about life and death that led her to convert to Islam. "I was really, really scared something was going to happen to him," said Cristina Tarantino. She started to wonder what happened after death, she said, and how to best live life on earth. She was spending time with her older sister, who had converted to Islam after marrying a Palestinian, and she sought her sister's guidance.

Her sister's answers about Islam made sense to Cristina and gave her some serenity, she said. She discussed her spiritual progress with her husband in frequent phone calls between Camp Taji, Iraq, and Mannheim. Even so, "I was kind of shocked when I heard her say it — 'I've accepted Islam,'" Chris, now a sergeant, said. His first question was whether she had begun wearing a hijab. She wasn't ready yet, she said. But he didn't ask her a lot, he said. "I asked for guidance in my prayers."

And by last year, the second time he deployed to Iraq, the blond, blue-eyed soldier had also become a Muslim. He decided not to hide it. "I went to Kuwait and bought a prayer rug and started praying right there," he said. "I saw it wasn't the end of the world to say I was a Muslim."

During the past decade of fighting in Muslim countries, some soldiers occasionally have to battle perceptions that Muslims are hostile to the military they serve.

Chris enlisted in the Army in 1998, before radical Islamists attacked New York and Washington, D.C., and the U.S. went to war in two Muslim nations. He said he'd never had any feelings, positive or negative, about Muslims, even when heading to Iraq. "All I knew was we were going to combat terrorism," he said. "As a soldier, I just did what I was told. They say ignorance is bliss. I guess I was ignorant."

Then, as his wife grew more religious and he was drawn with her to a Sunni mosque in Mannheim, he said the whole idea of radical, violent jihad against the West seemed utterly wrong. "I follow the teachings of the prophet Muhammad. What the prophet Muhammad teaches does not condone that," Chris said. "I don't associate myself with radicalism whatsoever."

But his situation is unusual: He's the only U.S. soldier at his German mosque, one of the few Muslims in the Army and one of even fewer Muslim soldiers who are not from a traditionally Muslim family or African-American. "I have to say that I've met zero that are of my race," he said. And although the couple's conversion is personal, not political, his views on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and war in general, have changed.

"As Muslims, we believe that if you kill one innocent person, it's as if you've killed the entire world. But if you save one person, you save the entire world," said Chris, who is in the Signal Corps and works on communications equipment. "I want to be on the side that's helping." As part of that idea, the couple helped start a non-profit group to send food and medical supplies to Somalia, a failed state undergoing the worst famine in decades.

Since 2006, the country has faced an insurgency led by al-Shabab, a militant Islamist group that controls much of southern Somalia.

The famine, caused by drought, war, restrictions on aid groups and continuous chaos, has pushed 4 million Somalis — more than half the population — into "crisis," according to the United Nations. Some 750,000 are at risk of death in the next few months, the U.N. says.

<http://www.stripes.com/news/raised-catholic-soldier-and-wife-convert-to-islam-1.157423>

“The unfortunate reality is that Somalia is the most difficult operating environment for humanitarians in the world today,” Nancy Lindborg, USAID’s assistant administrator for the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance, wrote on the U.S. State Department official blog. “Access continues to be denied by Al-Shabaab and other armed groups, creating an indefensible situation where they would rather put hundreds of thousands of Somali lives in jeopardy than allow humanitarian aid in.”

But the Tarantinos and others at Al-Faruq Omar Mosque felt they had to do something. Cristina was one of seven people from their mosque who formed a group called *Islamischer Humanitaerer Entwicklungsdienst*, or the Islamic Humanitarian Development Service (www.IHED.de) In just a few weeks, the charity had collected and put onto pallets 135 tons of food and medical supplies, Cristina said. Her husband provided some of the muscle. “I help when there’s a load to be carried,” he said.

It was all collected, organized and carried during Ramadan, when Muslim adults don’t eat or drink from sunrise to sunset. “You’re talking about some guys who were completely kaput,” Chris said.

