

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.

Changing the Face of the Military [Kellye Whitney, *Diversity Executive.com*, 13 November 2011]

- [This article profiles Craig McKinley, general in the United States Air Force and chief of the National Guard Bureau]. In 1976, the Air Force asked McKinley to become an equal opportunity and treatment officer. McKinley “went through a very dedicated and hands-on school at the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI).” “I spent 12 weeks learning about a side of me and a side of America that I didn’t know anything about,” McKinley said.
- Since McKinley took over the National Guard Bureau, the National Guard has published a book that has been distributed to every member of the organization, a kind of leaders’ guide in which all senior officers and senior enlisted members have signed a policy stating their commitment to diversity. This will help to ensure a sustained focus on related issues.
- The National Guard has entered into an agreement with the DEOMI to implement diversity competency training courses for next-generation leaders.

[Changing the Face of the Military](#)

DoD misses deadline for women-in-combat report [Lance M. Bacon, *The Army Times*, 17 November 2011]

- The Defense Department has failed to meet an October deadline for a report that looks at whether women should be allowed to serve in combat roles.
- Army Chief of Staff Gen. Ray Odierno on October 12 expressed his displeasure with the forthcoming report. “The report focuses on jobs that put women into maneuver battalions, such as intelligence officers, signal officers, and other specialties that women are not allowed to do in combat battalions,” said Odierno, who wants to open more doors to female soldiers.
- The Military Leadership Diversity Council and the Defense Department Advisory Committee on Women in the Service want to end all combat exclusion rules.

[DoD misses deadline for women-in-combat report](#)

Panetta preparing DOD directive on investigating sexual assaults [Chris Carroll, *Stars and Stripes*, 18 November 2011]

- In the face of a rising tide of criticism over the military’s handling of reported sexual assaults, a Pentagon spokesman said, “Defense Secretary Leon Panetta is preparing orders that make ending this ‘silent epidemic’ a top department priority.”
- According to the Pentagon’s estimate, the 3,158 sexual assault incidents reported in 2010 represented just more than 10 percent of those that actually occurred. The Defense Department has long been passive about the problems of underreporting and botched rape investigations, victims and their advocates say.
- “Panetta and his staff are studying a range of aggressive actions to end the long-standing problems,” Pentagon Press Secretary George Little said, but he declined to name specifics.

[Panetta preparing DOD directive on investigating sexual assaults](#)

DEOMI News Highlights

Diversity

[Agreement elusive on women in combat](#)
[DoD misses deadline for women-in-combat report](#)
[U. Va. student project aims to allow women in combat](#)

Human Relations

[Benning Names Building for Iraq KIA Piestewa](#)
[Changing the Face of the Military](#)
[DoD studies social media's impact on deployment](#)
[Marine: Fears of end to gay ban prove unfounded](#)

Miscellaneous

[Army reports 17 suspected suicides for October](#)
[Chairman Dismisses Notion of Military in Decline](#)
[Course trains social workers on military issues](#)
[T-shirt is offensive: West Point, women's group](#)

Misconduct

['Culture of hazing' cited in FAMU's death](#)

Racism

[How White Supremacists Are Trying to Make an American Town a Model for Right-Wing Extremism](#)

Religion

[Air Force Academy adapts to pagans, druids, witches and Wiccans](#)
[Cross removed at base in Afghanistan](#)
[Military: Second group calls for Pendleton cross to come down](#)

Sexual Assault / Harassment

[Bureaucracy has blossomed in military's war on rape](#)
[Military's newly aggressive rape prosecution has pitfalls](#)
[Panetta preparing DOD directive on investigating sexual assaults](#)

Diversity

Agreement elusive on women in combat

Military urged to rethink ban

By Rowan Scarborough

The Washington Times, November 17, 2011



*** FILE ** Army Maj. Sequana Robinson models a new women's combat uniform that is currently being evaluated by the Army, at Fort Belvoir, Va., in this photo taken Thursday, March 31, 2011. (AP Photo/Jacquelyn Martin)*

Top defense officials are grappling to find a unified position on whether to allow women in direct ground combat, as the [Pentagon](#) prepares a landmark report to [Congress](#) on the military's coed future.

In the wake of two wars in which women have exchanged fire with the enemy, the [Pentagon](#) is being pressed to scrap the ban on women serving below the brigade level in units whose main mission is direct ground combat. That means women may not be infantry members or Green Berets.

"It is the subject of ongoing discussions but not yet fully resolved," a senior [Pentagon](#) official said when asked whether [ArmyGen. Martin E. Dempsey](#), chairman of the [Joint Chiefs](#) of Staff, has a recommendation for Defense Secretary [Leon E. Panetta](#).

The chiefs and [Mr. Panetta](#) are being pressed to present their views now because [Congress](#) passed a bill ordering the services to conduct a review and submit it this year.

Asked for [Mr. Panetta](#)'s position, a second defense official said: "I think the secretary is still weighing the ultimate recommendations that are being worked, and the report is not complete. So I'm not sure I can add to that at this point."

Because the exclusion is a policy, not a law, [Mr. Panetta](#) could lift the restrictions on all or some jobs after notifying [Congress](#).

The [Obama administration](#) needed congressional approval to remove the codified ban on open gays in the ranks, which happened Sept. 20.

[ArmyGen. Raymond T. Odierno](#), a [Joint Chiefs](#) member, has gone on record as saying he wants some restrictions lifted. He said he disagreed with the [Army](#)'s report, which was completed before he became chief and was submitted to [Mr. Panetta](#). It apparently recommends the status quo.

On the WUSA-TV program "This Week in Defense News," [Gen. Odierno](#) said female intelligence and signal officers, for example, should be able to serve below the brigade level in combat battalions.

"We need them there. We need their talent," the [Army](#) chief said. "This is about managing talent. We have incredibly talented females who should be in those positions. So I have to work toward us taking a better look at that.

"We have work to do within the [[Defense Department](#)] to get them to recognize and change. We did not get there at this time in this report, and I'm focused on this and I'm going to spend some time on it."

[Gen. Odierno](#) did not endorse women as infantry, armor or special operations soldiers in the interview. His spokeswoman declined to comment this week.

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2011/nov/17/agreement-elusive-on-women-in-combat/?page=all#pagebreak>

The chiefs are said to be studying at least three options:

- Leave the combat policy in place.
- Open some roles in battalions but maintain the ban on special operations and spots where physical requirements would prevent the vast majority of women from qualifying.
- Open all ground combat slots to females, including special operations.

The [Pentagon](#) could amend the policy to allow women to join maneuver battalions but limit the jobs open to them.

Lifting restrictions on female combat service would affect the [Marine Corps](#) and the [Army](#) most because they have the most ground forces. Top [Marine Corps](#) generals are said to be cool to lifting the ban.

“I don’t think you will see a change because I don’t think our women want it to change,” Gen. James Conway, then the [Marine Corps](#) commandant, said last year. “There are certain demands of officers in a combat arms environment that our women see, recognize, appreciate and say, ‘I couldn’t do that.’”

He added: “Now that’s not to say that we don’t have women doing a tremendous job in combat where you have a pretty amorphous environment, no real front lines in a counterinsurgency environment. And their contributions are appreciated and recognized and rewarded.”

The [Pentagon](#) was supposed to have submitted the women-in-combat report in April, but asked for an extension until Oct. 31.

The push to put women in ground combat units has come mostly from liberals in [Congress](#) and outside groups. They argue that women have proved their mettle in Iraq and Afghanistan by serving in police units and security details that exchanged fire with the enemy in wars that had no front lines.

In addition to requiring the pending report, [Congress](#) established a special outside commission. A divided panel in March recommended that the [Pentagon](#) end all combat restrictions for women.

Women make up about 15 percent of the active-duty force.

Military analysts who favor the ban argue that the issue is upper-body strength.

The military recruits men on the assumption that the vast majority of them can handle the rigorous demands of infantry and armor.

“Pretending women are identical to men puts them in danger, especially in the combat arms,” said Robert Maginnis, a retired [Army](#) officer and analyst at the Family Research Council.

“It is incredibly naive and wrongheaded to suggest the average woman can run as fast and carry the same load as the average man. Denying the biological facts to advance a policy change for women in ground combat may please feminists with no clue about military culture, but it is dangerous for our security.”

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<http://www.armytimes.com/news/2011/11/army-dod-misses-deadline-for-women-in-combat-report-111711w/>

DoD misses deadline for women-in-combat report

By Lance M. Bacon - Staff writer
Army Times, 17 November 2011

The Defense Department has failed to meet an October deadline for a report that looks at whether women should be allowed to serve in combat roles.

Congress in the 2011 National Defense Authorization Act required the defense and service secretaries to review policies “to determine whether changes are needed to ensure that female members have an equitable opportunity to compete and excel in the Armed Forces.” That report was due to Congress on April 15, but the Pentagon requested an extension through October.

The report had not been submitted as of Nov. 16.

“The report is under department review; when it is complete we’ll deliver it to Congress,” said Pentagon spokeswoman Eileen Lainez.

Army Chief of Staff Gen. Ray Odierno on Oct. 12 expressed his displeasure with the forthcoming report.

“I was not involved with this specific report. It was done before I got here,” Odierno told *Army Times*. “And the reason I want to clarify that is because I am not real happy with it. I don’t think it represents some of the things that our women are doing in combat.”

The report focuses on jobs that put women into maneuver battalions, such as intelligence officers, signal officers and other specialties that women are not allowed to do in combat battalions, said Odierno, who wants to open more doors to female soldiers.

“We need them there. We need their talent,” he said. “This is about managing talent. We have incredibly talented females who should be in those positions. We have work to do within the [Defense Department] to get them to recognize and change. We did not get there at this time in this report, and I’m focused on this and I will spend some time on it.”

The Military Leadership Diversity Council and the Defense Department Advisory Committee on Women in the Service want to end all combat exclusion rules. Both agencies submitted reports in the past year calling the rules “unnecessary barriers” that are detrimental to the careers of women serving in uniform, and keep capable and qualified women from contributing to the strength of these units.

The Army opened most jobs to women more than a decade ago, but combat-exclusion policies still prohibit women from serving in 9 percent of the Army’s tactical and operational career fields, such as armor and infantry. Women also lose key assignments because they can’t be assigned to units or jobs most likely to see direct offensive ground combat. As a result, only 70 percent of Army positions are open to women, according to a report by the Military Leadership Diversity Commission.

These lost opportunities have a lasting effect. Today, 80 percent of general officers come from career fields that are closed to women. Just one female soldier was selected for brigadier general in 2010, out of 100 military officers chosen in all the services. Only 24 of the Army’s 403 general officers — or 6 percent — are female, though women represent roughly 15 percent of the force.

