

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.

Don't compare gay rights, civil rights [Ellis Cose, *USA Today*, Opinion, 4 August 2011]

- The author argues that the movement for racial equality and the movement for gay rights are "in many respects... more different than they are alike" and that "each battle must be understood on its own terms."
- The "fundamental difference... has to do with the weight of history—with the legacy of subjugation that is not simply wiped away with the passage of prejudice and time."
- For gays, says the author, the "prejudice is not linked to a system of economic oppression that will leave gay communities permanently incapacitated..." In the "fight for racial equality," however, the "tougher battle, for removing structural barriers to opportunity, is far from over."

[Don't compare gay rights, civil rights](#)

Battle within Campbell May Decide War on Suicide [Mark Brunswick, *Star Tribune*, 1 August 2011]

- Since 2006, 51 Fort Campbell soldiers have killed themselves. Twenty-one suicides by Campbell soldiers in 2009 were the highest of any base in the Army, prompting an emergency three-day shutdown by alarmed commanders.
- Fort Campbell has created a clinic, unique in the Army, to treat, track, and monitor high-risk Soldiers and appointed the military's first full-time suicide-prevention program manager.
- At Fort Campbell, Army leaders now believe that part of the answer lies in teaching soldiers that sucking it up is no longer the time-honored tradition it has been for centuries. The short-lived "Army of One" recruiting slogan has been replaced on the base with posters that vow "No Soldier Stands Alone."

[Battle Within Campbell May Decide War on Suicide](#)

As atheists know, you can be good without God [Jerry A. Coyne, *USA Today*, Opinion, 1 August 2011]

- The author argues that much of morality "seems intuitive and inborn" and sees "belief in God-given morality as American's biggest impediment to accepting the fact of evolution."
- The author asserts that morality "cannot come from the will or commands of a God" and supports this assertion by two arguments: "God—at least the God of Christians and Jews—repeatedly sanctioned or ordered immoral acts in the Old Testament" and "religiously based ethics have changed profoundly over time."
- Two sources of morality, according to the author, are "evolution and secular reasoning." "Clearly, you can be good without God," concludes the article.

[As atheists know, you can be good without God](#)

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Culture

<http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-chinese-teachers-20110801,0,7199823.story>

Chinese teachers are on a U.S. mission

Dozens of teachers from China are in Los Angeles to prepare for the opportunity of a lifetime: a chance to teach Mandarin in American schools.

By Ricardo Lopez

Los Angeles Times, 1 August 2011

The large ballroom in UCLA's Covel Commons resembled a bustling day-care center one recent day, as laughter rang out across the room.

A boisterous game of Twister was being played in one corner, charades were set up near the refreshments and the occasional shout of "Uno!" sounded from the front.



Folklorico dancer Denise Pereida, 16, left, and Chinese teacher Ni Meng have some fun at a UCLA event featuring mariachi music and folklorico lessons. (Francine Orr, Los Angeles Times / August 1, 2011)

But the participants, speaking in rapid-fire Mandarin, were not children. They were dozens of Chinese teachers in Los Angeles for a nine-day crash course to prepare them for what they consider the opportunity of a lifetime: to teach

Mandarin in American schools.

In a few weeks, 176 Chinese teachers will head to kindergarten through 12th-grade classrooms across the country, from rural Kentucky towns to the tidy suburbs of Salt Lake City. Only two will remain in California, assigned to schools in Redding and Ojai.

Most had never before left China. They had come armed with hopes of succeeding in the classroom, with fears that American students would be difficult to manage and with impressions of U.S. culture based on a diet heavy in Hollywood films.

The guest teacher program, started in 2007 and partly funded by the federal language initiative, Startalk, is an effort by the College Board and the Chinese government's Chinese Language Council International, also known as Hanban. The agencies want to expand Chinese instruction in the United States. UCLA's Confucius Institute is in its second year of hosting the program.

On a recent Saturday, in UCLA's ballroom-turned-playground, Jin Shan, a slender 33-year-old from Shijiazhuang, played the games with gusto, looking momentarily like a schoolgirl. (The contests serve as teaching aids, which they dissect in a later debriefing.)

Shan and her colleagues prepared for their visit by attending workshops in Beijing and studying American culture and teaching methods. But so much preparation can be mind-boggling. "I feel nervous," Shan said. "There are so many things to remember."

On their tightly packed schedule, for example, were sessions covering classroom management, how to use technology in their teaching, as well as practical tips for life in America (such as how to find Chinese cooking staples). Time was also carved out for karaoke and a Southwest-themed dinner complete with a mariachi duo and Mexican folk dancers.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-chinese-teachers-20110801,0,7199823.story>

On another day, the guest teachers visited Bell High School to see theory in action in Nada Shaath's Arabic class.

They furiously scribbled notes, observing Shaath's lively teaching style, which involves a steady stream of questions to students and, on a recent Friday, having them sing along in Arabic to the Christmas song "Jingle Bells."

This opportunity to observe foreign language instruction in Bell does much to ease their nerves, but it also reveals a stark contrast in international teaching styles.

In China, teachers frequently lecture their students and interact far less with them than their American counterparts, said Bao Zhu, 29, a college professor in English from northern China.

Zhu and his wife, Tian Qing, are both in the U.S. to teach, but they won't be anywhere near each other. Zhu is headed to Utah, his wife to Florida. His parents will care for the couple's 3-year-old son, who remains in China.

The yearlong separation is worth the heartache they expect to experience because the U.S. work will elevate their professional standing upon their return home. "We will be viewed as experts," Zhu said.

And because most will go to small rural districts in the U.S. that generally don't have a pool of instructors who can teach Chinese, they may find themselves welcomed like rock stars and featured prominently in local newspapers, said Jacque Van Houten, an international education consultant for the Kentucky Department of Education.

As a group of teachers chatted over fajitas last Saturday, a mariachi duo's song floating in the air, many seemed worried about the little things. How much does a bike cost? Where can you find Harry Potter books? What will the kids be like?

