

DEOMI News Highlights

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

One-handed man says TSA unfairly disqualified him for job as airport screener, files complaint [Chris Hawley, *Associated Press*, 27 July 2011]

- A one-handed man says the Transportation Security Administration unfairly rejected him for a job at New York's LaGuardia Airport, even though he's fully capable of unzipping luggage and patting down passengers.
- Michael Costantino, 32, said Wednesday he has filed a complaint with the TSA alleging that the agency violated the Americans with Disabilities Act by disqualifying him during a medical exam in January.
- Costantino said he complained to the TSA in February, then filed a formal claim with the TSA's Equal Employment Opportunity Office in June. The office has 180 days to investigate the claim.

[One-handed man says TSA unfairly disqualified him for job](#)

Wealth gap widens between whites, minorities [Hope Yen, *Associated Press*, 26 Jul 2011]

- The wealth gaps between whites and minorities have grown to their widest levels in a quarter-century.
- The recession and uneven recovery have erased decades of minority gains, leaving whites on average with 20 times the net worth of blacks and 18 times that of Hispanics, according to an analysis of new Census data released Tuesday by the Pew Research Center.
- Across all race and ethnic groups, the wealth gap between rich and poor widened.

[Wealth gap widens between whites, minorities](#)

Let deaf Americans serve their country [Robert B. Weinstock, *Washington Post, Opinion*, 21 July 2011]

- The author of the article makes an argument for allowing deaf persons to serve in the U.S. Armed Forces.
- The author states that there is "evidence of deaf people serving our country in several conflicts." He points to "other countries' policies, notably those of Israel, which has deaf soldiers in noncombat roles."
- The author also writes, "More and more soldiers with disabilities are returning to the front lines... 41 soldiers with prosthetic limbs... are back in the field... Capt. Scott Smiley... was blinded in Iraq and now commands the Warrior Transition Unit at West Point's Keller Army Medical Center as the Army's first blind active-duty officer. And if you consider learning disabilities, which are covered by the Americans With Disabilities Act, it's a good bet that the military has more soldiers with disabilities..."
- The author concludes, "It's time to let people with disabilities serve our country."

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Culture

Beards, robes for soldiers in new Afghan program

By Mandy Clark

CBS News, July 27, 2011

(CBS News) There was another brazen attack Wednesday in Kandahar, the key city to the war effort in southern Afghanistan. The city's mayor was assassinated by a suicide bomber who had a bomb in his turban.

CBS News correspondent Mandy Clark was in Kandahar recently, doing a story about an American soldier who is playing an unusual role there. She also happened to do an interview with that mayor who was murdered.

Jim Crawford may not look like it, but he's a U.S. Army major, and part of a program called Afghan Hands, designed to mentor government officials to break down barriers. He wears local clothing and a full beard like most Afghan men.

When we visited Kandahar earlier this month, Crawford was anxious to introduce us to the city's mayor: Ghulam Haider Hamidi.

"There are a lot of good Afghans here working very hard and risking their life and he is one of them. People are really lucky to have him as mayor," Crawford said.

That luck ran out today. A suicide bomber got into the same corridors of city hall the mayor had guided us through. On that day he told us he was fatalistic about the dangers he faced. The Taliban had already tried to kill him with a bomb aimed at his car and failed.

"I believe that God will kill me one day. That day and time will not be changed," Hamidi said.

Crawford's job means he often takes the same risks as the Afghans he works with.

While most U.S. soldiers travel around Kandahar in heavily armored vehicles, Crawford suggested we see the city from an auto rickshaw.

"It's a huge advantage, but first of all it gives me an insight into Kandahar. I'm able to understand them a bit more than if you are driving around in an armored vehicle. It's sort of from inside looking out," Crawford said.

Crawford is mindful of the danger.

"The biggest threat is assassination," Crawford said.

We went for a walking tour of Kandahar's markets, Crawford advised I'd be safer wearing a burkha. Crawford said he is finally used to wearing local clothing.

Although the outfits helped for a while, eventually a crowd began hurling stones at Crawford and the CBS News team in the market.

<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2011/07/27/eveningnews/main20084451.shtml?tag=mncol;lst;1>

It can be a painful process, but working through cultural misunderstandings is part of the job. In this case, the crowd may have mistaken a female foreign news correspondent for an Afghan woman walking with foreign men. This is a very conservative, segregated society."

The Afghan Hands volunteers commit to 6 years in the program, including two-year-long deployments in Afghanistan.

"It's like no other job I've ever had," Crawford says.

The idea is to create a core group of regional experts. There are roughly 400 serving in Afghanistan and Pakistan so far.

"I hope it is the future. I think this is something we probably should have done right after 9/11," Crawford says.

Crawford believes that small groups of U.S. soldiers like him will still be living with the Afghan people long after the combat troops are pulled out.

Face of Defense - Marine Earns Afghan People's Friendship

By Marine Corps Cpl. Colby Brown

Regimental Combat Team 1

HELMAND PROVINCE, Afghanistan, July 27, 2011

It looks like Marine Corps Sgt. Jose Hernandez is teaching an anatomy class, but he's actually learning the local language as he points to a boy's arms, legs, ears and eyes, naming each in Pashto.



Marine Corps Sgt. Jose Hernandez interacts with local men during a security patrol in Afghanistan's Helmand province, July 8, 2011. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Colby Brown

For the last month, Hernandez has been patrolling here without an interpreter and has learned enough Pashto to hold a casual conversation.

“If they see me taking an interest in learning their language, it shows I really care about what I talk to them about, and they take it as a sign of respect,” said Hernandez, leader of 2nd Section, Combined Anti-Armor Team 1, Weapons Company, 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment.

His immersion in the local community doesn't stop at language. Hernandez befriends everyone, from the children to the local elders.

While on patrol, he never turns down an offer from the local people for chai tea or a meal. Some of the local people have embraced him almost as a part of their family, referring to him as a son or uncle. His relationship also has led to several tips about insurgents and roadside bombs.

“Hernandez keeps a positive attitude,” said Marine Corps Sgt. Christopher Colfer, assistant patrol leader for 2nd Section, and a Philadelphia native. “He makes them feel comfortable and that we are here for them.”

The Los Angeles native's friendships make the area safer for coalition forces and the local community. He has created a special handshake with one of the local children, which shows how close his relationships are with the local people. The people trust Hernandez and his squad enough to put themselves at risk of being targeted by insurgent forces to help in keeping their community safe.