The food and supplies were picked up from a warehouse near Cologne and shipped by sea late last month. Cristina said the supplies would arrive in northern Somalia in the beginning of November, then be driven to the central region for distribution. Another charity, Human Plus, found sponsors to pay for transporting the supplies, which cost about 40,000 euros or \$57,400.

At home, the Tarantinos continue to study their new faith and seek to live it as fully as they can. Cristina wears the hijab when she leaves the house, as well as a long skirt and long sleeves. In Germany, her clothes rarely raise an eyebrow. At their mosque, for instance, “there are so many German converts,” she said, mostly women. There are also Moroccans, Bosnians, Poles and Russians.

The family lives on base, and when she goes to the commissary, people stare at her. “I feel like an astronaut,” she said. “Last time, when I went with my sister, they asked her if she was there to work,” she continued, explaining that some Turkish women wearing hijabs clean the local schools. “I tell my husband, ‘They probably think you brought me from Iraq.’”

But her husband has never had a problem with acceptance. Soldiers in his unit, the 72nd Signal Battalion rear detachment, know he’s a Muslim. “I’d stop for prayer. I’d talk to them about Islam because it’s my chance to do a good deed,” he said. “At first, they were - ‘What?’ ‘You are?’” “Really?” he said. After, they’d say, “Sgt. Tarantino, it’s prayer time.’ They were respectful,” he said.

Only once did he get a bad reaction. He greeted a “brother,” another Muslim soldier, and an African-American, by saying in Arabic, “Peace be upon you.” “And the other soldier said, “Shhh,”” Chris said. He plans to get out of the Army within the next year and move the family to the United States. Cristina plans to continue working toward a bachelor’s degree in communications, and her husband plans to continue his studies at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University. “The same stuff I’ve been trained to do. Just without a gun,” he said.

The couple met on base in Mannheim more than a decade ago. They’ve been married three times: Once at city hall, once in church and the last time at their mosque. One of the hardest things about their conversion had to do with their two young sons. “We were like, ‘What do we tell the kids?’” Cristina said. “So, gradually there was no tooth fairy, no Santa Claus. ... They took it very well.”

Chris gets a little uncomfortable when the discussion gets around to the afterlife, the promise to men of multiple virgins, and the possibility of his taking more wives in the future. His wife made it clear where she stands. “It’s an option, but it doesn’t mean it’s an option you should take,” Cristina said. “I have to say we’re very Europeanized that way.”

Saudi-backed religious tolerance center founded

By George Jahn, Associated Press
Macon.com, 13 October 2011

VIENNA (AP) -- A Saudi-backed interfaith center was inaugurated Thursday in Vienna, igniting debate over the subject of religious tolerance.



AP Photo - Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Austrian Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger, and Spanish Foreign Minister Trinidad Jimenez, Spanish from left, wait for the signing of the agreement for the establishment of the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Center for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue, KAICID, in Vienna, Austria, on Thursday, Oct. 13, 2011.

Backers hope the center will promote increased tolerance in Saudi Arabia, a kingdom that now prohibits any religion outside of Islam. Detractors say the Saudis are the last people who should be hosting initiatives on religious coexistence.

Wahhabism - the strain of Sunni Islam that is practiced in Saudi Arabia - is considered one of the religion's most conservative. Strict interpretations of the faith have left Saudi women without the right to drive or to go out without permission from a male relative. They have also have tattered ties with Islam's other major branch, Shiism, that have exposed deep rivalries between Saudi Arabia and predominantly Shiite Iran.

Relations reached a new low this week after U.S. allegations that Iran was behind a plot to assassinate the Saudi ambassador to Washington.

In Vienna to launch the interfaith center, Saudi Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal accused Tehran of "murder and mayhem" and said his country is working on a "measured response" to the purported Iranian assassination attempt.

But most of his comments focused on the "King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue" - and he appeared keen to dispel skepticism about his country's commitment to make it a focal point of interfaith dialogue and tolerance.