But Shan thinks she'll be a quick study, and her strategy to win over her students is simple:

"If I am kind to them, they'll respect me. In China, all my students love me."

Discrimination

Firefighters get damages in bias case

By John Christoffersen
Associated Press, 28 July 2011

NEW HAVEN, Conn. (AP) — A white group of firefighters who won a [reverse discrimination case](#) before the U.S. Supreme Court in 2009 has been awarded about \$2 million in damages from the city of New Haven, ending a 7-year-old legal battle that fueled national debate over racial justice, officials said Thursday.

The Supreme Court ruled that officials violated white firefighters' civil rights when they threw out 2003 promotion tests results because too few minorities did well. The firefighters returned to [U.S. District Court](#) in Connecticut seeking back pay, damages and legal fees.

Court papers indicate 20 firefighters accepted offers Wednesday from the city for back pay, additional pension benefits and interest. A trial to decide the damages had been set to begin Aug. 26.

Attorneys for the city told The Associated Press on Thursday that the firefighters will receive about \$2 million and the city will pay their attorneys' fees and costs of about \$3 million.

"I think it's a fair offer," said Richard Roberts, an attorney who represented the city. "We're glad we can move ahead and put this behind us."

City officials said the settlement, which includes three years of pension credit, avoids the cost and uncertainty of further litigation. They said the settlement will be paid for from an account set aside for the case and insurance proceeds.

"In addition to recognizing that this resolution allows the city to move forward, I want to acknowledge the work of the New Haven firefighters who never allowed this debate to affect their performance on the fire grounds, or, with one another," said [Mayor John DeStefano](#). "Their service to the people of New Haven and to their units has been and remains exemplary."

Roberts said the settlement does not require a judge's approval.

But he and Karen Torre, attorney for the firefighters, disagreed on the implications of the agreement and the value of the pension credits.

Torre said the agreement was significant because city officials, in essence, admitted to the firefighters' claims, including that the city conspired to violate the firefighters' civil rights. She also said the pension credit would be worth hundreds of thousands of dollars per firefighter.

But Roberts disputed her assertion, saying the city did not admit to conspiring to violate civil rights but only agreed to the Supreme Court ruling that New Haven discriminated against its white firefighters by ignoring the test results. He said the city listed all the claims in the agreement to make it clear the case was fully resolved. He also disputed Torre's estimate of the value of the pension credits.

Torre argued in court in 2009 that the firefighters were entitled to back pay with interest for long-overdue promotions, several categories of damages and attorney fees. She said the firefighters were subject to "the humiliation and economic hardship of prolonged career stagnancy in a rancorous atmosphere fostered by raw racial divides."

The case became an issue in confirmation hearings for Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor, who ruled against the white firefighters when she served on a [federal appeals court](#) before becoming the nation's first Hispanic on the high court.

<http://news.yahoo.com/apnewsbreak-firefighters-damages-bias-case-150016640.html>

The lead plaintiff, firefighter Frank Ricci, told the [Senate Judiciary Committee](#) he studied hard, played by the rules, and was denied a promotion because of the color of his skin. Sotomayor repeatedly was questioned about her ruling in the case during four days of testimony before the committee and argued her decision was evidence that she hews to the law and precedent, not emotion or sympathies.

"This was a trying time for ourselves and our families but it was also a great lesson in democracy," Ricci said Thursday. "We're glad that now we can put it behind us and get back to the work of protecting the citizens of New Haven."

A national poll conducted by Quinnipiac University at the time found more than 70 percent of those surveyed thought the firefighters should have been promoted. At the same time, about three-fifths said the case shouldn't make any difference in whether Sotomayor was confirmed for the high court.

New Haven officials said they were worried at the time about a lawsuit from black firefighters after only two of 50 minority candidates would have been eligible for promotion based on the test results. After the Supreme Court ruling, the city certified the exam results and promoted everyone who would have been promoted if the exams had been certified in the first place.

Diversity

<http://www.airforcetimes.com/news/2011/08/ap-haitian-amputee-soccer-team-to-work-with-troops-080111/>

Haitian amputee soccer team to work with troops

The Associated Press

Air Force Times, Aug 1, 2011 14:31:46 EDT

DENVER — The Knights of Columbus say an amputee soccer team that includes players injured in Haiti's 2010 earthquake plans to tour the United States to work with soldiers injured in Iraq and Afghanistan.

A spokesman for the Knights of Columbus, Andrew Walther, said Monday that the aim of the fall tour by Team Zaryen was to raise awareness about earthquake amputees in Haiti and to thank the U.S. military for its help after the quake.

Thousands of Haitians lost limbs so they could be pulled from the rubble or to stop infections following the quake.

The Knights of Columbus began working with the soccer team through its work with Project Medishare to provide prosthetic limbs to Haitian children. The Catholic benevolent organization is holding its 129th international convention in Denver.

Marines push for greater diversity

Corps' commandant pledges to improve recruitment, retention of minorities

By Gretel C. Kovach

San Diego Union-Tribune, 2 August 2011



Gen. James Amos, the commandant of the Marine Corps, speaks about diversity in the Corps at the National Naval Officers Association Convention. After his speech, Amos answered a question from Marine Capt. Rodney James, left. — John Gastaldo / The San Diego Union-Tribune

The Marine Corps has come a long way since it allowed its first African-American recruits into a segregated boot camp in 1942, but the service lags far behind where it should be today in diversifying its ranks, the commandant said Tuesday during a visit to San Diego.

Gen. James Amos paid tribute to those pioneering Marines who broke the color barrier in the Corps after training at Montford Point in North Carolina during a speech at the convention of the National Naval Officers Association, an organization that represents minority officers in the sea services.