“[Hernandez] is very good,” said Mohammed Mokhlies, a native of the Garmsir district here. “He is my friend, and he brings good peace and security. We are happy to have all the Marines, because they bring peace and security.”

Hernandez encourages his squad to emulate his efforts and treat the local people with respect. He includes his Marines when he is invited to a meal or chai tea, even if it means staying out on patrol two or three hours longer.

<http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=64818>

“The way they look at Sergeant Hernandez is the way they look at all the other Marines,” said Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Joseph Messina, a machine gunner with 2nd Section and a San Diego native. “When he goes up to the local people and is nice, they accept him. It makes it easier for us to interact with the local people, because they treat us like they would Sergeant Hernandez.”

For Hernandez, who is thousands of miles away from his family, the local people’s acceptance is comforting.

“Whenever I sit down with one of the local people, I feel like I am being accepted like at home,” Hernandez said.

“Since we arrived, we have gone from having the people resist shaking our hands to them inviting us into their homes,” he added. “The acceptance increases every day.”

Soldiers Train to Work with Afghan Women

by Dennis Yusko

Times Union, Albany, N.Y., July 26, 2011

An Albany woman who graduated with a master's degree from Harvard University and once taught English in South Korea will coordinate a new U.S. military effort to reach out to women in Afghanistan.

The New York National Guard recently tapped 2nd Lt. Dawn Hersey, 30, to manage its two new Female Engagement Teams, which will mobilize for Afghanistan with the 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team in November. The 40 or so Guardswomen from New York will serve as cultural mediators to Afghan women, to whom male soldiers are not permitted to speak because of the country's traditional customs.

The engagement teams will attach to combat units. They will meet with women in Afghanistan to build trust, glean intelligence and improve relations.

The challenge appears to be a good fit for Hersey, an Ivy League intellectual with sky-blue eyes who listens intently and answers questions forthrightly. She joined the military later than most because she wanted to lead soldiers in combat and someday take that experience into classrooms as a college professor.

"I always wanted to feel what I am doing has meaning," Hersey said in a recent interview. "This is something in which I think I can make a real impact."

Female soldiers can attach to, but not be assigned to, military combat units. Female Engagement Teams were introduced by the Marines in 2009. The groups bring female troops into war zones.

The National Guard women will accompany male soldiers during raids and other missions in which Americans segregate Afghan men from women and children for questioning. It will be during such information-gathering that the female soldiers will meet with Afghan women and children to try to build relationships and direct them to resources like health care. While officers used to peel female mechanics and drivers from their military jobs to accompany them on combat missions, the 27th BCT's Female Engagement Team represents the first time in which National Guard women will concentrate solely on reaching Afghan women.

"I think I'm going to hear the entire gamut, from thank you to go away," Hersey said of the responses she expects from the women she's intending to assist. She is one of 135 commissioned female officers in the state's National Guard and 13 assigned to the 27th Brigade. There are 941 male officers in the New York National Guard.

"Sometimes (men) think you are not capable," Hersey said. "There are a lot of stereotypes, a lot of undesired rumors if you go out with the guys in an infantry crowd."

<http://www.military.com/news/article/soldiers-train-to-work-with-afghan-women.html>

About 2,200 New York National Guard troops, including hundreds from the Capital Region, will leave for training in November and Afghanistan in January. Amsterdam native Spc. Serena Barone and her sister, Staff Sgt. Theresa Barone-Lopez, volunteered for the Female Engagement Team. "I think that women in the United States have a lot of freedom and Afghan women don't," Serena Barone said. "And I want to help in some way."

The women have undergone physical training and a cultural crash course at Fort Drum, where they learned Dari, the language used by many Afghans, and how to properly eat with their hands.

Hersey will serve as point of contact for the teams' members. She was born in Chester, Pa., and lived in Boston and communities in Warren and Washington counties for most of her life. She graduated with a history degree from Gordon College in Wenham, Mass., before earning her master's in government from Harvard. Before joining the military, she taught English for a number of years in South Korea.

Hersey moved back to the U.S. and enlisted in the National Guard. She scored in the top 99 percent on a military aptitude test, finished Officer Candidate School and was commissioned. The Army selected her for military intelligence. She completed an intense 120-day training program at Fort Huachuca in Arizona.

Hersey has never deployed. She's presently gathering as much "theory and information" for her job. She doesn't talk much about her achievements. "The saluting took a while for me to get used to," Hersey said. "I try not to advertise Harvard too much."

But her reference points are varied. Hersey's role model is Gaius Marius, an early Roman general and politician she likes because "he led an Army, but also supported society."

She hopes to one day earn a doctorate from Columbia University. "I would hope I have a strong personality," she said. "What I am trying to do right now will require a bit of fortitude."

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Discrimination

http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/federal-eye/post/eeoc-reconsiders-policy-on-criminal-background-checks/2011/03/23/gIQAfEOBYI_blog.html

EEOC reconsiders policy on criminal background checks

By Lisa Rein

Washington Post, July 25, 2011

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission is reexamining its requirement that employers do criminal background checks on job applicants, scheduling a hearing Tuesday on whether arrest and conviction records are a hiring barrier for minorities.

An increasing number of employers are seeking background checks out of security concerns.

Federal policy currently prevents companies from using criminal records to screen out job applicants unless the criminal conduct is job related.

The EEOC and other anti-discrimination advocates argue that because African Americans and Hispanics have higher rates of arrest and convictions than whites, they could suffer discrimination if companies do blanket criminal background checks that eliminate them from consideration for a job.

But civil rights groups and some EEOC members argue that background checks don't necessarily prevent someone from being hired, but provide employers with more information than they otherwise would have.

Credit background checks, which are permitted under federal law, are not up for reconsideration.

The commission heard a plea last week from the sister of an Orlando, Fla., woman who opened her home in 2001 to a convicted sex offender working for a local air-duct cleaning company and was raped and beaten to death by him.

“Is this too much to ask, that employers take appropriate steps to ensure the safety of their customers from their employees?” Lucia Bone, founder of the Sue Weaver C.A.U.S.E. (Consumer Awareness of Unsafe Service Employment), wrote to the commission. Bone's group is campaigning for legislation requiring criminal background checks on service employees.

In recent years, the EEOC has filed at least two lawsuits against companies that have adopted criminal history policies the commission believes have a disparate effect on African Americans and Hispanics.