<http://ebird.osd.mil/ebfiles/e20111127856079.html> or
<http://hamptonroads.com/2011/11/uva-student-project-aims-allow-women-combat>

U.Va. student project aims to allow women in combat

By Kate Wiltrout

Norfolk Virginian-Pilot, November 27, 2011

Four University of Virginia law school students - assisted by a professor and a high-flying law school alum - are gearing up to fight for the right of women to serve in combat, and they're interested in finding women in the military who want to join them.

Their effort, dubbed The Molly Pitcher Project, seeks to end military policies that categorically bar women from serving in units engaging in direct ground combat. The project takes its name from the woman who took over loading and firing a cannon after her husband fell ill during a Revolutionary War battle.

In the 1990s, Congress repealed laws banning women from flying combat aircraft and serving on warships. But positions in infantry and armor units, as well as special operations, are still off-limits. Earlier this year, a congressionally mandated commission recommended lifting all combat restrictions; Pentagon leaders are studying the issue and are expected to report back to Congress on the issue soon.

Kyle Mallinak is one of the second-year law students inspired to work for change after discussing the issue in a law and public policy class last spring.

He emphasized that the aim isn't to change physical fitness standards or establish a quota for women. The goal is to allow women who meet the military's standards to serve in any job. Women make up about 15 percent of the active-duty military.

"This is not about diversity at its core. It's not about a belief that we need a certain amount of women in everything," Mallinak said. "It's about individual dignity."

Anne Coughlin, the professor who taught the course and serves as a sponsor for the project, said women should be allowed to compete for jobs in elite units.

"We're not asking for special privileges, but if there are women who are fit and want to step up, the military should allow them," Coughlin said.

The military acknowledges that it can't operate in combat theaters without women in the ranks, Coughlin said, noting that in Iraq and Afghanistan, women have been killed in action and some have been awarded prestigious medals for bravery under fire.

"What we're just asking them to do is acknowledge, formally, publicly, honorably, what these women are doing," Coughlin said.

The Pentagon could propose that women be allowed to serve in some or all billets that are currently off-limits. Gen. Ray Odierno, the Army's chief of staff, has said he would like to see more jobs in combat battalions open to women, though he has stopped short of calling for an end to all gender-based limits.

The Pentagon could decide to change its policies on women in combat without congressional approval - doing so would require only notifying lawmakers. That's different from the landmark decision this year to allow openly gay men and women to serve in the military, a change that required Congress' support.

Another way to end the restrictions would be to challenge them in court as unconstitutional.

<http://ebird.osd.mil/ebfiles/e20111127856079.html> or

<http://hamptonroads.com/2011/11/uva-student-project-aims-allow-women-combat>

"It would be perfectly fine for us to never see a courtroom," Mallinak said, "But given the glacial pace that change comes at the Pentagon, we'd want to be prepared to litigate if necessary."

That's where Tally Parham comes in. Parham, who graduated from U.Va.'s law school in 1996, recently agreed to serve as lead counsel for The Molly Pitcher Project. An attorney in Columbia, S.C., she also knows a thing or two about serving in combat: as an F-16 pilot with the South Carolina Air National Guard, Parham flew air strikes in Iraq in the opening days of the war in 2003.

"I think the No. 1 test for the composition of any military fighting force is, what enhances combat effectiveness? What enhances military readiness?" Parham said. The most important individual traits for military success are skill, courage, determination and discipline, she said. "We've proven over and over and over again, none of those qualities are gender-specific."

Although Parham continues to serve in the Guard, she's involved in The Molly Pitcher Project as a lawyer and private citizen, and is working on the effort pro bono.

She said she understands that women on active duty, especially young ones, might not want to make waves by talking about what they can't do in the military. As a young pilot trying to prove herself, she said, she tried to stay away from discussions about gender and simply focused on doing her job as well as she could.

"I'd always hoped that at the point where we had large numbers of women in the leadership, change would just naturally occur," Parham said.

But that hasn't happened, so it's time to do more, she said.

"If there are women out there who are willing to challenge these issues of unfairness, then I'm happy to be their advocate."

Human Relations

Benning Names Building for Iraq KIA Piestewa

By Ben Wright

Columbus Ledger-Enquirer/Military.com, December 01, 2011

A headquarters building at Fort Benning, Ga., will be named today in honor of Spc. Lori Piestewa, who died in Iraq after her convoy was attacked in Nasiriyah.



Piestewa, 23, was the first Native American woman in history to die in combat while serving in the U.S. military and the first woman killed in the 2003 invasion of Iraq. A member of the Hopi tribe, she was a native of Tuba City, Ariz.

During a 10 a.m. memorial ceremony in Harmony Church, the Directorate of Training Sustainment Headquarters Building will be renamed Piestewa Hall. The building provides the Maneuver Center of Excellence with support in the training of Soldiers.

Items include water, fuel, distribution, transportation support, training equipment, medical support for high-risk Soldier training and other services.

The 27,000 square-foot building will house more than 98 civilians and 70 administrative workers, drivers, medics, fuelers and ammunition Soldiers who support training at the post.

Piestewa was deployed to Iraq with the 507th Maintenance Company from Fort Bliss, Texas, when her convoy got lost and ran into an ambush. A rocket propelled grenade struck the front left wheel of the Humvee she was driving, hurling the vehicle into the rear of a disabled tractor-trailer.

Piestewa and fellow Soldiers Jessica Lynch and Shoshana Johnson survived the crash with injuries but were taken captive. Lynch tried to fire her M16 but the weapon jammed.

Piestewa, who had a head wound, died in an Iraqi hospital.

Lynch has repeatedly said Piestewa was the true hero of the ambush. In her book "I'm a Soldier, Too: The Jessica Lynch Story," Lynch said Piestewa might have survived the head injury if she were treated in a U.S. military hospital with neurosurgeons available.

Piestewa, a private, was posthumously promoted to specialist and awarded the Purple Heart and Prisoner of War Medal.

In May 2005, Ty Pennington and the crew from ABC's "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" built Piestewa's parents and her children a brand new home in addition to a new veterans' center on the Navajo reservation.

The fallen Soldier's parents and children are expected to attend the ceremony, a post official said Tuesday.

Changing the Face of the Military

By Kellye Whitney

Diversity Executive, 13 November 2011

Some people know from an early age what they want to be when they grow up. Craig McKinley, general in the United States Air Force and chief of the National Guard Bureau, knew after watching a U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds flight demonstration team as a young boy that he wanted to fly planes.



His career focus on diversity evolved a bit more slowly. McKinley joined the military after college in 1974, serving on active duty in the Air Force for almost seven years before he joined the National Guard. He has been the organization's chief for three years following a four-year appointment by President George W. Bush.

The National Guard Bureau, composed of some 460,000 men and women in the U.S., Guam, Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia, has members of the Air Force and the Army who serve state governors when at home and go into federal service when mobilized.

"I happen to serve at a time when our nation is involved in a two-front war — Iraq and Afghanistan — and a few other hot spots around the world where the National Guard still serves in a federal status: Kosovo, the horn of Africa and the Sinai. We have soldiers and airmen stationed in those areas," he said. "The challenge right now is trying to keep all our kids alive and well-trained and well-equipped and well-led so they can survive combat. This year also has been a very tough year at home with the number of natural disasters that we've had — heat, tornadoes, floods, fires."

McKinley has 54 governor-appointed adjutants general — a kind of board of directors — who he works closely with as he resources, plans strategy, issues orders and works programs such as diversity for the respective states.

He said growing up as a white male after the Civil Rights Act of 1964, he watched America go through some tough times. The Vietnam War, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s march and his assassination as well as those of President John F. Kennedy and Sen. Robert Kennedy; he said these events left an imprint on people and contributed to how the military tackled diversity as an organization.

For instance, he said there weren't many women in the military in 1974, but by 1984 he was training female fighter pilots, "which was exactly the right thing to do."

Equal opportunity and treatment training classes also were mandated, and in 1976, with just 500 hours of flight time under his belt, the Air Force asked McKinley to become an equal opportunity and treatment officer.

"This was a career-broadening assignment much like an executive officer or an assistant to the commander, so you really got to know your boss very well, but you also went through a very dedicated and hands-on school at the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI)," McKinley said. "I spent 12 weeks learning about a side of me and a side of America that I didn't know anything about.

"Most of the equal opportunity treatment officers when I was in the business were African-American males. When you go through school and you become the minority in a majority class of African-American males, you get to know yourself and how you relate with other people very

http://www.diversity-executive.com/article.php?article_id=1366

quickly. Then I had to work on a base the size of a small town. It was Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas, about 35,000 people.”

McKinley said sometimes the system is not pure and there were things he had to correct on behalf of the base commander. “The next two years ... opened my eyes more to how you have to take care of people, make them feel empowered and give them hope they can achieve,” he said. That is where he first began to learn that an organization is stronger when it’s diverse. But it takes effort and leadership to create an environment where all people feel empowered to succeed.

“Sometimes people aren’t treated fairly,” McKinley said. “Sometimes the system doesn’t level the playing field so that everyone has equal opportunity. Sometimes there are good old boy systems out there that prevent all people from having the same advantages. In the Air Force back then, and even now, there are checks and balances that try to correct those inequities whether they’re done by thought, word or deed, or whether they’re done by perception.”

Deeds and perceptions often go hand and hand when executing tasks to further diversity and inclusion, according to Col. Ondra Berry, special assistant for diversity and special adviser to McKinley.

Berry met McKinley more than a decade ago when he was asked to speak at a conference on the connection between safety and diversity. He said McKinley gave him the autonomy to speak in front of National Guard leaders from around the country about the physical, emotional and mental issues involved in getting the best out of a person and making sure a person is in a safe and productive environment.

“He was really looking for someone who had a passion and drive, a belief, an understanding to tie diversity into mission readiness and I was looking for a leader [who] really supported it, not just in talk but in actions, and had a belief in the betterment of people,” Berry said. “When he became chief of the National Guard Bureau we continued to work together. He has done some things, stepped out there and has backed up a belief that we have the potential to be a best practice. He won’t settle for good enough, for satisfactory, for people just having an initiative, he wants to be the best, and that’s a great match for me.”

Since McKinley took over the National Guard Bureau, the National Guard has published a book that has been distributed to every member of the organization, a kind of leaders’ guide in which all senior officers and senior enlisted members have signed a policy stating their commitment to diversity. This will help to ensure a sustained focus on related issues.