Amos outlined plans to highlight the legacy of the Montford Point Marines in the history of the tradition-bound Corps, and to improve recruitment and retention of a more diverse pool of Marines. But he introduced his unscripted “from the heart” talk with about 500 officers by saying he was dismayed by the lack of diversity in the Corps, particularly among officers.

“We’re failing,” in this mission, Amos said. “We’re not the face of society.”

About 10 percent of the Corps is African-American, versus about 12 percent of the U.S. population, Amos said. Among the 2010 crop of 1,703 newly minted Marine lieutenants, only 60, or 3.5 percent, were African-American.

This year that percentage should be up to 5 percent, or about even with the percentage of eligible males, Amos said. He credited the change to efforts by Marines such as Maj. Gen. Ronald Bailey. In June, Bailey gave up his dual position overseeing the Recruiting Command at Quantico, Va., and the recruit depot in San Diego to lead the 1st Marine Division — the first African-American to do so.

The Corps has a reputation for attracting a predominance of southern white men, along with Latinos who appreciate its macho culture, though those stereotypes are less true today.

<http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/2011/aug/02/marines-push-greater-diversity/>

Retired Navy Capt. Anthony Barnes, president of the naval association, said the disappointing level of diversity in the Marine Corps is no surprise, but he is optimistic about where the Corps is headed.

“The first thing to do is identify the shortcomings,” he said. “If the top guy is not committed and he doesn’t communicate that commitment, then the organization has no chance.”

Amos, who became commandant in October, is taking a tough look at the Corps while all the service chiefs mount similar efforts to improve diversity.

The Military Leadership Diversity Commission, an independent panel convened to advise Congress on the issue, reported in March that all branches of the armed services are too white and too male in the higher ranks.

They found that 77 percent of active-duty senior officers are white, and 84 percent are male, based on data from September 2008.

The Marine Corps fared the worst in racial diversity in the lower enlisted ranks, with only 27.3 percent of its personnel coming from minorities. The Navy had the biggest percentage, at 49.5 percent.

In response to a question from the audience about how downsizing in the Marine Corps will affect efforts to recruit and retain minorities, Amos said: “The competition to remain on active duty will stiffen for everybody,” but the diversity campaign will continue full speed.

“We’re not even close to where we ought to be,” Amos said, so “our minority recruiting is going to stay the same.”

He laid out some of his plans: target a broader array of universities to recruit potential officers; work harder to award all available scholarships in honor of the first African-American Marine officer, Frederick Branch, most of which remain unused each year; boost mentoring of young officers to make sure they know how to make the right choices to gain promotion; and stress the service component of the Marine Corps to minority youth of all ages.

After the speech Amos was asked by San Diego journalists about diversity of another kind — the September end to the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” restrictions preventing gays and lesbians from serving openly in the ranks.

Last year as the change was being considered, the Marine Corps had expressed the most concern, pointing to front-line units as being particularly vulnerable to disruption.

Amos said Marines in Afghanistan told him during two visits to the war zone in the past year that it would be a “nonissue.”

“They went through the training, and then they just moved on,” Amos said.

Program Helps Disabled Vets Become Entrepreneurs

By Donna Miles

American Forces Press Service, 1 August 2011

WASHINGTON, Aug. 1, 2011 – Retired Army 1st Sgt. Renee Floyd wasn't about to let a disability stop her from realizing her dream of having her own business.

Applying 21 years of experience as an Army mechanic, she launched BRF Mobile Lube Service in Phenix City, Ala., in 2009 and began traveling to people's homes and businesses to provide convenient oil changes and maintenance services.



Retired Army 1st Sgt. Renee Floyd uses lessons from the Entrepreneurship Bootcamp for Veterans With Disabilities at Florida State University to build her business, BRF Mobile Lube Service, in Phenix City, Ala. Courtesy photo

But her big break came last month, she said, when she attended the Entrepreneurship Bootcamp for Veterans With Disabilities at Florida State University. The nine-day EBV crash course is part of a program designed to help participants get their businesses off the ground or enhance ventures they have started.

Syracuse University's Whitman School of Management in New York was the first to offer the program for veterans disabled as a result of their military service since Sept. 11, 2001.

Florida State University in Tallahassee, Fla., launched its own program in 2008. Now, a consortium of seven universities around the United States participates, anxious to help disabled veterans make their dreams of entrepreneurship a reality.

Randy Blass, a retired Air Force lieutenant colonel who serves as director for the FSU program, said entrepreneurship offers the veterans something a regular job can't.

Particularly for those struggling to deal with a separation from military service that they didn't initiate and often didn't want, Blass said entrepreneurship offers a new sense of identity.

"They are no longer that corporal or that sergeant or that captain. They are going through an identity transition, and to just get a job doesn't always address that psychological identity need," he said.

Entrepreneurship also holds allure to those who see it as a way to continue serving the country. "By being an entrepreneur, we are helping with the economic recovery," Blass said. "You are creating jobs. ... That message is not lost on someone who still wants to serve and is looking for some identity to latch onto."

Participants begin online training before arriving on campus for an intensive boot camp that Blass said keeps them engaged from sunup to long after sundown. Through classes and workshop sessions, they learn the nuts and bolts of running a business: how to write a business plan, raise capital and build a customer base.

The cost of the boot camp, including food, lodging and transportation, is picked up by participating universities with gifts from alumni, entrepreneurs, corporations and business leaders.

After the program, participants receive a full year of ongoing support and mentorship.

The training is demanding, and expectations of participants are high. "We don't coddle," Blass said. "We also don't dwell. We don't even really talk about their disabilities."

<http://www.defense.gov//News/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=64871>

Rather, the focus of the program is strictly on entrepreneurship. “We talk about business,” Blass said. “We are going forward. We are not looking backwards.”

Floyd had made good headway in building her mobile lube business. She had put her bachelor of science degree in business administration from American Military University to work, formulating a strong business plan and marketing motto: “We change lives, one car at a time.”