One-handed man says TSA unfairly disqualified him for job as airport screener, files complaint

CHRIS HAWLEY, Associated Press

Orlando Sentinel July 27, 2011

NEW YORK (AP) — A one-handed man says the Transportation Security Administration unfairly rejected him for a job at New York's LaGuardia Airport, even though he's fully capable of unzipping luggage and patting down passengers.

Michael Costantino, 32, said Wednesday he has filed a complaint with the TSA alleging that the agency violated the Americans with Disabilities Act by disqualifying him during a medical exam in January.

XU.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission The TSA said it could not comment on pending litigation, but said its rules require job applicants to "possess basic aptitudes and physical abilities, including color perception, visual and aural acuity, physical coordination, and motor skills."

An outside company conducts the medical exams, the TSA said.

Costantino applied for a job as a screener at LaGuardia about 18 months ago, he said. He passed an initial test in which screeners must pick out weapons on X-ray images, then cleared a background check and a job interview with a panel of TSA officials. None of them mentioned his lack of a hand, Costantino said.

"It never came up until the final stage of the application process, the medical exam," he said.

He took the exam in January; two weeks later he received a letter telling him he was disqualified because of his disability.

Costantino, who was born without his right hand, is an amateur boxer and previously managed a delicatessen in Brooklyn.

He said the medical examiner never tested him to see if he could perform the physical tasks required of a screener.

"They just made an assumption, based on the fact that he has a disability, that he cannot perform the job," said Jonathan Bell, his lawyer.

Costantino said he complained to the TSA in February, then filed a formal claim with the TSA's Equal Employment Opportunity Office in June. The office has 180 days to investigate the claim. After that, Costantino can request a hearing before the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Diversity

<http://www.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123265795>

Air Force Chief of Staff speaks on diversity at NAACP dinner by Alicia Garges, Space and Missile Systems Center Public Affairs U.S. Air Force.mil, 28 July 2011

LOS ANGELES (AFNS) -- Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Norton Schwartz spoke about the importance of diversity at the NAACP's Annual Armed Services and Veterans Affairs Awards Dinner here July 26.



Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Norton Schwartz addresses the audience at the NAACP's Annual Armed Services and Veterans Affairs Awards Dinner held in Los Angeles on July 26, 2011. The banquet was one of several events held in conjunction with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's annual convention and coincided with the 63rd Anniversary of the executive order desegregating the military. (U.S. Air Force photo/Lou Hernandez)

The banquet was one of several events held in conjunction with the group's annual convention and coincided with the 63rd anniversary of the executive order desegregating the military.

"As a nation, we are benefitting from having recognized the value of meaningful diversity," Schwartz said during an address to the attendees.

While earlier equal opportunity programs focused on race and gender, the current diversity movement looks beyond demographic considerations, the general said.

"We know that our strength is drawn from diverse perspectives that develop from different backgrounds -- to name a few: socioeconomic, educational, geographic, philosophical and spiritual," he said.

Ensuring Air Force working environments are conducive to equal opportunity and fostering diversity of perspectives in the service will lead to enhanced performance and effectiveness, Schwartz said.

"Our next challenge will be to identify more clearly how this is done and how we can measure our progress," the general said

Recently, the service formed the Air Force Diversity Committee, a senior-level working group chartered to find ways to leverage and better manage diversity, Schwartz said.

According to the general, diversity should not be an end unto itself, but rather a means toward a broader desired state of enhanced effectiveness for the Air Force and its overall mission. Schwartz pointed out that in academic literature, diversity management has been defined as the systematic and planned commitment on the part of organizations to recruit and retain employees from diverse demographic backgrounds.

"Note the open-ended sense of the phrase 'diverse demographic backgrounds,' which suggests that it is possible for any number of people, even of the same gender and race, to still have widely differing demographic backgrounds," Schwartz said.

<http://www.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123265795>

"Therefore managing diversity, I would argue, also implies -- as well as important considerations of race, gender and ethnicity -- a more active recognition and appreciation of the increasingly multicultural nature of contemporary organizations," he said.

The Air Force's diversity efforts focus on institutionalizing diversity throughout the service and allowing for the recruitment, development and retention of a highly-qualified and talented total force, Schwartz said.

"As we approach this challenge, we will consider ways in which we can engage every Airman -- officer, enlisted, and civilian -- across the total force as participants in this process, and encourage them to share in the responsibility for ensuring that the talents and capabilities of each individual are mutually respected, valued and applied toward enhancing mission accomplishment," Schwartz said.

Commanders and supervisors at all levels will be taking the lead in advancing diversity priorities, deepening the lines of communication and taking a personal interest in orchestrating individual success of others whose potential to serve the Air Force so values, he said.

"Your Air Force embraces the fundamental value of a diverse workforce, whose individual members, while possessing different backgrounds and perspectives, are singularly bound in common cause, lending their creativity, energy and dedication to the betterment of our mission and our nation's security," he said.

- **Strengthening the Air Force through Meaningful Diversity speech**

http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/let-deaf-americans-serve-their-country/2011/07/20/gIQACHUhSI_story.html

Let deaf Americans serve their country

By Robert B. Weinstock

Washington Post, 21 July 2011

In May 1971, near the end of my junior year in high school, I participated in Armed Forces Day activities at the U.S. Naval Academy. I was immediately enchanted by the academy and Annapolis. When I returned to school the following week, I asked my guidance counselor if I could apply to the Naval Academy. He said that he didn't think so, "because you have to be able to hear to serve our country."

I was the only deaf student in my Montgomery County high school, and I was a good student, involved in myriad extracurricular activities and unaccustomed to being told that I couldn't do something because of my hearing loss. Crestfallen, I rationalized that I wasn't that good a swimmer. Certainly naval officers needed to be able to swim more than 50 yards without gasping for breath.

My outlook changed in the fall of 1972, when I entered Gallaudet College (now university) as a freshman. For the first time, I lived and studied among other deaf and hard-of-hearing students. Thirty-nine years later, I know there is no limit to what a deaf person can do.

Except, it seems, in serving our country.

This issue is front and center for me once again, 40 years later, because of a young man named [Keith R. Nolan](#).

Keith is deaf. His father, [Kevin J. Nolan Sr.](#), a longtime educator, was a member of the Northampton (Mass.) City Council in the mid-1980s. He is believed to be the first born-deaf person to be elected to a city council in this country. Keith's siblings, also deaf, are successful professionals.