“At times we think the journey of diversity is past, that it’s something we’ve conquered and moved on from, but we have to continue to focus on diversity practice, goals [and] philosophy because our workforce turns over and they need that reinforcement,” McKinley said. “I’ve brought in folks from around the nation, a very wide variety of backgrounds to form a group of people not only to advise but to strengthen the goals of diversity from the National Guard. In the future, and I think we can declare victory on this in the next several months, we believe we’ll have state joint diversity councils in all our states. That was as a result of the executive council saying you can do marvelous things in Washington but you can’t produce a result in the states unless you push down these thoughts, ideas [and] principles to a lower level.”

Once the state joint diversity councils are in place, McKinley said adjutants general will start aggressively pushing diversity goals such as mentoring programs across the workforce to bring up future leaders who don’t look or act exactly like those currently in place.

“At times we spend the bulk of our time in the military planning for operations that don’t necessarily stress diversity,” McKinley said. “We don’t speak to it as leaders enough, and I felt that we need to do that because it’s absolutely the right thing to do. Secondly, the Army and the Air Force make it pretty clear the policies they set forth are the organizational policies and that if you’re

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in the military discipline, all the things that are part of the military are cornerstones of who we are. So to stress that not only is it the right thing to do, it's the policy of our services."

The pool of potential military recruits is also changing along with national demographics and becoming increasingly diverse. McKinley said recruiting from a diverse population is difficult even in a tough economic climate, and between 10,000 and 20,000 new soldiers and airmen are needed each year.

"Most of our workforce has turned over since Sept. 11, 2001," he said. "So this changing demographic posture for us is a readiness issue that we have to be aware of. My diversity adviser Col. Ondra Berry talks about the demographic piece as a war for talent and I believe he's absolutely right. We've got to make sure we don't miss a workforce that's representative of the nation and the communities in which we live."

The National Guard is a mission-based organization where people's lives are at stake.

"I can't afford to have a workforce that is worried about equal opportunity, being mentored, having the opportunities for schools, getting recognition for a job well done," McKinley said. "If they're thinking about those, quite frankly, we could have a mission failure and I can't live with that. So there [are] very important workplace reasons for diversity, but making it the right thing to do is what I'm stressing to our young leaders," he said.

The National Guard has entered into an agreement with the DEOMI to implement diversity competency training courses for next-generation leaders. Training, diversity conferences, and affinity groups that stress cultural events and personal relationships and celebrate the diversity of each ethnic group help inspire and reward those who go above and beyond the day-to-day work in the field. Specific programs around mentoring are also in play.

"I think having a mentoring program that is structured and works is a very, very important thing," McKinley said. "And the young person we recruit today is the person [who] will become a leader 20 to 30 years from now. We've really stressed a strong and bold approach to recruiting members of our community that don't necessarily look like us and that fill the representative categories in our communities that make us look like America. I think if we can do some of those things — I've got about a year left in this job — I can walk away with my head held high."

Kellye Whitney is managing editor of Diversity Executive magazine. She can be reached at kwhitney@diversity-executive.com.

<http://www.airforcetimes.com/news/2011/11/gannett-dod-studies-social-media-impact-on-deployment-112211/>

DoD studies social media's impact on deployment

By Mike Chalmers

The (Wilmington, Del.) News Journal

airforcetimes.com, 22 November 2011

In previous deployments to Iraq and South America, Master Sgt. Clifford Snyder relied on letters and brief phone calls to keep in touch with his wife and three children back in Camden, Del.

“The kids grew so much during those times,” Snyder said. “You felt when you first got home like a visitor in the house.”

But during his most recent six-month deployment to Iraq in 2009 and 2010, he checked in with them on Facebook and video-chatted with them on Skype almost daily.

“I got to see the kids, and they were able to give me updates on how school was going and stuff,” Snyder said. “I felt like I was there for the whole time.”

That nearly constant connection made his deployment with with Delaware Air National Guard more bearable and eased his homecoming transition, Snyder said. It's having the same effect for thousands of service members and their families around the world.

Social media networks and fast Internet connections in remote parts of the world are revolutionizing what it means to be deployed, experts said. Researchers are just now beginning to assess the effects on the military and the homefront.

“No other military in the history of warfare has had that level of access to their families,” said social psychologist Benjamin Karney at University of California at Los Angeles, who studies marriage and family relationships in the military.

Karney and three other researchers recently began a three-year study for the Department of Defense on how families handle the stress of deployments. They'll track 8,000 families before, during and after deployments.

The military had blocked most access to Facebook and similar sites until about two years ago because of concerns over security breaches, said Don Faul, vice president of online operations for Facebook. Now military commanders advise troops and their families on how to keep themselves and their units safe online.

Use of those sites has boomed, said Tara Crooks, co-founder of the Army Wife Network, a company offering support and advice for military spouses.

“I don't know a military family member who isn't on Facebook,” she said.

Katelyn Rowley, a 24-year-old senior airman with the Delaware Air National Guard, said she used Facebook and Skype to keep in touch with her fiance and family during her deployment to Kuwait last year.

“I was able to talk to family every day if I wanted to, which is awesome,” said Rowley, of Smyrna, Del. “You don't feel like you're missing out on things. I can't imagine deploying for long periods of time and relying only on letters.”

Karney said the Pentagon wants to know if such a connection could strengthen family bonds and ease the post-deployment transition or distract service members from their mission and expose fractures in their personal relationships.

The truth might be a little of both, he said.

<http://www.airforcetimes.com/news/2011/11/gannett-dod-studies-social-media-impact-on-deployment-112211/>

“For the families that are strong to begin with, this technology is probably a tremendous help to them,” Karney said. “For families having problems, maybe the technology will exacerbate their problems.”

Faul said one of Facebook’s most popular features among military families is the ability to create groups, so only certain people can see their comments and pictures. Many spouses create secret groups for intimate conversations.

“It’s just the two of you who are seeing it,” said Jason Krafsky, a relationship speaker and blogger with his wife, Kelli, who call themselves the Social Media Couple.

Those conversations might prove awkward after deployment, Krafsky said.

“You’re used to typing everything out and contemplating what you’re saying before you hit send, so going from Facebook to face-to-face can create this weird dynamic,” Krafsky said.

Army Maj. Thomas Murphy would video-chat on Skype with his wife, Bianca, and two daughters, ages 2 and 4, almost every day, sometimes reading books to them, during his one-year deployment to Iraq.

“You could break away from the monotony of everyday stress and feel like you’re back home for a bit,” said Murphy, who is stationed at Fort Leavenworth, Kan.

That connection helped the family when he returned home about a month ago.

Their daughters got so used to using Skype that their youngest girl still wants to talk to him that way, Bianca Murphy said: “Even though he’s sitting in the living room, she’ll say, ‘No, Mommy, I need to talk to him on the computer.’”

Kat Mathis, of Colorado Springs, Colo., said Skype has made a huge difference during the deployment of her husband, Army Spc. Chris Mathis, to Afghanistan. Their 4-month-old daughter was a newborn when he left and will be 10 months old by the time he returns.

“I’ll put the video camera on and put her on the floor, and he’ll sort of play with her,” Mathis said. “That’s the closest he can come. He loves it. He gets to see her grow

Marine: Fears of end to gay ban prove unfounded

By Robert Burns, AP National Security Writer
boston.com, 28 November 2011

MANAMA, Bahrain (AP) -- Marine Gen. James F. Amos, the face of opposition in the military to lifting the ban on gays serving openly, now acknowledges his concern has proven unfounded that repeal would undermine the war effort. In fact, he says, Marines have embraced the change.

In an Associated Press interview, Amos called the repeal in September "a non-event."



In this photo taken July 29, 2011, Marine Corp Commandant Gen. James Amos speaks with reporters the at Patuxent River Naval Air Station, Md. Since the lifting two months ago of a longstanding U.S. ban on gays serving openly in the military, Amos said U.S. Marines across the globe have adapted smoothly and embraced the change. "I'm very pleased with how it has gone," he said in an Associated Press interview during a week-long trip that included four days in Afghanistan. (AP Photo/Cliff Owen)

That is in contrast to his cautionary words to Congress in December 2010, shortly before President Barack Obama signed the repeal legislation. The ban was not lifted until this year to allow the Pentagon to prepare troops for the change.

"Successfully implementing repeal and assimilating openly homosexual Marines into the tightly woven fabric of our combat units has strong potential for disruption at the small unit level as it will no doubt divert leadership attention away from an almost singular focus on preparing units for combat," Amos testified. Still, he said at the time that if the law were changed, it would be faithfully followed by Marines.

He now sees no sign of disruption in the ranks - even on the front lines.

"I'm very pleased with how it has gone," Amos said during a weeklong trip that included four days in Afghanistan, where he heard nary a word of worry about gays. During give-and-take sessions with Marines serving on in Helmand province, he was asked about a range of issues, including the future of the Corps - but not one about gays.

The Associated Press accompanied Amos on the trip.

In the AP interview, he also offered an anecdote from the home front to make his point that the change has been taken in stride.

He said that at the annual ball in Washington this month celebrating the birth of the Marine Corps, a female Marine approached Amos' wife, Bonnie, and introduced herself and her lesbian partner.

"Bonnie just looked at them and said, 'Happy birthday ball. This is great. Nice to meet you,'" Amos said. "That is happening throughout the Marine Corps."

Looking back, Amos said he had no regrets about publicly opposing repeal during wartime. He said he had felt obliged, as commandant of the Corps, to set aside his personal opinions and represent the views of the 56 percent of combat Marines who told a Defense Department survey last year that repeal could make them less effective and cohesive in combat.

http://www.boston.com/news/world/middleeast/articles/2011/11/28/top_marine_says_service_embracing_gay_ban_repeal/?page=1

"I think I did exactly what I should have done," Amos said. "I've never looked back on it and said it (his concern) was misplaced."

Not only did Amos hear no talk about the repeal's impact during his visit to Afghanistan, the subject also did not arise when he fielded questions from Marines on board the USS Bataan warship in the Gulf of Aden on Saturday.

In Bahrain on Sunday, one Marine broached the topic gently. He asked Amos whether he planned to change the Marines' policy of leaving it to the discretion of local commanders to decide how to handle complaints about "homosexual remarks or actions." Amos said no.

He said he is aware of only one reported incident in Afghanistan thus far, and that turned out to be a false alarm. He said a blogger had written of a gay Marine being harassed by fellow Marines for his sexual orientation. In an ensuing investigation, the gay Marine denied he had been harassed.

A Defense Department spokeswoman, Cynthia O. Smith, said implementation of the repeal of the gay ban is proceeding smoothly across the military.

"We attribute this success to our comprehensive pre-repeal training program, combined with the continued close monitoring and enforcement of standards by our military leaders at all levels," Smith said.

In the months leading up to Congress' repeal, there were indications that the change might not be embraced so readily.