What she didn’t initially recognize was that a fear of approaching authority figures had kept her from fully marketing the business. “It was holding me back from going to the corporations and small businesses and offering my services to them,” she said.

But it took a professor at the FSU boot camp to help her realize and press through that fear, she said.

“After he hit me with that and made me think about it, I was able to resolve that issue right away,” Floyd said. She immediately began pushing herself to single out and engage business leaders to promote her business.

Another big takeaway from the boot camp was learning to rethink her approach to the business. “I realized that I had to come out of the technician role and into the management role to make it a success,” she said.

The boot camp experience and follow-on mentoring already is making an impact on her bottom line.

“I’m seeing an increase in my business and new opportunities to expand it,” she said. “I came back here [from the boot camp] on fire. And I am still implementing those things I learned from the school, and making them a permanent part of my daily business.”

Now, Floyd calls herself “a walking kiosk” in extolling the value of the EBV program to other disabled veterans.

“The business or idea that you never thought you could own is only an EBV class away,” she tells them, and “the business that you currently own is only an EBV class away from success that you could never have imagined.”

Other graduates of the program share Floyd’s enthusiasm.

Chris Cancialosi, a former Army National Guard aviator, started his own business, gothamCULTURE, shortly after returning from Iraq in 2005. But it was the EBV program, which he attended in 2009, that helped him realize the difference between being self-employed and being an entrepreneur.

“If you expect to grow, you have to focus on growing the business,” he said, rather than trying to do it all solo. Now that he’s hired a staff and delegates some of the company’s support functions, Cancialosi is seeing his company grow by leaps and bounds.

“Being an entrepreneur means that I have the ability to control my destiny, to make a difference in the world in my own way,” he said. “The only limits that are set for me as an entrepreneur are those that I set for myself. I am [now] able to create something in the world in my own vision.”

Other alumni of the program say they are applying the lessons learned through EBV in building their businesses.

Jose Rene “J.R.” Martinez, an Army veteran severely burned when his Humvee hit a landmine in Iraq in April 2003, graduated from FSU’s program in 2008 and now serves as a motivational speaker and actor on ABC’s “All My Children” soap opera.

Daniel Hash, another graduate of the 2008 boot camp, founded United Doves, a company that releases doves at weddings, funerals and other events, then retrieves the birds after they return home.

<http://www.defense.gov//News/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=64871>

Marylyn Harris, a former Army nurse who attended last year's class, runs Harrland Healthcare Consulting, a management consulting firm.

Former Army staff sergeant Claudel Aubry, a 2010 EBV graduate, runs a logistics management firm that specializes in transportation and supply chain management.

Reggie Crane, a retired chief master sergeant who attended the same class, is applying lessons learned to his company, Next Level Coaching and Consulting Services.

Cancialosi called the program one of the best things going for disabled veterans who have the fire in their bellies to become entrepreneurs.

“For people who are very serious and very committed to starting their own business and world of entrepreneurship, this program is fantastic,” he said.

“It is a phenomenal program. The people running it are extraordinary human beings” he added. “It really is that epitome of the idyllic American spirit.”

As the program grows, Blass said, the next plan is to expand it to include caregivers of veterans with disabilities and spouses of the fallen.

Syracuse University was the first to offer that program, and Blass said FSU will offer its first Entrepreneurship BootCamp for Veterans Families in February.

Details about the program and how to apply are posted at <http://whitman.syr.edu/ebv/> with links to participating universities' websites.

Human Relations

1-star to Marines: Turn in spice users

By Andrew deGrandpré - Staff writer
Marine Corps Times, 1 August 2011

You blow the whistle on a drug user in your unit.

Are you:

- a. A good Marine.
- b. A snitch.

A one-star general in Japan is putting Marines on the spot, urging them to ignore a deeply ingrained cultural mindset prevalent among junior troops in which informing on others for drug use — or just about anything else — makes you a snitch. Which is to say, the enemy.

Branded “Not in My Corps,” the general’s new campaign at 1st Marine Aircraft Wing was launched as commands throughout the service battle a relentless problem with drugs in the ranks. Since October 2009, more than 3,100 Marines have been thrown out for alleged drug use, according to Marine officials at Manpower and Reserve affairs in Quantico, Va. So far this fiscal year, which began Oct. 1 and ends Sept. 30, an average of 150 are booted monthly.

The initiative has been praised by senior Marine leaders, including the commandant. And the three-star head of all Marine forces in Japan calls “Not in My Corps” a model that commands everywhere should follow. But among the rank and file, this concept poses a difficult question: Is it right to rat out fellow Marines?

The man behind it says yes.

“What I’m starting to see here is that instead of being considered a rat, or in the minority, the people who bring attention to those who have broken with us, from a core-values standpoint, are starting to be heralded,” said Brig. Gen. William D. Beydler, 1st MAW’s commanding general and star of a “Not in My Corps” TV spot now airing in Japan on the Armed Forces Network. “That was the whole intent: Take a stand. You’re frustrated. I’m frustrated. ... Let’s do something about it.”

Beydler’s primary focus is spice, which is similar to marijuana, except it’s made from synthetic compounds whose potency can vary wildly. Some people smoke it and catch a slight buzz. Others get so whacked out they have to be hospitalized. Spice has proved popular with some Marines and other service members because, until recently, it was unregulated and readily available in tobacco shops and gas stations. Moreover, standard drug screens couldn’t detect it.

But that’s changed. In March, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration outlawed the sale and possession of specific chemicals used to make spice. And now the Defense Department has a test that can determine whether troops have ingested some of these chemicals, although the Corps uses it only in conjunction with investigations. Soon, Beydler said, that too may change.