Keith has a master's degree and has worked as a high school teacher in Southern California. But more than anything, he wants to serve our country, as some of his forebears did. At 28, he enrolled in the Army Reserve Officers Training Corps program at California State University at Northridge. By all accounts, he was a model cadet.

The ROTC program is open to all students, but completing it requires a medical exam, and that is where Keith's aspirations are blocked. The Army will not commission him because he is deaf. Rep. Henry A. Waxman (D-Calif.) has interceded on Keith's behalf, and his office is reviewing the policy implications.

To buttress his case, Keith has found evidence of deaf people serving our country in several conflicts. He has studied other countries' policies, notably those of Israel, which has deaf soldiers in noncombat roles. Only 20 percent of U.S. service members are in combat roles, he says, and the rest serve in support. Keith wants to work in military intelligence.

More and more soldiers with disabilities are returning to the front lines. Keith identified 41 soldiers with prosthetic limbs who are back in the field. He learned of [Capt. Scott Smiley](#), who was blinded in Iraq and now [commands the Warrior Transition Unit](#) at West Point's Keller Army Medical Center as the Army's first blind active-duty officer. And if you consider learning disabilities, which are covered by the [Americans With Disabilities Act](#), it's a good bet that the military has more soldiers with disabilities, on the front lines and elsewhere.

Being deaf has not prevented Keith Nolan from leading a full life. It has not prevented him from being called a top cadet by his ROTC superiors.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/let-deaf-americans-serve-their-country/2011/07/20/gIQACHUhSI_story.html

So what's the problem? Why can't Keith Nolan serve our country? For that matter, why couldn't I 39 years ago?

The United States has one of the world's largest militaries, and arguably the most powerful. It has not always been the most diverse. My one-time school of choice, the Naval Academy, [did not admit women until 1976](#). And the "[don't ask, don't tell](#)" policy, hopefully on its way to an overdue demise, has led to many proud gay and lesbian service members being discharged from the military.

The military needs to rethink its policies regarding people with disabilities.

I am unabashedly dovish, but I know that with the United States engaged in two wars and a conflict in Libya, our military's need for America's best has never been greater. There's a large pool of people who are being systematically excluded by an outdated, irrelevant policy. It's time to let people with disabilities serve our country.

Robert Weinstock is special assistant to the provost at Gallaudet University; the views expressed here are his own.

<http://ebird.osd.mil/ebfiles/e20110725832926.html> or
<http://hamptonroads.com/2011/07/navy-prepares-submarines-1st-female-officers-0>

Navy prepares submarines for 1st female officers

By Michael Melia, Associated Press

Norfolk Virginian-Pilot, July 25, 2011

HARTFORD, Conn.--For Ensign Peggy LeGrand, the biggest concern about serving on a submarine is not spending weeks at a time in tight quarters with an entirely male crew. What worries her is the scrutiny that comes with breaking one of the last gender barriers in the U.S. military.

"I have a feeling more people will be focused on us. Our mistakes and successes will be magnified more than they deserve," said LeGrand, a 25-year-old Naval Academy graduate from Amarillo, Texas.

LeGrand is among a small group of female officers who are training at sites including Groton, Conn., to join the elite submarine force beginning later this year. While the Navy says it is not treating them any differently from their male counterparts, officials have been working to prepare the submarine crews - and the sailors' wives - for one of the most dramatic changes in the 111-year history of the Navy's "silent service."

The initial class of 24 women will be divided among four submarines, where they will be outnumbered by men by a ratio of roughly 1 to 25. The enlisted ranks, which make up about 90 percent of a sub's 160-sailor crew, are not open to women although the Navy is exploring modifications to create separate bunks for men and women.

The female officers, many of them engineering graduates from Annapolis, are accustomed to being in the minority, and so far they say they hardly feel like outsiders. The nuclear power school that is part of their training, for example, has been open to women for years because the Navy in 1994 reversed a ban on females serving on its surface ships, including nuclear-powered vessels.

At the U.S. Navy's submarine school in Groton, where eight women were among dozens who recently completed the 10-week officer basic course, Ensign Kristin Lyles said the presence of the first class of females bound for submarine duty was not even remarked upon at this month's graduation ceremony.

"I understand the reason why. It was never explained but it was kind of implied that while we're going through training, as soon as they started calling attention to it in that way, it's singling us out," said Lyles, 23, of Fairfax Station, Va. "In my experience, I am no different from the guy sitting next to me in all my classes."

A submarine group spokesman, Lt. Brian Wierzbicki, said the Navy would not facilitate photographs or interviews with the female submariners because it does not want to distract them from training or make them feel different from their male peers.

The female officers will report to their submarines starting in late November or early December. All of the vessels are guided-missile attack submarines or ballistic-missile submarines, which are

<http://ebird.osd.mil/ebfiles/e20110725832926.html> or
<http://hamptonroads.com/2011/07/navy-prepares-submarines-1st-female-officers-0>

relatively large by submarine standards. They are the USS Wyoming and USS Georgia, based in Kings Bay, Ga., and the USS Maine and USS Ohio, with their home port in Bangor, Wash.

On submarines with corridors barely wide enough for sailors to brush past one another, the six female officers on board will all share a stateroom. Their shifts will be divided so that women are assigned to each sub's two rotating crews. The lone bathroom for officers will have a reversible sign, letting men know that it's in use by women and vice versa.

LeGrand said she is not concerned about being outnumbered.

"Space is at a premium and everyone has no space. You just get over it and do your job," she said in a phone interview.

She said she is thrilled at the opportunity to join the close-knit submarine community, but she does not dwell on being a barrier-breaker.

"Every now and then I think about it and yeah, it's pretty cool, but ultimately I'm just happy I get chance to serve on a sub," she said.

The change is a source of anxiety for others, including the wives of submariners, who worry the close contact at sea could lead to sailors' cheating.

"The issue really has to do with the creation of a relationship that becomes very close and then results in further relations ashore. That is, of course, what bothers the wives. They know the kind of relationships that happen between the shipmates," said retired Navy Rear Adm. W.J. Holland Jr., a former submarine commander.

Although Holland said commanders would be reluctant to have women on their subs, he said the Navy pulled off a more daunting challenge last year by outlawing smoking on submarines. The crews can adapt, he said.

The Navy reversed the ban on women in submarines in April 2010. In the fall, when officials announced the first subs selected to take on female officers, senior leaders held town hall meetings with the crews and their families to address their concerns. Wierzbicki, the Navy spokesman, said training has been provided to the crews and commanding officers to prepare them for the change.