During a visit to a Marine combat outpost in southern Afghanistan in June, then-Defense Secretary Robert Gates was confronted by an enlisted Marine who clearly objected to the repeal. He told Gates that the Marine Corps had "a set of standards and values that is better than that of the civilian sector," and that repeal of the gay ban had "changed those values."

He asked Gates whether Marines who object to serving with gays would be allowed to opt out of their enlistment. Gates said no and predicted that if pre-repeal training was done right, "nothing will change" with regard to rules of behavior and discipline.

That Marine was not alone in making known his doubts about the wisdom of allowing gays to serve openly in uniform. In a survey of military members last year, 45 percent of Marines viewed repeal negatively in terms of how it could affect combat readiness, effectiveness and cohesion. Among those Marines who serve in combat roles, 56 percent expressed that view.

The issue split the military. Gates and other senior military leaders supported lifting the restrictions, pointing to a Pentagon study showing that most people in uniform don't object to serving with gays.

But Amos and his Army counterpart bucked their bosses to recommend against lifting the ban during wartime.

"I don't want to lose any Marines to the distraction," Amos said then.

Miscellaneous

Army reports 17 suspected suicides for October

Staff report

Army Times, 18 November 2011 17:06:44 EST

The Army on Friday reported 17 suspected suicides during the month of October.

One of the deaths has been confirmed as suicide, while the other 16 remain under investigation.

October's total is the same as the total reported for September. Three of those deaths have been confirmed and 14 others are still under investigation.

Among reserve-component soldiers who were not on active duty, as many as 12 committed suicide in October, the Army reported. None of the cases has been confirmed. October's total is higher than September, when eight soldiers from this population are believed to have killed themselves. Three of the eight cases have been confirmed.

"Our people are the Army, and their health and well-being are top priorities," Maj. Gen. David Quantock, director of the Army Health Promotion and Risk Reduction Task Force, said in a statement. "This is very important work and I can assure you that the Army team is fully engaged and is totally committed to it."

Chairman Dismisses Notion of Military in Decline

By Jim Garamone

American Forces Press Service, 28 November 2011

LONDON, Nov. 28, 2011 – In two venues here today, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff emphatically dismissed the notion that the U.S. military is in decline.

During an interview on the BBC program “Newsnight,” Army Gen. Martin E. Dempsey bristled when Jeremy Paxman began the interview by asking, “General, what’s it like to take over the military at a time when it is in decline?”

“We’re not in decline,” Dempsey asserted. “The incline or decline is not an affect of size, it’s a function of capability.”

Dempsey explained that the U.S. military has learned much over the past 10 years of war. “We tend to face adversaries who don’t mass against us -- they decentralize,” he said. “We’ve had to become a network to defeat a network.”

The chairman cited other examples, noting that before 9/11, responsibility was hoarded at higher levels in the U.S. military. Today, he said, the impetus is to push responsibility down to those who need it.

In addition, Dempsey said, the U.S. military is a joint force in ways that service members who served even as recently as the Persian Gulf War wouldn’t recognize. Navy electronics warfare officers routinely deploy with Army and Marine Corps units to help defeat threats posed by roadside bombs; and soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines work alongside civilians in provincial reconstruction teams in Afghanistan.

“We can find a way to rebalance ourselves to find capabilities that we didn’t have 10 years ago, and still be a military very much where it needs to be for the world,” Dempsey said.

Budget challenges do exist, and the U.S. military will do its part to help the nation over the deficit crisis, the chairman said. The military is cutting \$450 billion in spending over the next 10 years, he noted, a level of cuts he said is manageable.

“Anything more and it risks being unmanageable,” he added. “But I can’t see that far yet.”

Dempsey said he believes a psychology contributes to talk about decline. “We are neither in decline nor are we victims,” he said at the Colin Cramphorn Memorial Lecture following his talk with the BBC. “We are simply responding to what one might argue is a historic cycle of resources.”

Historically, Dempsey said, the U.S. military has expanded during times of conflict and shrunk following the conflicts.

“The key,” he said, “is that we have to ensure that what we do in contraction is ‘expandable,’ so if we get the future wrong – which, by the way, we have an uncanny capability to do that – that we’ll have enough capability to get through the initial challenge and then be able to expand the force.”

<http://www.airforcetimes.com/news/2011/11/ap-course-trains-social-workers-on-military-issues-112611/>

Course trains social workers on military issues

By Susanne M. Schafer - The Associated Press

Air Force Times, Nov 26, 2011

COLUMBIA, S.C. — Army Reserve Capt. Chad Lauro wants to use his military experience to help those who bear the mental wounds of war. Kina Wilkening, an Air Force spouse whose pilot-husband was deployed for 273 days last year, calls military families “silent heroes” who need help, too.

Both are graduate students at the University of South Carolina, which is starting a new program to train social workers to assist the military, veterans and their families.

“I see it as my way of giving back,” said Lauro, 35, originally from Mechanicsburg, Pa., who served as a military logistics specialist and has been in two years of full-time course work to enter a new career.

Lauro, who works at Veterans Administration clinics as part of his studies, said he’s able to “speak the military language” after 18 years with the military and a yearlong deployment to Afghanistan.

“I think there’s a great need. Not everyone comes back with (post-traumatic stress disorder), but there are many things I can do to help the military and veterans’ community,” Lauro said.

Wilkening, who lives near the joint Air Force and Navy base in Charleston and is originally from Austin, Texas, said she has seen firsthand how spouses and children of the military may need the assistance of social workers.

“You feel so alone. You just don’t know where to turn,” said the 27-year-old. “I think military spouses and families are the silent heroes on the home front.”

Mental health counseling, addiction treatment, behavioral health issues and transitional counseling are areas where social workers can help, said Nancy Brown, the USC professor who has been pulling the program together.

“There is a growing need for social workers in this field,” said Brown, an associate professor in the College of Social Work.

Brown said the program is in its final stages of academic approval. It will be an 18-hour graduate level certificate program that is part of the college’s two-year master’s degree program. Four courses will be available by the summer.

Over the next decade, the college could prepare as many as 3,000 social workers in the field, said Anna Scheyett, dean of the college.

Scheyett said two other elements of the program include an academic position so research will be conducted. Professors also will train doctors, nurses, teachers and others who may interact with veterans or military members in their communities, she said.

“We must think about how to best serve these military men and women, many of whom we are welcoming back now, but who also will be with us for the next 50 to 60 years,” Scheyett said.

Army Lt. Col. Jeffrey Yarvis, the deputy commander for behavioral health at Fort Belvoir Hospital in Virginia, said he was consulted when the University of Southern California developed a similar program.

<http://www.airforcetimes.com/news/2011/11/ap-course-trains-social-workers-on-military-issues-112611/>

“South Carolina is uniquely positioned to do this kind of work,” Yarvis said, pointing out that several other states have had National Guard and Reserve units deployed repeatedly overseas, with members returning to rural areas where services might be less available.

Several colleges and universities in Maryland, Pennsylvania, Montana and Texas are looking at expanding training for social workers, Yarvis said, “but Southern California and South Carolina are the furthest along in this process.”

In South Carolina, more than 13,000 members of the Army and Air Force National Guard deployed overseas since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, Guard officials said.

Reaching out to military members who reside in rural areas is a major concern for Col. Ronnie Taylor, the officer in charge of service member and family care for the South Carolina National Guard.

“If a service member is on active duty, they return to a military facility where resources may be available to them, unlike a National Guardsman or reservist who may live as much as two to three hours away,” said Taylor, who has been working with Scheyett.

He said he is trying to set up mobile “one-stop shops” to get information to outlying units and Guardsmen about employment assistance, military medical insurance, psychological assistance and even educational benefits. USC may be able to provide internships for students so they can get training, and help his organization reach out to its members, he said.

South Carolina’s Department of Veterans Affairs estimates there are about 413,000 military veterans in the state.

According to a recent release from the nonprofit research organization the RAND Corp., more than 2.2 million military members were deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan between 2001 and 2010. The high tempo of operations has included longer and more-frequent deployments, which have “resulted in significant mental health problems among service members,” the research group said.

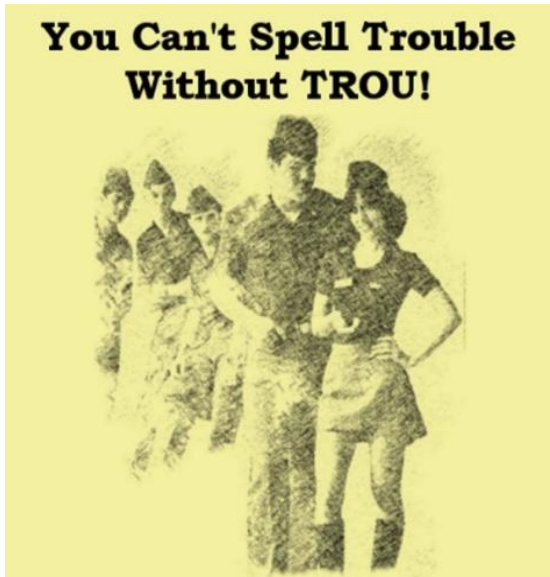
<http://www.armytimes.com/news/2011/11/army-tshirt-is-offensive-west-point-womens-group-112811/>

T-shirt is offensive: West Point, women's group

By Joe Gould - Staff writer
Army Times, Nov 28, 2011

Service Women's Action Network and the U.S. Military Academy at West Point are condemning a website that sells T-shirts bearing cadet slang they consider sexist and offensive.

Service Women's Action Network has asked militarythread.com to stop selling shirts that use the word "trou," a slang term for female cadets.



"It's part of a hazing ritual," Anu Bhagwati, a former Marine captain who is executive director of SWAN, said of the term.

Though little known outside West Point, "trou" emerged after women were first admitted to the academy in 1976 and derives from the way uniform trousers fit female cadets.

West Point officials said in a statement the website's offerings run counter to the values of the academy and the Army, as well as their sexual assault and harassment prevention programs.

"'Trou' is an offensive, derogatory term of cadet slang that demeans female cadets and is not tolerated at the United States Military Academy," Lt. Col. Sherri Reed, director of public affairs at West Point,

said in an email.

The shirt in question bears an illustration of four male cadets gawking at a female cadet in a 1970s hairstyle, a tight-fitting service shirt and a miniskirt, under the words, "You Can't Spell Trouble Without TROU!"

The site also sells a T-shirt that reads, "Old Trou," a play on the academy term, "Old Grad."

The company militarythread.com, launched by 2004 West Point graduates Kevin Powell and Travis Dent, advertises its T-shirts as humorous. Among the West Point in-jokes referenced on them are a Chinese restaurant near the academy, anti-Navy football slogans and the "green girl," which is slang for a comforter given to cadets.