"Saudi Arabia is willing to financially participate in this project, and to place all its moral and political resources behind such a center, without infringing ... on its autonomy or independence from any political interference," he told officials and reporters.

And he warned against "extremist minorities within every religious and cultural community ... seeking ... to propagate notions of intolerance, exclusion, racism and hatred.

"These tiny minorities," he said, "are trying to hijack and disrupt the legitimate identities and aspirations of people of all cultures and faiths."

The founding document cites principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human rights, "in particular, the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion." It emphasizes "human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion."

Its board will consist of three Christians, three Muslims, a Jew, a Buddhist and a Hindu.

<http://www.macon.com/2011/10/13/1742937/saudi-backed-religious-tolerance.html>

King Abdullah, who is regarded as a reformer by Saudi standards, is slowly moving to lift some restrictions dictated by conservative Saudi society. He recently decreed that women would be allowed for the first time to vote and run as candidates in elections for municipal councils starting in 2015. He also promised to appoint women after two years to the Shura Council, the currently all-male consultative body with no legislative powers.

At the same time, the kingdom continues to impose many religiously motivated social restrictions on women.

In Saudi Arabia, no woman can drive, travel, work, marry, get divorced, gain admittance to a public hospital or live independently without permission from a male guardian. Men can beat women who don't obey them and fathers or brothers can prevent their female relatives from getting married if they don't approve.

Any reforms at home must be cautious so as not to offend the country's senior clergy, which the Saudi royal family depends on for support, a fact that has apparently prompted the king to pave the ground for changes abroad.

Its direct predecessor, a Saudi-sponsored interfaith conference in Madrid three years ago, was described in a confidential U.S. Embassy cable as a "ground breaking event."

"That Saudis are bringing together Muslim, Christian and Jewish scholars, all on equal footing, for a dialogue to establish mutual understanding and religious tolerance is truly significant. One of the King's main purposes in leading this event may be to stimulate the Saudi people to question their own attitudes toward non-Muslims," said the cable, available on the WikiLeaks site.

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<http://www.stripes.com/news/some-muslim-servicemembers-struggle-to-balance-faith-and-service-1.157422>

Some Muslim servicemembers struggle to balance faith and service

By **JOHN VANDIVER**

Stars and Stripes, 10 October 2011

STUTTGART, Germany — When Mohammad A. Hasan joined the Army in 1994, practicing his Muslim faith wasn't hard.

Even in the immediate aftermath of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks 10 years ago, not much changed.

It wasn't until his deployment to Iraq in 2003 that Hasan says he began to notice the ways in which his religious background set him apart from his peers.

After the deployment, everything changed," said Hasan, who left the military in 2005 and now works as an Army civilian in Virginia.

With a dark complexion and Muslim name, the Bangladesh-born soldier's loyalty was at times questioned by suspicious troops during his deployment in Iraq, he said.

Later, at Fort Stewart in Georgia, Hasan said, he also ran into conflict with a commander over his desire to attend Friday afternoon prayers.

Though he offered to come to work early or stay late to make up for the time spent in prayer, those requests were rejected again and again.

Eventually, the command capitulated, but the work environment felt unwelcoming, Hasan said.

Hasan, who left the service as a staff sergeant, said he felt no conflict between his faith and service.

Troops serving today should avoid getting pigeonholed as a "Muslim soldier," he said. "Just be a soldier."

During the past decade of fighting in Muslim countries, some soldiers have struggled to strike a balance between the demands of faith and service.

They also sometimes have to battle perceptions that Muslims are hostile to the military they serve, particularly in light of high-profile incidents involving Muslim troops who turned against fellow servicemembers.

The most notable of those cases occurred nearly two years ago, when Maj. Nidal Hasan opened fire at Fort Hood, Texas, where he was stationed, killing 13 people.

Investigators have said Hasan drew inspiration from U.S.-born radical cleric Anwar al-Awlaki, who was killed in a drone strike last week in Yemen, where he was based.