Submarines had been the last class of military vessel off-limits to women. Navy officials say one lesson they learned from integrating surface ships is to make the transition gradually. The Navy wants to make sure it is aware of any potential issues that might arise, according to Lt. Cmdr. Jean Sullivan, chief of the naval personnel's office of women's policy.

"There are going to be leadership challenges and maturity challenges anyone would face in their first job. There is just a spotlight on it because they're the first on submarines," Sullivan said.

<http://ebird.osd.mil/ebfiles/e20110725832926.html> or
<http://hamptonroads.com/2011/07/navy-prepares-submarines-1st-female-officers-0>

The chairwoman of the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services, retired Army Lt. Gen. Claudia Kennedy, told a committee meeting last month that one risk is that men could feel constrained and resent the presence of women.

"One of the issues around women being integrated is this thought that, 'Oh, now because you're here, we can't do XYZ,'" Kennedy said. "And that creates a greater sense of isolation and exclusion for women."

The Navy is looking into bringing women aboard the smaller, Virginia-class attack subs, which would require reconfigurations to accommodate men and women together.

LeGrand said the diverse missions of the attack subs would be appealing, but the larger submarines are just fine with her.

As a semi-professional cyclist, she's hoping to serve on a sub large enough to bring aboard a stationary bike.

Human Relations

Consultant Program Supports Troops, Families

By Elaine Sanchez

American Forces Press Service, July 27, 2011

WASHINGTON – With portable, flexible care, the Defense Department’s Military Family Life Consultant program has become a critical component in service member and family support, the director of the Pentagon’s office of family policy, children and youth said.

Through the program, behavioral health specialists deploy around the world to offer short-term, nonmedical counseling and life coaching to military families dealing with everything from deployment and reintegration issues to natural and manmade disasters.

This immediate care can prove invaluable to a family member in need, Barbara Thompson told American Forces Press Service.

“We’re at the prevention end of the spear,” she said. “We can help families cope with the challenges they’re facing before these issues escalate, before they require more intensive treatment.”

The Defense Department launched the program in 2004 in response to the stressors of an increasing deployment pace and unexpected tour of duty extensions, Thompson explained. Officials saw the value of augmenting family center staffs to better meet the needs of families.

“To have that professional mental health specialist be available to help guide staff as they work with families and children has just been a real godsend,” Thompson said.

Since its inception, the program has exploded, with officials embedding consultants in family centers, military child and youth programs, summer camp programs and in schools, both on and off installations, with a high level of military participation.

“We recognized early on that children were manifesting behaviors as they coped with the separation from a parent, and we wanted to make sure the staff was totally prepared to meet their needs,” Thompson said.

To address the needs of geographically separated service members and their families, consultants are sent to many Guard and Reserve reintegration events -- about 100 events a week -- she said. As word spread about the program, so did the demand. Army officials, for example, requested a life consultant be embedded in every brigade.

Recently, with the program’s flexibility and portability in mind, officials began to surge consultants into areas affected by natural disasters, such as tornados and earthquakes, and to military communities dealing with stressors of a different kind, Thompson explained. For example, officials sent 54 counselors to Fort Hood, Texas, after the November 2009 shooting spree there, and to Japan this year in the wake of a massive earthquake and tsunami.

Consultants typically embed in a location from 30 to 90 days, or for a semester when dealing with child and youth programs and schools. On average, they meet with families about four times.

“We want to be sure we are providing access to someone you can talk to, whether it’s communication with your kids, marital issues or trouble in the work environment,” Thompson said.

These sessions are kept confidential, she added, unless there’s a “duty to warn” situation, such as domestic violence or a suicide risk.

Officials hope this confidentiality encourages people to seek help without the perceived stigma of seeking mental health care, she added. “We want people to have the opportunity to talk to someone, to problem solve and figure out the next steps for themselves and their families,” she said.

All consultants are licensed clinicians with a master’s or doctorate degree. But while on duty, they’re wearing a nonmedical counseling hat, Thompson noted. The program is meant to complement military treatment facilities and mental health care programs, she explained, not replace them. Consultants will recommend further treatment if the situation escalates to a higher need.

“It’s problem-solving and coaching, not therapy,” she said.

With a years-long track record of success, Thompson said, she believes the program will continue to be in demand for some time to come, even with the troop drawdowns in Iraq and Afghanistan.

“Our gut feeling is that the issues are going to be around for a while, regardless of downsizing,” she said. “Psychological issues and challenges of reintegration take time.”

The program provides a stable opportunity to work through those issues, Thompson said. “This program is supporting one component of the spectrum of psychological health,” she added. “It’s a critical component for family support.

Service members and their families can find a life consultant by contacting their local family support or child and youth center.

Miscellaneous

Congress passes GI Bill fixes

By Leo Shane III

Stars and Stripes, July 27, 2011

WASHINGTON — Just days before the start of the fall semester, Congress has approved a host of changes to the way GI Bill benefits will be paid in an effort to prevent thousands of veterans from facing a steep drop in tuition payouts.

The measure, passed by a 424-0 vote in the House on Tuesday, would guarantee that student veterans enrolled in classes will receive at least as much tuition funding from the education benefit next semester as they did last semester. The president is expected to sign the bill into law in coming days.

On Aug. 1, changes approved by Congress last fall will set the maximum yearly tuition for students attending private or out-of-state colleges at \$17,500. In-state tuition for veterans is covered fully by the post-9/11 GI Bill and will not be affected.

AdvertisementThe private college payout changes will mean thousands more annually for most veterans, but they'll hurt students from seven states where the reimbursement rates were higher than the \$17,500 cap.

Students from a number of high-priced private colleges petitioned Congress in recent months to grandfather them in at their old rates until graduation, to ensure they didn't face new student loan payments to finish their degrees.

The bill passed Tuesday, dubbed the "GI Bill Fairness Act," will do that, but only for students at private colleges. That should help about 6,000 students who meet that criteria, but not a few thousand fewer who are attending out-of-state public universities.

Tom Tarantino, senior legislative associate at Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, said his group is still concerned about that population and the potential debt they could face, but "Congress should get credit for getting this far when it's clear there isn't the mood for new spending."

The initial estimate for the tuition fixes was about \$50 million, although that figure assumed more than 6,000 veterans would have been affected.