Dent told Army Times the company is not pulling the T-shirts. The shirt with the illustration was vetted by his female friends, he said, and has since become a top seller among his female customers.

"We got a handful of emails asking if it was disrespectful to women; some people thought it was degrading to them," Dent said. "There are others who feel that it's an endearing term and 'I like it.' I don't know if it's a generational thing."

Bhagwati countered that servicewomen often will not speak out against behavior that, outside of the military, would be deemed sexist.

"Sexist terminology is used militarywide and unfortunately, a lot of military personnel male and female don't call it out," she said. "They don't realize it's a form of sexual harassment. Women adopt these coping mechanisms where it's no big deal. Well, it is."

<http://www.armytimes.com/news/2011/11/army-tshirt-is-offensive-west-point-womens-group-112811/>

Bhagwati, whose condemnation of the T-shirts preceded the school's, said the term is part of a continuum of sexism, sexual harassment and assault that pervades the service academies and the military.

"It's way beyond this one T-shirt," she said. "A culture condoning harassment very often leads to a culture of condoning assault, where we have high rates of harassment and assault at the academies and in the real military."

In the Defense Department's own surveys, 9 percent of female West Point cadets in 2010 had experienced unwanted sexual contact — which means intentional touching — but only 14 percent of these women reported it.

The survey was administered to more than 5,000 cadets and midshipmen across the service academies, including 1,173 men and 555 women at West Point.

Ninety-four percent of these women indicated they had experienced sexist behavior; 51 percent experienced sexual harassment; 57 percent experienced unwanted sexual attention; and 20 percent experienced sexual coercion.

The offenders were identified as fellow students in 94 percent of cases.

Reed called these statistics "not acceptable" and pointed to efforts within the academy to gauge and address sexist behavior among the cadet corps earlier in the year.

The school introduced four courses to train or retrain Sexual Assault Response Team members and address a requirement that all military and Army civilian personnel receive sexual assault and harassment training, Reed said.

She said a threefold increase in reports of wrongful sexual contact in fiscal 2010 over the year before is "further evidence of the positive results of training, and a decrease in resistance to put up with repugnant behavior."

Misconduct

<http://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/local/os-robert-champion-family-to-sue-famu-20111128,0,3956296.story>

'Culture of hazing' cited in FAMU's death

The family is expected to announce their decision to file a lawsuit against Florida A&M University in their son's death.

By Arelis R. Hernández

Orlando Sentinel, November 28, 2011

Family members of a Florida A&M University marching band member who died in Orlando following a suspected hazing attack announced a lawsuit against the university during a news conference Monday in Atlanta.



Attorney Christopher Chestnut, who is representing Robert Champion's family, said FAMU is being sued because "all the evidence points to the fact that hazing was a cause in the drum major's death and it happened on FAMU's watch." "The culture of hazing is don't ask, don't tell," said Chestnut, who was joined by Champion's parents. "The family is saying, please tell."

Chestnut said the pervasive culture of hazing is "being protected at FAMU." FAMU didn't immediately respond to comment. But FAMU president James Ammons spoke publicly shortly after Champion's death, denouncing hazing and announcing a task force to investigate and end hazing. He fired the band's longtime director Julian White several days later.

On Monday, Pamela Champion told reporters she hopes the suit will help hazing victims come forward and expose the secrecy embedded in the band's internal structure.

In this picture taken from Facebook, Robert D. Champion, of Atlanta, was studying Music Technology/Education at Florida A&M University

"It needs to stop and we want it to stop," she said. "No one wants to be standing in our shoes."

She added: "We want to make sure this doesn't happen to anyone else,"

Chestnut said he submitted a notice of intent to file a wrongful death lawsuit – the first step in suing a public entity in Florida – but the actual lawsuit will be entered in six months. Other names, such as individual school officials, could be included in the lawsuit because "liability doesn't rest on any one person's shoulders. A number of people turned their backs...dropped the ball and contributed to the death of Robert Champion."

Champion, 26, was pronounced dead at an Orlando hospital Nov. 18 following a suspected hazing attack aboard a bus outside the marching band's hotel. The alleged attack happened after the band performed at the Florida Classic football game. Champion's funeral is scheduled for Wednesday in the Atlanta-area, Chestnut said.

No arrests have been made in Champion's death. His initial autopsy results were inconclusive and a death investigation is still ongoing.

Racism

http://www.alternet.org/news/153162/How_White_Supremacists_Are_Trying_to_Make_an_American_Town_a_Model_for_Right-Wing_Extremism/

How White Supremacists Are Trying to Make an American Town a Model for Right-Wing Extremism

A recent influx of white supremacists and Patriot group members to the town of Kalispell, Montana, is causing alarm.

By David Holthouse, Media Matters for America
(Editor's note: This is the 1st of a four-part series)
Alter Net, 22 November 2011

At first glance the Pioneer Little Europe website seems like it could be the work of the Montana Office of Tourism. Photographs depict the rugged beauty of the Flathead Valley region near Glacier National Park in northwest Montana.

One image shows a young blond-haired girl playing in a meadow overlooking Kalispell, the largest town in the area, with a population around 20,000.

The site also features short news items about the Northwest Montana State Fair and a wildflower beautification program along with Kalispell job postings.

But then there's this: A scan of a full-page advertisement in a recent edition of the Flathead Beacon, the local paper, with photographs of 47 babies newly delivered in the Kalispell Regional Medical Center. All but one are fair-skinned with light-colored hair. "Wonderful white babies being born in Kalispell," the website reads. "What do the babies look like being born in your town?" Another item on the Pioneer Little Europe site depicts white families relaxing on the shore of a lake. A caption reads, "This is how white our beaches are, and I'm not talking about sand."

And that little girl in the meadow? Her name is Dresden Hale. That's Dresden for the German city firebombed by the Allied forces in World War II, and Hale for the 1990s leader of the neo-Nazi group World Church of the Creator, Matt Hale, who's doing 40 years in prison for soliciting the murder of a federal judge.

Dresden Hale is the youngest daughter of Kalispell resident and [neo-Nazi activist April Gaede](#), the public face of the Pioneer Little Europe (PLE) movement. Launched in 2008, PLE invites "racially conscious" white Americans to relocate to the Flathead Valley to help create a heavily-armed Aryan homeland.

(Gaede's other two daughters, Lynx and Lamb, are identical twins who gained widespread media attention by [performing neo-Nazi folk ballads as the musical act Prussian Blue](#). They have since [renounced](#) white supremacism.)

The PLE movement has brought dozens of white supremacists to the Flathead Valley. They are increasingly making their presence known by staging public events, openly recruiting and distributing racist literature, stocking up on firearms at area gun shows while dressed in neo-Nazi clothing, working for local anti-gun control and anti-abortion campaigns (according to Gaede), and issuing violent threats to perceived enemies, including Media Matters, which is now under "indictment" for treason to the white race.

The growing numbers of PLE white supremacists in the Flathead Valley parallels a recent influx to the area of ultra right-wing "Patriot" movement leaders and their followers. Their combined forces are rapidly transforming the region into the hottest flash point of right-wing extremism in the country.

Nationwide the [anti-government Patriot movement](#) is surging, and the number of racist hate groups has surpassed 1,000 for the first time since the Southern Poverty Law Center, a leading authority on extremism, began tracking white supremacist activity.

http://www.alternet.org/news/153162/How_White_Supremacists_Are_Trying_to_Make_an_American_Town_a_Model_for_Right-Wing_Extremism/

Both trends are glaringly evident in the Flathead Valley. Local anti-hate activists have [responded to the PLE with several large demonstrations](#). Meanwhile, local, state, and federal law enforcement authorities, as well as Montana civil rights activists, say that PLE white supremacists are forming ties with newly arrived Patriot group members in the region.

"They're showing up at each other's events, and they have in common a great degree of hostility toward the government in general and specifically law enforcement," says a federal law enforcement investigator with specialized knowledge of extremism in Montana. "Also they're both openly encouraging individuals with a similar mindset to relocate to the Kalispell area. At this point they are separate but related concerns for law enforcement."

Religion

<http://ebird.osd.mil/ebfiles/e20111127856084.html> or

<http://articles.latimes.com/2011/nov/26/nation/la-na-air-force-pagans-20111127>

Air Force Academy adapts to pagans, druids, witches and Wiccans

Officials say an \$80,000 Stonehenge-like worship center underscores a commitment to embrace all religions.

By Jenny Deam, Los Angeles Times

Los Angeles Times, November 27, 2011

Reporting from Colorado Springs, Colo.--In the still of a cold November evening, a small gathering of pagans, led by two witches, begins preparations for the coming winter solstice. But these are not just any pagans, and this is not just any setting. They are future officers of the United States Air Force practicing their faith in the basement of the Air Force Academy's cadet chapel.



Cadets gather for the dedication ceremony of the Air Force Academy's dedication
(Jerilee Bennett/The Gazette)

Their ranks are slim. According to the academy's enrollment records, only three of 4,300 cadets identified themselves as pagans, followers of an ancient religion that generally does not worship a single god and considers all things in nature interconnected.

Still, the academy this year dedicated an \$80,000 outdoor worship center — a small Stonehenge-like circle of boulders with propane fire pit — high on a hill for the handful of current or future cadets whose

religions fall under the broad category of

Earth-based." Those include pagans, Wiccans, druids, witches and followers of Native American faiths.

Witches in the Air Force? Chaplain Maj. Darren Duncan, branch chief of cadet faith communities at the academy, sighs. A punch line waiting to happen, and he's heard all the broom jokes.

For the record, there are no witches among the cadets this year. But the two spiritual leaders for all Earth-based religions — one a civilian, one an Air Force reservist — are witches and regularly cast spells, which they say is not so different from offering prayer. There also are no druids this year. But there could be next year.

"We're here to accommodate all religions, period," Duncan says. The building of the Cadet Chapel Falcon Circle on the hilltop, he says, is no different from the past conversion of chapel rooms into worship spaces that serve this year's 11 Muslim, 16 Buddhist and 10 Hindu cadets. There are also 43 self-identified atheist cadets whose beliefs, or lack of them, Duncan says are also to be respected.

"It is very nice to have our own space," says Cadet 1st Class Nicole Johnson, a 21-year-old senior from Florida who became a pagan after entering the academy.

This is not about religious tolerance — a phrase Duncan, a Christian, rejects as implying that the majority religion is simply putting up with the minority. He calls it a 1st Amendment issue. If the military is to defend the Constitution, it should also be upholding its guarantee of religious freedom. "We think we are setting the standard," Duncan says.