“Random testing is not available — yet,” he said. “But I believe it’s coming.” Until then, Beydler will direct his NCOs to “take a much more active role” enforcing the rules. And those rules — namely Article 1137 of the U.S. Navy Regulations — are clear, he said. Marines and sailors must report to their chain of command all offenses under the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

“We don’t expect individuals to put themselves at risk in a direct confrontation,” said Beydler, who’s been nominated for promotion to major general. “This is not a call to vigilantism. This is having Marines and sailors, especially those in leadership positions, do the right thing. ... And I think Marines are smart enough to know that if they see somebody stupid enough to do this, [they’ll ask

<http://www.marinecorpstimes.com/news/2011/08/marine-spice-japan-snitch-080111w/> themselves] what other stupid things would they do in an operational situation, in a combat situation, in a situation where there's risk for a group of Marines. And I think they're tired of it."

The dilemma for Marines

Anecdotally, Beydler's hunch is correct. Marines are growing increasingly intolerant of drug use among their peers, and some are coming forward to report them. Others are against the idea entirely.

Since his initiative rolled out earlier this year, five 1st MAW Marines have ID'd someone in their unit for smoking spice, according to a spokeswoman for III Marine Expeditionary Force, the unit's parent command. Most did so anonymously, she said.

One of these Marines was featured recently in the Okinawa Marine, a base newspaper. The story recounts how this Marine — identified only as "John" — was threatened with violence by his barracks-mate, who was using their shared bathroom to get high with his buddies. After ample contemplation, John outed him. Citing concerns for John's privacy and safety, Marine officials would not allow Marine Corps Times to speak with him. His barracks-mate and another Marine were busted, according to III MEF, and an investigation is ongoing.

For Marines who come forward, the threat of retaliation is real, though so far it hasn't been a problem, Beydler said. In recounting his story to the Okinawa Marine, John said that during formations his sergeant major routinely preached the command's promise to provide confidentiality, and that he'd heard the sergeant major and the commanding officer had "taken care of" a few others who agreed to ID spice users.

Elsewhere, other Marines have shown a willingness to make similar decisions. In January, the commanding general of 2nd MAW, Maj. Gen. Jon M. Davis, held a "heroes dinner" for several Marines aboard Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, N.C. One corporal in attendance was credited with sounding an alarm when insurgents attacked an airfield in Afghanistan. A sergeant responded to a car accident she witnessed. Several others helped prevent suicides.

Lance Cpl. Saul Uriarte, an aircraft electrical systems technician at MCAS Beaufort, S.C., reported three Marines for smoking spice.

'A weak way out'

For some, the choice is simple. Sgt. Adam Arredondo, a supply chief with Fox Battery, 2nd Battalion, 14th Marines, said he wouldn't think twice about reporting another Marine for using spice. "My responsibility far outweighs the consequence of being called a snitch," he said. "It's not the Buddy Corps; it's the Marine Corps. Don't let the door smack you in the face on the way out."

To Cpl. Jeff Dvorak, now a field radio operator with Marine Wing Support Squadron 471, it's not so black and white. One night during a 2009-10 deployment to Iraq's Al Asad Airbase, Dvorak, then a lance corporal with another aviation unit, left his "two-man can" to grab some chow. He returned to find his lance corporal roommate high and a can of aerosol dust cleaner beside his rack.

Dvorak told him to quit it. Do it again, he said, and their corporal would hear about it. And that's exactly what happened. "I told the corporal, he told the sergeant and the sergeant brought it to our gunnery sergeant," Dvorak said. "That was the end of it. I never saw him high again. ... I am a firm believer in taking care of things at the lowest level. Our CO never had to mess with it, and my roommate's record didn't get tarnished."

One former sergeant with 8th Engineer Support Battalion out of Camp Lejeune, N.C., agreed that problems such as drug use are best handled at the small-unit level. It's just not worth the time and effort involved in pursuing criminal charges or nonjudicial punishment, he said on the condition of anonymity for fear his views are not widely embraced. There are "other ways" to convey the message that a Marine screwed up.

<http://www.marinecorpstimes.com/news/2011/08/marine-spice-japan-snitch-080111w/>

This former sergeant, who left the Corps in the fall, said he believes one errant Marine is an entire squad's problem, and said he wouldn't hesitate to make everyone "pay" for that individual's mistake. That would mean daily and nightly inspections, he said, and around-the-clock martial-arts training.

"I would make their lives such a pain that they'd know it's important to look out for one another," the former sergeant said. "They should be the ones saying, 'You need to stop smoking spice. We're a team.' ... When you run and tell some commander, it's a weak way out. It's the easy way out. The tougher thing to do is solve the problem yourselves."

Beyond that, though, he said he objects to the notion of a commander asking Marines to compromise their loyalty to one another. Doing that, he said, contradicts long-standing lessons taught by NCOs and staff NCOs at the small-unit level, and risks ruining the trust Marines must have for one another if that unit is to function cohesively.

"You just don't do it, even if it's anonymous," the former sergeant said. "Find another way. ... I've had unit commanders, first sergeants and platoon sergeants all say, 'We don't rat on one another; we police our own.' That's a big thing in the Corps."

Sgt. Daniel Henry, who's augmenting a logistics billet with Regimental Combat Team 1's motor transport section, believes the Corps has made clear to Marines that drugs can ruin your health and end your career, he said in an email from Camp Dwyer, Afghanistan. Five years ago, while he was stationed in Okinawa, spice was a "huge epidemic," Henry said. But since his return stateside, the problem doesn't seem quite so bad. RCT-1 is clean, he said. So is his parent unit at 1st Marine Division.

But when it comes to busting drug users, Henry draws a hard line. Unless it's a junior Marine openly flouting the rules, he'll keep his head down. Reporting a peer within your unit "begets mistrust, which in turn breaks up whatever cohesion your unit may have," he said.

"I wouldn't call the cops on my own brother or sister, so why would I snitch on another Marine? You can fancy up the verbiage and say it's 'policing your own,' but at the end of the day it's still snitching. I know nothing. I saw nothing. I heard nothing. It's an easy mindset that keeps me in my lane."

Headed your way?