In a statement, House Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Jeff Miller, R-Fla., said by approving the fixes, lawmakers are "keeping our promise to America's student veterans ... enabling them to stay in the school of their choice."

Officials from the Department of Veterans Affairs had said earlier that changes the tuition payout rules this late in the summer could throw the entire GI Bill processing system into disarray, potential disrupting payouts to the nearly 800,000 student receiving the benefit.

However, VA officials backed off that stance in recent days, instead saying that it will likely only slow delivery of benefits for the few thousand affected veterans.

<http://www.stripes.com/news/congress-passes-gi-bill-fixes-1.150316>

Tarantino said his group will continue to push for additional fixes to the tuition payouts, but they are also hopeful that schools will step in this fall with tuition assistance packages to keep those veterans in class.

First Results From the 2010 Census

Population Reference Bureau Reports on America

(July 2011) *PRB Reports on America*

Here are 10 key findings about how the U.S. population has changed:

1. On April 1, 2010 there were **308.7 million people** living in the United States. Although the pace of population growth slowed relative to the 1990s, the increase in population from 2000 to 2010—at 27.3 million—represents the third-largest increase in U.S. history.
2. In 2010, **children under age 18 made up 24 percent of the U.S. population—an all-time low**. Population aging is not unique to the United States and in many developed countries—including Japan, France, Germany, and Canada—the share of the population under age 18 is substantially lower than in the United States.
3. **The decennial census has historically missed a higher percentage of minorities and children**, and this trend continued in 2010. Results from the Census Bureau's demographic analysis show that 2010 Census enumeration may have missed 2.5 percent of African Americans and 1.7 percent of children under age 18.
4. In 2010 there were 50 million Hispanics living in the United States, making up nearly one in six U.S. residents. **The Latino population increased 43 percent since 2000 and has more than doubled since 1990**. Overall, minorities accounted for 92 percent of the total U.S. population growth during the past decade, and Hispanics accounted for over half of the increase.
5. In the United States, **racial/ethnic minorities are not evenly distributed across age groups**. While nearly half of the population under age 18 are racial/ethnic minorities, two-thirds of the voting-age population is non-Hispanic white.
6. **Since the 1950s, the population has shifted to the South and West**—and this trend continued over the last 10 years. For the first time, the West has overtaken the Midwest as the second most-populous census region—just as it overtook the Northeast 20 years earlier.
7. Across the country, **population growth slowed with the lagging economy**, and unlike the 1990s, when every state gained population, Michigan's population declined between 2000 and 2010. Among the 50 states, Nevada had the fastest population growth rate (35 percent), while Texas had the largest numerical increase (4.3 million).
8. **Areas with the fastest growth included suburbs of metropolitan areas in the South and West**, such as the region around Orlando, Fla.; the "Research Triangle" area of North Carolina; the northern Virginia exurbs of Washington, D.C.; and the areas surrounding such cities as Las Vegas, Atlanta, and several cities in Texas (Houston, Dallas-Fort Worth, San Antonio, and Austin). As in previous decades, many rural areas lost population, including much of the Great Plains and northern and central Appalachia. In fact, nearly half of the 1,104 counties that lost people during the 2000s were counties that were isolated from metropolitan areas and had small or nonexistent urban populations.
9. Within metropolitan areas, **most U.S. population growth during the past century has taken place in suburban areas, rather than central cities**. In the last decade, however, the population living in central cities has rebounded somewhat, registering an increase of 3 percentage points. One-third of the U.S. population now lives in central cities, the highest proportion since 1950.
10. **Racial/ethnic diversity is increasing in local areas across the United States**. Results from the 2010 Census show that 11 percent (341) of the country's 3,143 counties already have become "majority minority"—less than 50 percent non-Hispanic white. And another 225 counties have reached the "tipping point" toward becoming majority minority sometime in the next decade: Between 40 percent and 50 percent of the population in those counties are minorities.

<http://www.stripes.com/news/veterans/homelessness-among-afghanistan-iraq-veterans-rises-1.150125>

Homelessness among Afghanistan, Iraq veterans rises

By Gregg Zoroya

Stars and Stripes/USA Today, 25 July 2011

More than 10,000 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans are homeless or in programs aimed at keeping them off the streets, a number that has doubled three times since 2006, according to figures released by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The rise comes at a time when the total number of homeless veterans has declined from a peak of about 400,000 in 2004 to 135,000 today.

"We're seeing more and more (Iraq and Afghanistan veterans)," says Richard Thomas, a Volunteers of America case manager at a shelter in Los Angeles. "It's just a bad time for them to return now and get out of the military."

The VA blames the rise on a poor economy and the nature of the current wars, where a limited number of troops serve multiple deployments.

The result is a group of homeless veterans where 70 percent have a history of combat exposure with its psychological effects, says Pete Dougherty, a senior policy adviser on homelessness at the VA.

Among all homeless veterans, perhaps 20 percent to 33 percent were in combat, he says.

LaShonna Perry, a former Army mechanic who served in Iraq and Afghanistan, was homeless for more than year after leaving the military. She rented an apartment last year with a federal voucher.

"Some soldiers still have issues they're dealing with from what they've seen, what they've experienced," she says. "Some think, 'There's nothing wrong with me.' They can deal with it on their own. Until it gets out of control."

As of May, there were 10,476 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans either living on the streets, in temporary housing or receiving federal vouchers to help pay rent for an apartment.

About 13 percent are women, the VA says.

The spike in Iraq and Afghanistan veterans seeking shelter comes at a time when the government and non-profit groups are pouring more resources than ever into fighting veteran homelessness.

The VA and the Department of Housing and Urban Development are spending \$46.2 million to expand the voucher program.

The VA is set to announce Tuesday that nearly \$60 million will fund a program of grants to veterans with families who are homeless or at risk of losing their homes.

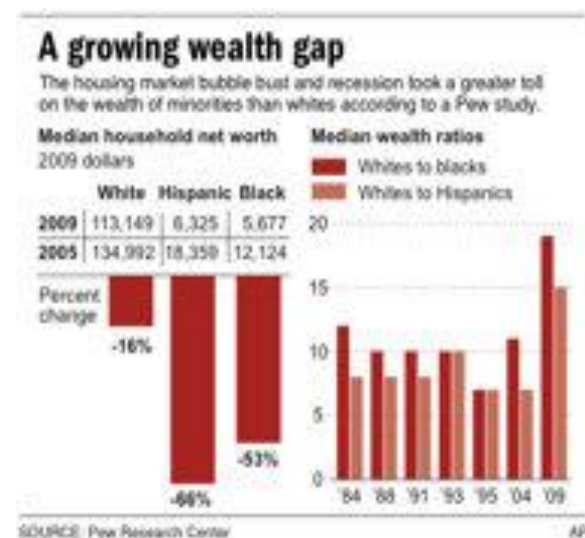
"There are places to turn to for help that did not exist before," says John Driscoll, president and chief executive officer of the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans.