<http://ebird.osd.mil/ebfiles/e20111127856084.html> or

<http://articles.latimes.com/2011/nov/26/nation/la-na-air-force-pagans-20111127>

In addition to providing worship space, new policy dictates that all cadets take courses in understanding the religions of those who may someday fall under their command. Recently he's fielded calls from West Point and Annapolis about replicating the Air Force's efforts.

In 2005, the Air Force — still reeling from accusations of sexual assaults against female cadets at the academy — was accused in a lawsuit of allowing aggressive proselytizing toward non-Christians. The suit, ultimately dismissed, was brought by an attorney and academy graduate, Michael Weinstein, who founded the Military Religious Freedom Foundation and has continued to fight what he calls a climate of religious oppression at the academy.

Weinstein isn't buying this new spirit of "Kumbaya." He says he has received hundreds of complaints from cadets who allege pressure by other cadets or superiors to profess faith in Christ and cites a desecration incident in 2010 when a cross was left at a previous Earth-based worship site. The Air Force condemned that incident, and it was never discovered who was responsible.

Weinstein says the presence of the powerful fundamental Christian organization, Focus on the Family, just a short hop down the highway from the academy only adds to tension for non-evangelicals.

Meade Warthen, a civilian spokesman for the academy, stands by the academy's efforts, adding that it takes heat not only from critics like Weinstein but also from those who say it does too much to accommodate other religions.

Back at the solstice preparations, with glue guns drawn and takeout pizza within easy reach, the pagan cadets decorated yule logs with bits of ribbon and glitter. Yule logs, whose ritual burning symbolizes faith in the reappearance of the sun, will be displayed alongside the Christmas trees and menorahs in next month's crowded religious calendar at the academy.

And though Johnson acknowledges that her beliefs are often misunderstood, she says she has taken no serious grief from other cadets, save occasional questions about whether pagans dance naked (she doesn't) or whether she can cast a spell on commanding officers (she wouldn't even if she could).

The rule is no spells cast without someone's permission. There is a prevailing tenet of her faith, she says: Do as you will, but harm no one.

<http://ebird.osd.mil/ebfiles/e20111125855832.html> or
<http://www.politico.com/news/stories/1111/69039.html>

Cross removed at base in Afghanistan

By Tim Mak

Politico.com, November 23, 2011

A large cross that had been prominently displayed outside a chapel on an isolated military base in northern Afghanistan was taken down last week, prompting outrage from some American service members stationed there.



“We are here away from our families, and the chapel is the one place that feels like home,” a service member at Camp Marmal told POLITICO. “With the cross on the outside, it is a constant reminder for all of us that Jesus is here for us.”

“Not having it there is really upsetting,” added another. “I walk by the chapel daily on the way to chow and the gym, and seeing the cross is a daily reminder

of my faith and what Jesus accomplished for me. It is daily inspiration and motivation for me to acknowledge my faith and stay on the right path.” Camp Marmal is a German base that hosts NATO forces. The interfaith chapel in question is supervised by the U.S. Army.

The soldiers said they found great comfort in the chapel — and the cross visible outside. “Sometimes the Church and the ability to openly express religious views ultimately gets people through the deployments over here,” one told POLITICO by email.

The service member said he asked the base chaplain, a military officer, what had happened to the cross. “I had to take it down,” said the chaplain, according to the soldier, without further explanation.

Pentagon spokesperson Commander William Speaks confirmed the cross was removed and told POLITICO, “The removal was, in fact, in accordance with Army regulations” and pointed out that the Army chaplain manual prohibits permanent display of religious symbols.

“Distinctive religious symbols, such as crosses... will not be affixed or displayed permanently on the chapel interior, exterior or grounds,” reads the manual.

Speaks said the cross had been up since mid-October; the service members said it was longer.

The two characterized the removal of the cross as an attack on their religion and noted that there had been no complaints from Muslims — there are two mosques on the base — or Jews, who had recently conducted a service in the chapel without incident.

“I really don’t understand why Christians are always attacked. If it was a crescent moon on top of a mosque, it would never be taken down,” said an Army serviceman.

“We would just like to know where the line is. The chaplains wear different religious symbols on their uniforms depending on which religion they are. Is that the next thing to be targeted?” added a second service member.

http://www.nctimes.com/news/local/military/military-second-group-calls-for-pendleton-cross-to-come-down/article_9bd92843-4d77-5339-9295-9e80d81d3285.html

MILITARY: Second group calls for Pendleton cross to come down

By Mark Walder

North County Times, 30 November 2011

As Camp Pendleton officials decide what to do with an unofficial memorial cross atop a base hillside, another group opposed to letting the cross stand has petitioned for its removal.

[Americans United for Separation of Church and State](#) has written to base commander Col. Nick Marano, saying the cross's establishment on government property represents an unconstitutional endorsement of the Christian religion.

The Washington-based group has joined the [Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers](#) in calling for the base to remove the cross.

"There are constitutional ways for Camp Pendleton to allow its soldiers to honor fallen comrades," attorney Ian Smith of Americans United wrote in a letter to Marano.

Smith goes on to say that his group believes it would be lawful for the base to create a memorial where troops and their families inscribe personal messages or symbols of their own choice to commemorate those killed in war.

"If the government designated the monument as a public forum and treated all messages equally, then it would be permissible for soldiers to include religious symbols without running afoul of the Constitution," Smith said. "But a single cross is not such a monument and therefore cannot be saved."

Asked this week whether his group would file suit if base officials let the cross remain, Smith said that decision has not been made.

"We try and resolve these kinds of issues without litigation," he said.

Several Christian groups including the [American Center for Law and Justice](#), founded by televangelist Pat Robertson, are lobbying the base to leave the cross where it stands, citing their own interpretation of case law regarding religious symbols on publicly owned property.

The cross was first erected in 2003 by a group of Marines from the base's 2nd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment.

Over the years, it has become a kind of rite of passage for regimental Marines and sailors to trudge to the top of the hill above the base's Camp Horno to visit the site.

In addition to the cross, a number of other memorial artifacts to troops lost in battle adorn the site.

The cross burned down in a 2007 wildfire, and was replaced earlier this month with a new one installed by a group of former Camp Pendleton troops and widows of troops killed in Iraq.

The group carried the cross up the steep hillside over a several-hour period.

An article about that effort caught the attention of the Military Association of Atheists, which filed a formal objection to the cross, saying it was against Pentagon regulations because it effectively endorses one religion over another.

Marine Corps lawyers are now weighing how to respond to the complaints.

A base spokeswoman this week said it was unclear when a decision would be made.

http://www.nctimes.com/news/local/military/military-second-group-calls-for-pendleton-cross-to-come-down/article_9bd92843-4d77-5339-9295-9e80d81d3285.html

As the flap plays out, former Navy chaplain Scott Radetski ---- who helped erect the original cross and built the 13-foot-tall replacement ---- said Tuesday he hopes it's allowed to stand.

"I would be bummed (if it's removed)," Radetski said. "It was a gift for the troops of 2/1, and I think it's an overreaction on the part of those who are opposed."

Radetski also said he recalls that the group that put up the original cross did have permission from base officials. He specifically recalled approval being granted by the base's environmental stewards.

Efforts to reach base officials to verify that were not immediately successful.

Base officials have previously said the cross was put up without any official sanction from the Camp Pendleton authorities. They've also pointed out that a formal process exists for the establishment of any memorial or religious site on military bases.

Radetski built the new cross at his Seattle-area home and drove it to Camp Pendleton, where he and the others put it up on Veterans Day. The group used their retired military identification to get access to the base and apparently did not coordinate the activity through any official channels.

The cross was fashioned from a telephone pole wrapped in fiberglass and treated with a fire retardant.

Former Navy medical corpsman and Iraq war veteran Shannon Book, who was with the 2/1 in Iraq and is being treated for post-traumatic stress disorder, also helped put up the new cross and said he would be sad if it's taken down.

"I lost a lot of friends in horrific ways, and for me it would be a slap in the face," he said. "If it goes away, there will be a lot of heartache."

The issue of religious symbols on military bases is one the Pentagon confronts often. Earlier this month, it ordered the removal of a cross that was put up on a chapel in Afghanistan, saying no permanent religious symbols are allowed inside or outside base religious facilities.

Sexual Assault / Harassment

<http://ebird.osd.mil/ebfiles/e20111129856267.html> or

<http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2011/11/28/131524/bureaucracy-has-blossomed-in-militarys.html>

Bureaucracy Has Blossomed In Military's War On Rape

By Michael Doyle and Marisa Taylor

McClatchy Newspapers, November 28, 2011

WASHINGTON — Under the political gun, the Pentagon has bulked up its anti-rape campaign far more than many people realize. It's expensive, aggressive and imperfect. Training on preventing and dealing with sexual assault has proliferated. Sometimes it's tainted juries. Budgets have ballooned. So have bureaucracies. Lawmakers have tried to protect victims. Sometimes they've bungled the job. Higher-ups have demanded tougher action. Sometimes they've unduly cowed subordinates.

Contrary to public and political impression, an extensive McClatchy review of military sexual assault finds plenty of Pentagon and congressional action. Some works. Some falls short. Some goes too far, in a legal arena that's notorious for its complications.

"These cases are among the most difficult to handle because of the many thorny issues involved, like 'he said, she said' testimony, alcohol use and misuse of military position, and because they impact the ability of soldiers to live and work together," noted Lisa Schenck, an associate dean at George Washington University Law School who's a retired Army colonel and a former senior judge on the U.S. Army Court of Criminal Appeals.

Bureaucratically, the Pentagon undeniably has beefed up. The budget for the Defense Department's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office leapt from \$5 million in fiscal 2005 to more than \$23 million in fiscal 2010. Once administered by a civilian with a doctorate in counseling, the office is now overseen by an Air Force major general with a background in security.

Total Defense Department spending on sexual assault prevention and related efforts now exceeds \$113 million annually. "The department has placed particular emphasis over the past few years on reducing the stigma associated with reporting incidents, ensuring commanders receive sufficient training and providing appropriate training and resources to investigators and trial counsel," Defense Department spokeswoman Cynthia Smith said.

Some training aims to prevent misbehavior in the first place, with classes that have titles such as "Sex Signals" and "Can I Kiss You?" The training gets mixed reviews. Numerous service members confided that sexual assault and harassment training "is not taken seriously," the Government Accountability Office noted in 2008. A 2009 Pentagon sexual assault task force likewise warned that some training, heavy on the PowerPoint, was only "marginally effective."

And some of it can taint the military justice system. One drink, service members periodically have been taught, renders a woman incapable of consenting to sex. This lesson is easy to remember and it draws a bright line: better safe than sorry. It's also legally inaccurate and can be dangerous in a courtroom. Last year, for instance, Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Jamie Walton faced charges relating to a brief affair with a 19-year-old female Marine. The charges against the married Walton included sexual assault and providing alcohol to a minor.