The term snitching carries a negative connotation, said 1st Lt. Patrick A. McElroy Jr., who as the substance abuse control officer at 1st MAW is intimately familiar with the effort to flush out drug users. The command's course of action calls for "moral courage and integrity," he said, stressing that more must be done to encourage Marines to overcome the fear of turning in one of their own.

Marines who do drugs are "oath breakers," McElroy said. "Personally, I hope all spice users are caught and then administratively separated from the Marine Corps."

Beydler is convinced his model works and could be used to round up other troublemakers and rule breakers, but he would not predict whether "Not in My Corps" will catch on elsewhere. His boss, however, said leaders across the service should take notice.

"I envision this campaign expanding Marine Corps-wide to empower Marines to hold their peers accountable," said Lt. Gen. Kenneth J. Glueck Jr., the commander of III MEF and Marine Corps Bases Japan.

People are watching in Washington, too. Commandant Gen. Jim Amos is aware of the effort and impressed, though he hasn't spoken about it with Beydler directly, said his spokesman, Maj. Joseph Plenzler. The Corps' top officer is interested in any method that deters drug use, he said.

This one would appear to have potential.

Battle Within Campbell May Decide War on Suicide

by Mark Brunswick

Star Tribune, August 01, 2011

CLARKSVILLE, TENN. -- Sgt. Patrick Cummings suffered his second traumatic brain injury when a 155mm shell exploded midbarrel as he and other soldiers fired a howitzer against the Taliban. The blast should have killed everyone within a 100-yard radius, but here was Cummings, sitting on a table at the All American Tattoo Company outside Fort Campbell, spending his Valentine's Day night alongside two fellow Soldiers who also survived the blast.

The tattoo the men will share memorializes the searing experience they shared, a time-honored military tradition for commemorating brushes with death. But a new deadly danger has been waiting inside Fort Campbell for those preparing for or returning from war, an epidemic of suicides that has shown how ill-prepared the military is to deal with the psychological and emotional injuries of nearly a decade of conflict.

"The problem is you are drilled on these tests from boot camp, 'Suck it up. Be a Soldier,'" said Kat Cummings, who accompanied her husband to the tattoo parlor. "They come home, they went through their surgery, the very last thing they thought about was counseling for what they went through," she said. "I understand why these guys are knocking themselves off."

Home to the 101st Airborne, the Army's most often deployed contingency force, Fort Campbell sprawls across 106,000 acres of western Kentucky and Tennessee. The base and its inhabitants bear the scars of nine years of constant warfare, the air thick with equal measures of adrenaline and trauma, Soldiers preparing for war, Soldiers trying to recoup.

For many, it's too much.

Since 2006, 51 Fort Campbell Soldiers have killed themselves, including three from Minnesota. The 21 suicides by Soldiers serving here in 2009 were the highest of any base in the Army, prompting an emergency three-day shutdown by alarmed commanders.

During past periods of war, suicides were considered a cost of doing business for the military. Today, everyone at Fort Campbell recognizes they instead pose a crisis, said Joe Varney, who has been put in charge of a new suicide-prevention program at the base. "Once we got engaged in a two-theater war, back-to-back deployments, the stress and strain started to manifest itself," he said.

Under Varney's direction, Fort Campbell is the tip of the spear for a new fight, a proving ground for suicide-prevention programs. Varney is the military's first full-time suicide-prevention program manager and Fort Campbell has created a clinic, unique in the Army, to treat, track and monitor high-risk Soldiers. The clinic has hired 50 care assistants, who interview returning Soldiers and direct troops to further counselling or back to their unit based on how they answer questions about their mental health. New arrivals at the fort and family members on base are given handouts of mental health literature and enough magnetized confidential numbers to cover a refrigerator. When 270 Soldiers recently returned from a yearlong deployment, the weeklong program they were required to attend mentioned suicide 23 times.

The military and the community surrounding the base have become involved in Soldiers' lives like no other employer. Clinics make sure unit leaders know when a Soldier misses a medical appointment. Soldiers considered at-risk are contacted while on leave. After many suicides, the base conducts a "psych autopsy," interviewing family members, neighbors and commanders to see if there is a pattern or a red flag that was missed.

"High risk potential is now tops on our list," said Maj. Gen. Francis J. Wiercinski, until recently Fort Campbell's acting senior commander. "We're starting to identify that before people redeploy. By the

<http://www.military.com/news/article/battle-within-campbell-may-decide-war-on-suicide.html>
time they come back, we've already got an idea. We don't single people out or make them feel like they are different, but we try to focus and watch."

But all the behavioral care providers and brochures cannot change some of the core elements of the stressful, adrenaline-fueled atmosphere on and around a military base that can make life seem intolerable -- injuries, post-traumatic stress disorder, repeated deployments, financial strains, wives and children who've become strangers.

'Completely different'

At places like the Woodlands housing complex inside Fort Campbell, Army families live in a world that might strike an outsider as a throwback to the '50s and '60s. Built within the last two years for higher-level enlisted Soldiers and their families, the side-by-side duplexes look like a metro suburb. Pizza delivery drivers make their way through the winding streets at dinner time, and toys and ATVs take up spots on driveways. Children wander from house to house, searching for playmates, and it's assumed someone will always look out for them.

Behind almost every front door live anxieties and demands that anyone outside this world might find difficult to comprehend, let alone live with.

Lauren Williams, whose husband returned from Afghanistan in February as a flight medic, qualifies for food stamps because of the relatively low pay of a Soldier with the rank of specialist -- \$23,000 to slightly under \$28,000 a year, depending on experience.

After three deployments to Iraq, two to Korea and one to Kuwait, Amy Blackston has calculated that she and her husband have been together only five of the 11 years they've been married. During her husband's last deployment, her parents moved to Clarksville from Georgia to help with her five children. She was an Army medic herself before giving up her military career after the birth of her third child. When she and her husband were deployed to Iraq, they signed over guardianship of their two oldest children to her parents. By the time she and her husband returned, the kids didn't know who they were.