It was Hasan who may have served as inspiration for Naser Jason Abdo, a soldier who will be tried later this year in connection with allegations that he planned to bomb a restaurant popular with Fort Hood soldiers.

"Professionally, as a theologian and a Muslim, it is frustrating because you don't want those people (attackers) to be an advocate of your community," said Muhiyyaldin Ibn-Noel, a former Muslim chaplain for the Navy who now works as a civilian with the Marines in Okinawa.

Currently, there are about 3,600 people who identify themselves as Muslim in the military's active component and 1,500 in the Reserve component, according to the Pentagon.

<http://www.stripes.com/news/some-muslim-servicemembers-struggle-to-balance-faith-and-service-1.157422>

Ibn-Noel, who retired in July after nearly two decades of service as a chaplain, said it's up to Muslim troops to speak out against servicemembers like Nidal Hasan and prevent false perceptions from taking root.

"If there's nothing to fill in those areas of doubt, those things will continue to grow," said Ibn-Noel, who ended his 32-year career as a lieutenant commander.

While the mission comes first, Ibn-Noel said, commands he's worked in over the years have been willing to make accommodations for troops when it comes to things such as Friday prayer obligations and the requirements of high holidays like Ramadan.

There's no reason that faith and service can't be balanced, he said.

"People are just sometimes afraid to ask for things," said Ibn-Noel, explaining that some troops are hesitant to express their needs in the regimented military environment.

While challenges persist for Muslim troops when it comes to practicing their faith and avoiding discrimination, those problems tend to occur at the small unit level, according to Ibrahim Hooper, communications director of the Washington-based Council on American-Islamic Relations.

"Generally, the reports we get are of lower-level officers and enlisted personnel who engage in bigoted speech," Hooper said. "We don't see it as a systemic problem from the top down."

In most cases, commands do a good job of handling those complaints, once they're made aware of the problem, he said. "That doesn't lessen the effect on the individual," Hooper said.

The experiences of Muslim troops vary. While some have struggled at times for acceptance, others say they've noticed no discernable discrimination or suspicion from their peers.

Spc. Anza Ali, a Heidelberg, Germany-based soldier who was raised in the Muslim faith, but no longer practices, said she's never encountered any serious discrimination.

"Because Islam is no longer a significant part of my life, I would probably be oblivious to any unfair treatment I may receive ... aside from the occasional terrorist joke here or there," Ali wrote in an email.

But for Mohammad A. Hasan, memories of the struggles he had with his unit are still with him.

"It left a scar in my heart," he said.

Sexual Assault / Harassment

Two US soldiers accused of rape in South Korea

By Associated Press

Boston Globe, October 9, 2011

SEOUL - Two US soldiers have been accused of raping teenage girls in South Korea in separate incidents, prompting US military officials to apologize yesterday as they tried to ease growing public anger.

Army Brigadier General David Conboy, who supervises the US garrison in Seoul, issued a statement apologizing for “pain” caused by allegations that a US soldier raped a girl in Seoul on Sept. 17. That soldier - a private in his early 20s - is being questioned by police.

Another US private has been arrested on suspicion of raping a girl on Sept. 24.

The top US diplomat for East Asia, Kurt Campbell, apologized Friday for what he called a “tragic and inexcusable rape that took place about a week ago.”

The alleged assaults have prompted small protests near the US Embassy in Seoul, while the Internet has been abuzz with Koreans expressing anger. Yesterday, a minor labor party called for restricting the movement of US soldiers outside their bases.

The United States has 28,500 troops stationed in South Korea, a legacy of the Korean War.

General James Thurman, America’s top commander in South Korea, said he has ordered a 30-day curfew after “the incidents over the last several months.”

US officials are wary of anti-American sentiment that could be rekindled in countries where their troops are stationed. In 2002, the acquittals of two US soldiers whose armored vehicle killed two South Korean schoolgirls prompted nationwide protests against the US military presence in the country.