Prospective jurors reported that they'd been taught that a woman can't consent to sex after only a single drink. The judge instructed them to ignore the training. One juror, a Marine staff sergeant, nonetheless said he couldn't reconcile his prior training with the new instructions. "It's just integrity, sir," the staff sergeant told the judge, a trial transcript shows. "I can't agree with it."

The judge dismissed the staff sergeant, and Walton subsequently was convicted of adultery, which is illegal in the military. Although the judge managed to eject the juror who admitted a conflict, the question lingers whether jurors in other trials may retain their erroneous lessons.

Earlier this year, an Air Force enlisted man at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst in New Jersey was accused of sexually assaulting an intoxicated woman. Military jurors revealed that they, too, had been taught that any amount of alcohol rendered a woman substantially incapacitated and hence incapable of

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consenting. "First of all, that's not the law," said the enlisted man's attorney, Michael Waddington, "and it's not medically accurate."

The erroneous lessons that stuck in the minds of jurors made his job more difficult, Waddington said, though his client eventually was acquitted of the sex-related charges. With paperwork, too, the Pentagon is reinforcing its campaign against sexual assault. The Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office's first annual report, presented in May 2005, covered 10 pages.

By March 2011, the annual report and appendices spanned some 620 pages. It included significant statistical detail and a useful listing of each allegation. It also included ornamentation, such as a photograph of country singer Toby Keith posing with soldiers.

Raw performance sometimes has lagged. Congress directed the Pentagon in October 2008 to complete a comprehensive sexual assault database by January 2010. The Pentagon missed the deadline. Now officials hope to complete the database by August 2012, at an estimated cost of \$12 million.

To motivate the military, officials employ sharp rhetoric and direct commands. In April 2004, notably, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld ordered top commanders to "identify, remove and encourage the prosecuting of those responsible" for sexual violence. Military officers began facing new obligations; their promotions could turn, in part, on how well they handled sexual assault issues. Prosecutions have proliferated. No commander, numerous military officers confided on the condition of anonymity, wants to be second-guessed for failing to prosecute even an iffy case.

This new command focus contrasted with what many veterans said was a prior blind eye, or worse. Ohio resident Kori Cioca, for instance, was a Coast Guard enlisted woman when, she says, one of her superiors grabbed her by the hair in December 2005, pulled her into a stateroom and raped her. She reported the attack, but she was the one who got in trouble.

"The command did not keep the rape and assault confidential," Cioca's attorney Susan Burke reported, in a lawsuit filed on Cioca's behalf, "but instead permitted other military personnel to harass (her), call her names and spit on her." But as officials rivet attention and incite action to avoid a repeat of Cioca's experience, their rhetoric can charge ahead of the facts.

In late September, for instance, a California congresswoman took to the floor of the House of Representatives with a frightful tale of military sexual violence. "Nineteen thousand rapes a year occur in the military," Democratic Rep. Jackie Speier declared on Sept. 22, citing what she called Pentagon estimates. Speier's horrific account was the latest in a weekly series she's delivered all year, spotlighting what she calls the "epidemic of rape and sexual assault in the military." Equally bad, she says, is military indifference.

"The Department of Defense still testifies that there are 19,000 rapes that occur in the military every year," Speier said in a House speech on June 15, "and we have done nothing about it." Speier was misspeaking; usually her written statements refer to 19,000 "rapes and sexual assaults," rather than rape alone. Even this, though, can be exaggerated. By all accounts, rapes are underreported. The intimately violent crime can shame any victim into silence.

Last year, the military received 3,158 reports of sexual assault. Rape accounted for about one-quarter of the total. If only one in five military rapes is reported, as the Pentagon estimates, the annual number would be about 3,900. The 19,000 number Speier cited was an extrapolation based on a survey of 2 percent of the military. It referred, moreover, to any form of "unwanted sexual touching." This covered everything from a slap on the bottom to fondling to rape.

Speier, introducing a bill in November to impose a new system for handling military sexual assaults, further declared that "for too long, the military's response to rape victims has been, 'Take an aspirin and go to bed.'" The sound bite was vivid, but it referred to a comment allegedly made in 1985 to Navy enlisted woman Terri Odam.

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<http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2011/11/28/131524/bureaucracy-has-blossomed-in-militarys.html>

Since Odam's long-ago experience, part of the military's increasingly aggressive response involves training specialized personnel. More than 10,000 trained "victims' advocates" now serve in the Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force. In addition, more than 500 sexual assault response coordinators serve military installations and units.

This proliferation of trained personnel can help change the military culture, like a swelling of antibodies, but transformation can take awhile. A victims' advocate, for instance, was summoned in March 2007 at Camp Lejeune, N.C., when Marine Lance Cpl. Maria Lauterbach said Cpl. Cesar Laurean had raped her. An advocate then accompanied Lauterbach to meetings with Navy investigators and counselors and conversed with her daily.

Lauterbach's victims' advocates largely performed well, a Defense Department Office of Inspector General investigation concluded this month. The unit's sexual assault coordinator, though, fell short. "As a result," the Office of Inspector General reported, "the professionals who met to discuss sexual assault cases were unable to facilitate Lance Cpl. Lauterbach's proper care and services or assure her safety, well-being and recovery." Lauterbach disappeared in December 2007. Her remains were found a month later. Laurean eventually was convicted of murdering her.

The political and military response to sexual assault has included revising the relevant laws. Judicially, this hasn't always turned out well. In 2006, for instance, Congress changed the sexual-assault provisions of the Uniform Code of Military Justice. Part of the intent, as Rep. Loretta Sanchez, D-Calif., said once, was to emphasize "the acts of the perpetrator, rather than the reaction of the victim during an assault."

But in trying to protect the victim, the congressional rewrite caused considerable courtroom confusion by shifting the burden of proof onto those defendants who claim that the sex was consensual. The reasons are technical, but the result, according to Marine Corps Lt. Col. Raymond Beal II, a military judge, is "horribly flawed."

"If you had 100 monkeys with a typewriter, they'd probably come up with something like this," Air Force Col. Don Christensen, another military judge, declared during a 2009 aggravated sexual assault case,

The Senate is considering a defense authorization bill that would change, once more, the military law provisions. The prospects for the bill are unknown.

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Military's newly aggressive rape prosecution has pitfalls

A McClatchy analysis found the military is filing charges in more rape and sexual assault allegations, including some cases that would be unlikely to go to trial in civilian courts.

By Marisa Taylor and Chris Adams

McClatchy Newspapers, November 29, 2011

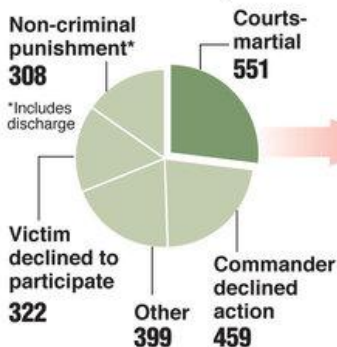
WASHINGTON — By the time Marine Staff Sgt. Jamie Walton went to trial on rape charges, his accuser had changed her story several times. A military lawyer who evaluated the case told Walton's

Military sexual assault cases

An analysis by McClatchy of sexual assault allegations in the U.S. military, 2009-10, shows a low conviction rate.

Overall

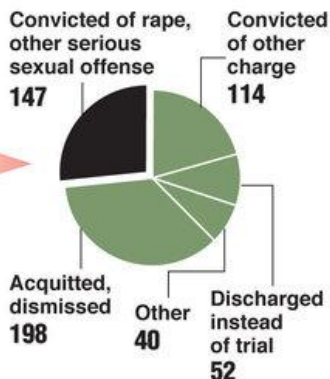
What happened to the 2,039 rape and sexual assault allegations



*Includes discharge

Courts-martial

Disposition of the 551 cases



Source: A McClatchy analysis of U.S. Department of Defense Graphic: Judy Treible © 2011 MCT

commander they didn't have enough evidence to go to trial on sexual assault charges. The prosecutor even agreed. But the Marines ignored the advice. "Everyone knew I didn't rape her," said Walton, who was acquitted of the charge last year. "But they went ahead with the trial anyway."

Walton's questionable prosecution clashes with the public's perception of a soft-on-rape military. A McClatchy analysis found that the military is prosecuting a growing number of rape and sexual assault allegations, including highly contested cases that would be unlikely to go to trial in many civilian courts. However, most of the accused aren't being convicted of serious crimes. Such results are provoking cynicism within the

armed forces that the politics of rape are tainting a military justice system that's as old as the country itself.

"In the media and on Capital Hill, there's this myth that the military doesn't take sexual assault seriously," said Michael Waddington, a former Army judge advocate who now defends the cases. "But the reality is they're charging more and more people with bogus cases just to show that they do take it seriously." McClatchy's review of nearly 4,000 sexual assault allegations demonstrates that the military has taken a more aggressive stance. Last year, military commanders sent about 70 percent more cases to courts-martial that started as rape or aggravated sexual-assault allegations than they did in 2009.

However, only 27 percent of the defendants were convicted of those offenses or other serious crimes in 2009 and 2010, McClatchy found after reviewing the cases detailed in the Defense Department's annual sexual assault reports. When factoring in convictions for lesser offenses — such as adultery, which is illegal in the military, or perjury — about half the cases ended in convictions. The military's conviction rate for all crimes is more than 90 percent, according to a 2010 report to Congress by the Pentagon.

"The pendulum has swung," said Victor Kelley, a former federal prosecutor who's a defense attorney with the law firm National Military Justice Group. "It may be true that years ago some of these allegations weren't given the attention they deserved. But now many of them are given more deference than they're due."

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<http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2011/11/28/131523/militarys-newly-aggressive-rape.html>

But legal officials with all four military branches say the low conviction rate shows how difficult it is to convict the suspects, not that innocent people are being sent to trial. One common problem in all courts — military and civilian alike — is that a sexual assault victim's behavior comes under attack as much as that of the accused does. As a result, juries may not convict despite hearing significant evidence that a rape occurred.

Making acquittals even more likely, the military is prosecuting more contested cases under a controversial law that broadens the definition of sexual assault. Under the 2006 law, the military can argue that a victim was sexually assaulted because she was "substantially incapacitated" from excessive drinking and couldn't have consented.