He said more than 2,400 non-profit organizations across the country now have homeless veteran programs.

Wealth gap widens between whites, minorities

By HOPE YEN

Associated Press, Tue, Jul 26, 2011



WASHINGTON (AP) — The wealth gaps between whites and minorities have grown to their widest levels in a quarter-century. The recession and uneven recovery have erased decades of minority gains, leaving whites on average with 20 times the net worth of blacks and 18 times that of Hispanics, according to an analysis of new Census data.

The analysis shows the racial and ethnic impact of the economic meltdown, which ravaged housing values and sent unemployment soaring. It offers the most direct government evidence yet of the disparity between predominantly younger minorities whose main asset is their home and

older whites who are more likely to have 401(k) retirement accounts or other stock holdings. "What's pushing the wealth of whites is the rebound in the stock market and corporate savings, while younger Hispanics and African-Americans who bought homes in the last decade — because that was the American dream — are seeing big declines," said Timothy Smeeding, a University of Wisconsin-Madison professor who specializes in [income inequality](#).

The median wealth of white U.S. households in 2009 was \$113,149, compared with \$6,325 for Hispanics and \$5,677 for blacks, according to the analysis released Tuesday by the [Pew Research Center](#). Those ratios, roughly 20 to 1 for blacks and 18 to 1 for Hispanics, far exceed the low mark of 7 to 1 for both groups reached in 1995, when the nation's economic expansion lifted many low-income groups to the middle class.

The white-black wealth gap is also the widest since the census began tracking such data in 1984, when the ratio was roughly 12 to 1.

"I am afraid that this pushes us back to what the Kerner Commission characterized as 'two societies, separate and unequal,'" said Roderick Harrison, a former chief of racial statistics at the Census Bureau, referring to the 1960s presidential commission that examined U.S. race relations. "The great difference is that the second society has now become both black and Hispanic."

Stock holdings play an important role in the economic well-being of white households. Stock funds, IRA and Keogh accounts as well as 401(k) and savings accounts were responsible for 28 percent of whites' net worth, compared with 19 percent for blacks and 15 percent for Hispanics. According to the Pew study, the housing boom of the early to mid-2000s boosted the wealth of Hispanics in particular, who were disproportionately employed in the thriving construction industry. Hispanics also were more likely to live and buy homes in states such as California, Florida, Nevada and Arizona, which were in the forefront of the real estate bubble, enjoying early gains in home values.

But those gains quickly shriveled in the housing bust. After reaching a median wealth of \$18,359 in 2005, the wealth of Hispanics — who derived nearly two-thirds of their net worth from home equity — declined by 66 percent by 2009. Among blacks, who now have the highest unemployment rate at 16.2 percent, their household wealth fell 53 percent from \$12,124 to \$5,677.

In contrast, the median household wealth of whites dipped a modest 16 percent from \$134,992 to \$113,149, cushioned in part by a stock market recovery that began in mid-2009.

"The findings are a reminder — if one was needed — of what a large share of blacks and Hispanics live on the economic margins," said Paul Taylor, director of Pew Social & Demographic Trends. "When the economy tanked, they're the groups that took the heaviest blows."

The latest data come as [President Barack Obama](#) and congressional leaders try to reach a deal to avoid a U.S. default on its financial obligations after Aug. 2. Democrats and Republicans have been wrangling over proposals that could cut trillions of dollars from programs such as Medicare and Social Security; they are divided over whether to bring in new tax revenue, such as by closing corporate tax loopholes or increasing taxes for the wealthy.

The NAACP and other black groups urged Obama to resist deep cuts to housing assistance or safety net programs, saying it would disproportionately hurt urban areas with high poverty and unemployment. The U.S. poverty rate currently stands at 14.3 percent, with the ranks of the working-age poor at the highest level since the 1960s. Some analysts believe the poverty rate will climb higher when new figures are released in September.

"Typically in recessions, minorities suffer from being last hired and first fired. They are likely to lose jobs more rapidly at the beginning of the recession, and are far slower to gain jobs as the economy recovers," said Harrison, who is now a sociologist at Howard University. "One suspects that blacks who lost jobs in the recession, or who have tried to help family members or relatives who did, have now spent whatever savings or other cashable assets they had."

Other findings:

—About 35 percent of black households and 31 percent of Hispanic households had zero or negative net worth in 2009, compared with 15 percent of white households. In 2005, the comparable shares were 29 percent for blacks, 23 percent for Hispanics and 11 percent for whites.

—Asians lost their top ranking to whites in median household wealth, dropping from \$168,103 in 2005 to \$78,066 in 2009. Like Hispanics, many Asians were concentrated in states like California hit hard by the housing downturn. More recent arrivals of new Asian immigrants, who tend to be poor, also pushed down their median wealth.

—Across all race and ethnic groups, the wealth gap between rich and poor widened. The share of wealth held by the top 10 percent of U.S. households increased from 49 percent in 2005 to 56 percent in 2009. The threshold for entry into the wealthiest top 10 percent, however, dipped lower: from \$646,327 in 2005 to \$598,435.

The numbers are based on the Census Bureau's Survey of Income and Program Participation, which sampled more than 36,000 households on wealth from September-December 2009.

<http://news.yahoo.com/wealth-gap-widens-between-whites-minorities-040224418.html>

Census first began publishing wealth data from this survey, broken down by race and ethnicity, in 1984.

Online:

Pew Social & Demographic Trends: <http://pewsocialtrends.org/>

Census Bureau: www.census.gov

Misconduct

Navy secretary censures former Va. officer

Associated Press, Jul 23, 2011

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va. (AP) — The secretary of the Navy has censured the former commander of a fighter squadron at Oceana Naval Air Station.

Navy Secretary Ray Mabus said Cmdr. Liam Bruen permitted a hostile work environment, allowed subordinates to sexually harass a junior officer and gave the officer a bad performance evaluation as reprisal for filing a formal complaint.