"When I experienced that, I was, like, 'I'm done,'" she said.

About a year and a half ago, a Soldier in the same unit as Blackston's husband became mentally unstable and fired an entire clip of bullets into his wife, killing her. A few months ago, a Soldier in the rear detachment of Brandi Beattie's husband murdered his wife on post.

Williams said the stresses of multiple deployments manifest themselves in many ways.

"You're under the limelight, negative and positive, and that wears a toll on all of our husbands," she said. "They come home, and it's completely different than when they left."

The toll is so well understood that it's largely accepted in silence.

Beattie, whose husband is serving in Afghanistan, has started a Facebook page called Diapers and Deployments as a way to connect with other families in the Fort Campbell community. The links have proved invaluable, not just for trading shopping tips or setting up a play date, but also for when something bad happens far away. When the phone calls, texts and e-mails from overseas suddenly stop, one wife will call another to see if that couple is still in touch. If a chain of calls reveals that no one has had contact, they know there has been a casualty or injury and the base is on blackout.

"Somebody is hurt, you already know that," Beattie said. "As selfish as it is, you just sit down and you pray it's not your Soldier."

As much as 25 percent of Clarksville attorney Michael Williamson's practice consists of handling disputes related to Soldiers from Fort Campbell, from divorce and child custody cases to property troubles. Williamson has filed divorce papers against Soldiers he's never met; the paperwork comes back from a combat zone, signed. The case of one of his clients, an Army captain sent to

<http://www.military.com/news/article/battle-within-campbell-may-decide-war-on-suicide.html>
Afghanistan, is an example of how muddy domestic life can become in the military. The captain's wife took the couple's 3-year-old daughter home to Alabama and the captain is struggling for shared custody. The wife claimed in a deposition that she discovered him one night crawling around the couple's house, thinking he was hunting for the Taliban. She maintains he suffers from PTSD. The captain produced paperwork from the Army saying he doesn't suffer from the stress disorder, but the wife's attorney is claiming the Army is covering for him.

Hypervigilant

Fort Campbell and next-door neighbors Clarksville, Tenn., and Oak Grove, Ky., are inextricably linked. With 23,000 workers, the base is the largest employer in both Kentucky and Tennessee.

Since 2009, 35 percent of the suicides among Soldiers based here have occurred in the cities surrounding the post; 35 percent have occurred elsewhere while Soldiers were on leave; 16 percent have occurred in a combat zone, and 13 percent have occurred on base.

Clarksville's leaders walk a fine line between demanding Soldiers toe the line in town, and knowing that the town plays a critical role in spotting and throwing a lifeline to struggling Soldiers. Clarksville Police Chief Al Rivers Ansley meets quarterly with base commanders, exchanging information about trouble spots in town that may have to be declared "off limits" to Soldiers. A former member of the military himself, Ansley said it's not uncommon for his cops to give a ride home to a drunken Soldier who hasn't committed a crime or to contact the base when they respond to a call involving a Soldier.

"This is a military town, many of us are ex-military, so I have a strong bond for what they do, and I respect the fact that the general wants to hold his people accountable, cares about them, doesn't want them to get in trouble," Ansley said. Police "have to understand what some of these guys have been through," he adds.

No Army of One

On a recent overnight shift in the district that abuts Fort Campbell, Clarksville police officer Keith Jones responded to a report of people smoking pot in a pickup outside a house shortly after beginning his 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. shift. Cops pulled the truck over after a short chase. Inside the cab, police found marijuana seeds, several bullets and an empty magazine for a semi-automatic rifle. The driver didn't have a license. One passenger was on probation. The other passenger was a 20-year-old woman, pregnant. The truck belonged to her husband, a Soldier on a deployment.

Police Sgt. Dave Gailbraith, a former Army master sergeant, said the scenario was typical of the scenes that confront police, and sometimes returning Soldiers.

"The guy comes home from war, his wife is pregnant and it may or may not be his. Maybe his checking account is cleaned out. Maybe someone new is sleeping in his bed and wearing his clothes. You think those are the kinds of things that would lead someone to hurt himself?"

On another call, the wife of a deployed Soldier had returned to their Clarksville home to find the front door kicked in.

Jones, who has been with the department three years, is one of the few members without military experience. But his wife is a supply sergeant on base with a deployment to Iraq scheduled. His first week of solo patrols brought his first dispatch to a military suicide, a Soldier recently returned from a deployment, drunk and despondent over the friends he'd lost. Friends took one gun from him but didn't know about the other he kept.

"It was definitely a life-changing event for me, something that no one can be prepared to see," Jones said.

<http://www.military.com/news/article/battle-within-campbell-may-decide-war-on-suicide.html>
While suicides are down on the base so far this year, the Army doesn't know if that's due to its new efforts or the simple fact that so many Soldiers are away at war. As many as 24,000 Soldiers are expected to return to Fort Campbell from Afghanistan and Iraq by the end of the year.

At Fort Campbell, Army leaders now believe that part of the answer lies in teaching Soldiers that sucking it up is no longer the time-honored tradition it has been for centuries.

The short-lived "Army of One" recruiting slogan has been replaced on the base with posters that vow "No Soldier Stands Alone."

'Band of brothers'

Despite the Army's efforts and its use of the latest in technology, there is no simple test that can predict when a Soldier will commit suicide.

"But we can see people having problems at home, people having problems with their finances," Varney, the suicide-prevention coordinator said. "We can see people showing up late to work. We can see people living their entire weekend for the sole purpose of getting drunk. If we can educate our community that these are the key warning signs that an individual is at risk, I sincerely think that we can save lives."

Back at the All American Tattoo Company, the finishing touches were being put on Sgt. Cummings' arm. It combined an eagle, an American flag, the Japanese symbol of the 101st's Third Brigade Combat Team, and these words: "We few, we happy few, we band of brothers. For he today that sheds his blood with me shall always be my brother."