"What would you have us do? Tell the victim she can't get justice just because it's a hard case?" asked Timothy MacDonnell, an Army prosecutor who retired in 2008. "Then you're saying to sexual predators, 'Just be careful and make sure you do it in private and you'll get away with it.' "

In dozens of interviews, however, a wide range of people who are involved in the military justice system questioned whether the military was weighing the proper legal considerations when deciding whether to take criminal action. Unlike in the civilian justice system, a military commander, not a prosecutor, makes the final call on whether to press charges. At times, the commanders disregard their legal advisers' recommendations and pursue allegations of sexual assault, raising concerns that the anti-rape campaign of advocacy groups and Congress is influencing them.

Even some prosecutors say the strategy has backfired, making it more difficult to crack down on the crime in general. "Because there is this spin-up of ' We have to take cases seriously even though they're crap,' it creates a kind of a climate of blase attitudes," said one Navy prosecutor, who asked to remain anonymous because she feared retaliation for speaking out. "There is a pressure to prosecute, prosecute, prosecute. When you get one that's actually real, there's a lot of skepticism. You hear it routinely: 'Is this a rape case or is this a Navy rape case?'"

The reality, of course, is many women and men are raped or sexually assaulted in the military. When confronted with the crime even now, some commanders aren't aggressive enough in cracking down, many from all perspectives agree. North Carolina native Stephanie Schroeder, for instance, said her superiors were unsympathetic after a fellow Marine followed her into a women's bathroom and raped her.

Her superior said, " 'Don't come bitching to me because you had sex and changed your mind,' " recalled Schroeder, who's since joined a lawsuit alleging that the military failed to protect her from the 2002 assault. Her attacker was never punished, Schroeder said, while she was disciplined after her commanders concluded that she'd lied.

A federal judge is expected to decide soon whether to give Schroeder and others class action status in suing the military. But many military attorneys describe cases such as Schroeder's as isolated instances that garner most of the attention and outrage. "Even with this spotlight shining on the military, it has not eliminated the horror story of some commander ignoring valid charges," said Dwight Sullivan, senior appellate defense counsel for the Air Force. "We haven't prevented the horror stories and now we've created another problem of overcharging."

The pressure ratcheted up in 2003, when female cadets at the Air Force Academy accused commanders of ignoring their sexual assaults. In the wake of the scandal, the military prosecuted several of the accused. The cases didn't go well. One of the juries took only 20 minutes in 2006 to acquit a defendant. After a judge dismissed charges against another cadet, civilian prosecutors declined to charge him in 2007 because of a lack of evidence.

In fact, none of the men accused in the scandal were convicted of charges related to non-consensual sex, said attorneys who were involved. Citing such failures, Congress boosted the military's anti-sexual assault budget and crafted the new law to help prosecute cases. As lawmakers turned up the pressure,

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the military acted on the demands. The number of all sex-crime allegations sent to courts-martial increased from 113 in 2004 to 532 in 2010, according to Defense Department data.

Too often, however, defendants are being prosecuted despite qualms about the evidence, attorneys said. In Walton's case, the accuser initially denied having sex with him when her commander questioned her. After Walton confessed to adultery and urged her to tell the truth, she admitted having an affair with him. At that point, she said in a sworn statement that she and Walton had picked up "protection" before heading to a hotel. She denied drinking any alcohol.

Three months later, she changed her account again, saying Walton had plied her with hard liquor before taking her to the hotel. While they were watching TV on the bed, she said, "he all of a sudden rolled on top of me." "I don't think I said anything," she said in a statement. "I just remember my clothes coming off and I accepted it was happening." The woman said she realized she'd been raped after attending anti-sexual assault classes. She notified the lawyer who was defending her against adultery charges. The woman also told her estranged husband.

When a military lawyer, known as an investigating officer, reviewed her allegations, he recommended that the Marines drop the aggravated sexual assault charge. Not only had the accuser's story changed, friends said she'd told them the sex had been consensual and that she would do it again because she thought her husband was cheating on her. The commander nonetheless rebuffed the lawyers' advice, pursuing nine charges against Walton that ranged from aggravated sexual assault to indecent language. Walton's possible fate changed from expulsion from the military to 30 years in prison. "They threw everything at me to see what would stick," he said.

Commanders such as Walton's are instructed to consider the evidence, but they aren't required to follow their lawyers' advice. They also can weigh other interests such as the "good order and discipline" of their troops. Given the push to prosecute, many commanders may see a trial as the best way to determine whether allegations are true.

"Most of the rape cases that I've defended in the military system never would have gone to trial in a civilian system because the prosecutor would say, 'There's no way I'm taking that to trial because I'm not going to get a conviction,'" said Charles Feldmann, a former military and civilian prosecutor who's now a defense attorney. "But in the military, the decision-maker is an admiral or a general who is not going to put his career at risk on an iffy rape case by not prosecuting it. It's easy for him to say, 'Prosecute it.' If a jury acquits or convicts, then he can say justice was done either way." "If a military commander dismisses a case and there's political backlash, he's going to take some real career heat over that dismissal," Feldmann said.

Prosecutors outside the military appear to have more success at trial. There's no exact comparison with the civilian justice system, but a study of the nation's largest counties showed that 50 percent of the defendants charged with rape were found guilty of felonies in 2006, the most recent year for which those statistics are available. In New York state, almost 88 percent of the defendants charged with felony sex crimes were convicted in 2010.

In many civilian jurisdictions, the victim has to be unconscious or physically helpless or some sort of force would have to be used for prosecutors to proceed with sexual assault charges. "A lot of the cases I help people with today I couldn't prosecute in my old jurisdiction because it's not criminalized by state law," said Teresa Scalzo, a veteran civilian prosecutor and the deputy director of the Navy's Trial Counsel Assistance Program. While the 2006 law allows the military to pursue more sexual assault allegations, it didn't make the prosecution of such cases any easier, attorneys said.

In one recent case, an enlisted woman said she was drunk and fading in and out of consciousness when Army Spc. Kevin Olds touched her breast and put her hand on his penis. The pair had been drinking heavily together during a party. The woman, who was married, told a friend she "did not stop what was happening because she did not want to hurt (his) feelings," according to court records.

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At one point, she said, "No, it's OK." That meant, she testified, that she didn't want him to be mad, but she did not want him to continue. She conceded that he may have misunderstood what she meant. Olds, who was married as well, said he'd thought the woman had consented. Earlier this year, an investigating officer warned that "insufficient grounds" existed for a sexual assault prosecution.

A commander decided that charges should be pursued anyway. When the accuser said she'd prefer not to testify, the military sent the case to a summary court-martial, which is the equivalent of a misdemeanor court. Olds represented himself, and was acquitted on Nov. 15. "It never should have seen the inside of a courtroom," said Charles Gittins, who represented Olds at the outset.

Army Sgt. Derek Akins was supposed to go to trial earlier this year in Fort Riley, Kan., after he was accused of sexually assaulting a fellow enlisted man's wife, according to court documents.

All three had been drinking heavily at a party at the couple's house. The husband said that he and his wife had shared a bottle of rum. The woman said Akins had flirted with her but that she didn't remember any sexual encounter because she'd passed out. The husband, however, contended that Akins had had sex with his semiconscious wife in his presence while all three were in the couple's bedroom.

In a last-minute reversal, the husband said that what had happened had been consensual. The military dropped the sexual assault charge. "This is how nuanced and difficult these cases can be," said Philip Cave, Akins' lawyer and a retired Navy judge advocate. "The prosecution can be lied to as well." In fact, an accuser and a defendant can have powerful motives to withhold important facts or lie about consensual sex. The military treats "fraternization" — socializing with someone who's lower in rank — as a crime. It's also illegal to have an extramarital affair or to have sex in some overseas locations.

McClatchy tried to talk to commanders about their roles in specific cases, but they either declined to be interviewed or referred a reporter to public affairs offices. However, attorneys involved in prosecutions maintained that the military is weighing only the legal merits of cases, not the political ramifications.

"We have seen a push to prosecute more challenging cases," said Scalzo, who added that commanders "have become bolder because they've been educated about the nature of non-stranger sexual assault, especially when alcohol is involved." Officials also denied that a low conviction rate signals any problems with the cases.

"I don't think it's an accurate way to measure the success of our program," said Janet Mansfield, an attorney with the Army's Office of the Judge Advocate General. Asked how the Army was determining whether it's working, she responded that it was "hard to define." "We want to see that due process exists," she said. "We want to see that victims are happy with the experience of the court-martial, if not the outcome." Walton, however, thinks that the justice system has tilted unfairly in favor of the accuser.

After a two-year ordeal, the Marines convicted him of adultery and sent him to prison for six months. As soon as she made the rape accusation, the service dropped the adultery charge against his accuser. She was promoted, while he received a bad conduct discharge. After 13 years in the military, Walton has lost his retirement and veteran's benefits, and the ability to attend college for free. And he worries that even an acquittal will be seen as a mark of guilt.

"A lot of people aren't going to like me because I made a stupid decision and I cheated on my wife," he said. "But I don't deserve to be seen as a rapist."

Michael Doyle and Tish Wells contributed to this article.

Panetta preparing DOD directive on investigating sexual assaults

By **CHRIS CARROLL**

Stars and Stripes, 18 November 2011

WASHINGTON — In the face of a rising tide of criticism over the military's handling of reported sexual assaults, a Pentagon spokesman said Defense Secretary Leon Panetta is preparing orders that make ending this "silent epidemic" a top department priority.

"He believes it is no longer acceptable that we say that we can just do better on this, [but] that we need to take action," Pentagon Press Secretary George Little said Friday. "In the coming months, you will see him issue very direct guidance to the department on this very important issue and problem."

According to the Pentagon's estimate, the 3,158 sexual assault incidents reported in 2010 represented just more than 10 percent of those that actually occurred. The Defense Department has long been passive about the problems of underreporting as well as of botched rape investigations, victims and their advocates say.

Panetta and his staff are studying a range of aggressive actions to end the long-standing problems, Little said, but he declined to name specifics.

The decision, Little said, was spurred both by urging from senior DOD staff and by recent congressional and court actions.

Rep. Jackie Speier, a northern California Democrat, this week introduced legislation that would change the way alleged sex assaults in the military are investigated. Instead of remaining in the normal chain of command, the bill would require the investigations be handled by a new Sexual Assault Oversight and Response Office.

"We owe our brave women and men in the military a justice system that protects them, not punishes them when they become victims of sexual assaults and rape committed by other service members," Speier said in a statement on her website.

A federal class action lawsuit filed early this year accuses the DOD under former secretaries Robert Gates and Donald Rumsfeld of failing to take steps to prevent assaults, and not taking seriously the need to investigate sexual assault allegations.

The lawsuit now includes dozens of men and women, some of whom say they were repeatedly raped and harassed while department leaders failed to take action.

Little said there would be no inaction with Panetta in charge.

"He is getting out ahead of this issue," he said. "He's taking this on as a major priority."