The Virginian-Pilot reported Saturday that Cmdr. Liam Bruen was head of Strike Fighter Squadron 186 in August 2009 when an informal meeting was held to choose call signs for new officers. Ensign Steve Crowston was given one of three signals that were proposed, all of which had anti-gay overtones.

Mabus said in a letter Wednesday that Bruen "demonstrated a profound lack of judgment" in not promptly stopping the harassment.

According to 190 pages of documents obtained by the newspaper through the Freedom of Information Act, after the August 2009 meeting Crowston promptly notified his chain of command that he found the names offensive and humiliating. Shortly afterward, the squadron's second-in-command, Cmdr. Damien Christopher, told Bruen he thought the names were problematic.

A few days later, Bruen called an all-officers meeting. His notes show he told the group "derogatory references of a homosexual nature" would not be tolerated.

Crowston wasn't satisfied. Six months later, he filed a complaint with the inspector general for Naval Air Force Atlantic.

An initial investigation dismissed most of Crowston's complaints. The Naval Inspector General then conducted its own inquiry and found what happened at the call sign meeting constituted hazing, sexual harassment and a hostile work environment.

In a 17-page response to the inspector general's findings, Bruen called the investigations "troubling and one-sided." He said three of the other five officers had been given "homosexually oriented" proposed call signs that day, and he said he held an officers' meeting to "address the inappropriate behavior" without identifying Crowston as the one who had complained.

Bruen, who retired earlier this year, said in an email to the newspaper that since he is no longer in the Navy he fails to see the validity of the Navy secretary's actions.

Crowston said Friday that "justice is served" with Bruen's censure. The Navy also has removed the unfavorable fitness report from Crowston's file and has promoted him to lieutenant junior grade.

<http://news.yahoo.com/navy-secretary-censures-former-va-officer-172853398.html>

He said he hopes other service members subjected to offensive comments will be inspired by the outcome of his complaint.

"Fight the homophobic bigotry anywhere and anytime," Crowston said.

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Information from: The Virginian-Pilot, <http://pilotonline.com>

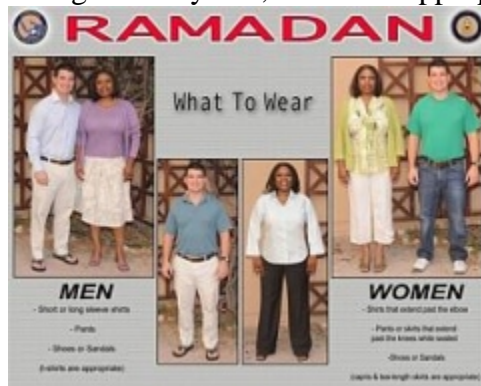
Religion

Troops in Mideast given guidance on Ramadan

By Geoff Ziezulewicz

Stars and Stripes, July 27, 2011

NAPLES, Italy — As Muslims prepare to observe the holy month of Ramadan with fasting and prayer, U.S. troops across the Middle East are being reminded to respect the customs of the societies around them. Among the guidelines: Do not eat, drink, smoke or chew gum in public during the daily fast, and dress appropriately: no shorts or short skirts.



This attire guidance for U.S. personnel in Bahrain during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan was posted to the Navy's 5th Fleet Facebook page recently. During Ramadan, Muslims fast from sunup to sundown. U.S. community members in Bahrain need to observe stricter dress codes during Ramadan, as well as refrain from eating and drinking in public, according to 5th Fleet. Courtesy of U.S. Navy

During Ramadan, which this year begins Aug. 1, Muslims refrain from eating or drinking between sunup and sundown.

Among guidance issued to U.S. military deployed in Muslim majority countries, the Bahrain-based command of U.S. Navy 5th Fleet posted guidance for sailors and their family members to heed during Ramadan when off base.

U.S. personnel are not expected to fast during Ramadan, but community members must refrain from eating, chewing gum, drinking water, smoking or chewing tobacco in public during daylight hours, according to 5th Fleet. “‘In public’ includes riding in a bus or car (even your own), walking or exercising,” according to the 5th Fleet’s Facebook page. “Eating, drinking or smoking by a non-Muslim in public during the day is considered a civil offence by many local laws, which may result in a fine or confinement.”

Alcohol consumption by U.S. military personnel in any off-base venue is prohibited during the holiday, with the exception of USO/MWR facilities, private off-base dwellings, or hotel rooms occupied by troops who are transferring or on a business trip.

Shorts are prohibited while off base during Ramadan as well, according to 5th Fleet, and women are required to wear pants or skirts long enough to cover their knees when seated.

Fifth Fleet spokesman Lt. Frederick Martin said this week that the command sends out Ramadan guidance annually.

<http://www.stripes.com/news/middle-east/troops-in-mideast-given-guidance-on-ramadan-1.150254#>

“When in public, both in Bahrain and elsewhere in the 5th Fleet area of operations, Ramadan brings increased cultural and legal restrictions, which we, as guests in these countries, are expected to adhere to,” Martin said in an email.

In Kuwait and Qatar, U.S. 3rd Army provides training to troops, and also instructs them not to eat, drink, smoke or chew tobacco while off-base, spokesman Capt. James Sweeney said in an email.

“They are also warned that these actions are punishable under local law,” he said.

In Iraq, personnel are encouraged not to eat, drink or smoke in the presence of Muslims during the daytime hours, according to U.S. Forces-Iraq spokesman 1st Lt. Joseph Larrew.

“Also, any troops conducting meetings with Iraqis are encouraged to do so earlier in the day to be considerate to their needs,” he said in an email.

While NATO troops in the field across Afghanistan are not restricted from eating, drinking or smoking outside the wire, they are made aware of the holiday, according to Air Force Maj. Deb Balentine, a spokesman for the coalition’s International Security Assistance Force.

Troops are encouraged to be sensitive to the importance of fasting and not to eat or drink in front of Afghan citizens, she said.

They are also told to be aware of the limits fasting may put on Afghan police or soldiers’ abilities to conduct operations or train, she said.

A Defense Department press release Tuesday said Afghan soldiers and Marines from 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment in Helmand province were planning to distribute more than 1,200 bags of wheat grain to the local population.

“The Ramadan holiday is part of the daily life of every Afghan person,” 1st Lt. Paul Mooney, the assistant civil affairs team leader for 1/3, said in the release. “Showing we respect the holiday will help the perception of Marines to positively change.”