Male Military Spouses Cope With Added Challenges, Expert Says

By Elaine Sanchez

American Forces Press Service, 3 August 2011

WASHINGTON, Aug. 3, 2011 – Brian Campbell knew some challenges were in store for him after he left his Navy career to follow his military wife across the country.

But what he didn't count on were the additional challenges brought on not by his status as a military spouse, but by his gender.

“I was the first [nonmilitary] male spouse in that command ever,” Campbell said in a podcast posted on Military OneSource.

Seeking social connections, Campbell looked for a spouses' club at their new installation, but instead, found a wives' club.

“I didn't fit into that organization very well,” he said. “In a lot of instances, when you're talking about a spouses' organization, you're going to be the only male in the room.”

Campbell eventually found the social interaction he craved by reaching out to men within his wife's command. These connections are vital, he said, and can “help build that social organization that can be lacking for you as a male spouse.”

As a small segment of the overall military population, it can be difficult for service members' civilian husbands to figure out where they fit in, but building strong support networks can help to ward off feelings of isolation, said Scott Stanley, a research professor from the University of Denver and a military family expert. According to the 2010 Military Family Life Project, just 5 percent of active duty service members' civilian spouses are male.

“While things have changed a lot in society and changed a lot in the military, it's still more typical for people to think of the male as the warrior,” Stanley said in a Military OneSource podcast.

“There's a lot to work out and a lot to figure out, and it's clear that it's difficult for some couples.”

Stanley cited a study he's part of that's following Army couples over time to gauge how they're doing. Evidence shows that civilian men married to a service member are twice or a little more than twice as likely to divorce, he said.

“It's really clear even in the divorce data that this is something that's even trickier than what the average military couple is going through,” he noted.

Part of the difficulty, Stanley explained, is people don't understand the male role when it's the female service member who is deployed. “A lot of these men are sort of swimming in a whole new part of the pool, if you will, without really knowing exactly where to go or what to do or what sort of supports to seek.”

Compounding this, some men may find their spouse role clashes with their sense of who they are as a male, or their perception of who they're supposed to be. And in some cases, he said, men may be less inclined than women to seek support or to open up about their struggles.

“They may feel extra uncomfortable, at least some men might, because of the nature of this: ‘Well, my wife is going off to war, and I'm here watching the kids,’” he said.

Military families have access to a vast array of support programs, Stanley noted, however, many are focused on connecting with the service members' wives.

“You have all these support systems where it's really easy for the wife of a service member to walk in the room, immediately see a lot of other people like her, and start connecting in an environment that's been created to be female friendly,” he said.

<http://www.defense.gov//News/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=64912>

While service members' husbands may feel out of place in these settings, they still can create a strong support network and social connections. Stanley suggested they develop friendships with other couples who have the same dynamic. That way, he said, they'll gain a friend with whom they can "blow off steam," as well as someone who can relate to their complaints and concerns.

Chaplains and counselors, he added, are other avenues of emotional support. People can connect with a counselor through the TRICARE military health care system or through their installation's family support center. People who live away from an installation can call Military OneSource at 1-800-342-9647 to connect with a counselor.

Campbell advised his fellow male spouses to look into installation-sponsored trips or to find other men who share the same interests, such as bike riding or chess. The local community also can be a great source of support, he added.

"If you can find an organization, a club, a church, a civic group, something in the local area that you can feel a part of, that's what you need to do," he said. "That's what's important: feeling like you belong in the community."

While male spouses may feel isolated at times, Stanley noted, they're not alone. "They may or may not be talking about it with other guys, but there are a lot of men out there who are going through this and feeling it," he said.

"But you are really in this," he added, "so you have to kind of figure out what's going to work for you to cope with this in the best way you can at this time, because that's going to be the best thing for your marriage, best thing for your family and the best thing for you down the line."

Miscellaneous

Admiral gets two stars and a president

By Corinne Reilly

The Virginian-Pilot, 3 August 2011



Rear Adm. Nora Tyson, who entered the Navy in 1979 in an administrative post common to female officers at the time, now leads 6,000 men and women in a carrier strike group. Tyson has been in the Navy for more than 30 years and has commanded the amphibious assault ship Bataan (Steve Earley/The Virginian-Pilot)

Rear Adm. Nora Tyson, the first woman to command a Navy carrier strike group, was promoted to a two-star rank aboard the carrier George H.W. Bush on Monday.

The occasion included a special surprise: the participation of the ship's namesake.

The former president administered Tyson's oath of office via video teleconference from his summer home in Kennebunkport, Maine.

"That is something that, obviously, I will never forget as long as I live," Tyson said.

About 50 of her sailors attended the ceremony, the Navy said in a news release. The Bush's commanding officer, Capt. Brian E. Luther, helped pin the second stars on her shoulders.

Tyson commands Carrier Strike Group 2. She's been in the Navy for more than 30 years and previously commanded the amphibious assault ship Bataan.

The Bush, the Navy's newest aircraft carrier, is in the Middle East on its maiden deployment. Among other missions, it's supporting operations in Iraq and Afghanistan

Don't compare gay rights, civil rights

By Ellis Cose

USA Today, August 4, 2011

It has become fashionable to wrap the gay rights movement in the mantle of America's earlier struggle for racial equality. As Sen. John McCain's daughter, Meghan, put it during one televised interview, "Gay marriage and everything having to do with the gay rights movement (is) my generation's civil rights issue." To make that assertion is not only to claim moral legitimacy but to invite comparison with the epic efforts that ultimately forced America to end its homegrown racial caste system.

Certainly, there are similarities between the movement for racial equality and the movement for gay rights. Both movements share the goals of ending discrimination and fostering decency. But in many respects, they are more different than they are alike. To point that out does not diminish the importance of the battle for equal treatment for gays. It merely acknowledges that each battle must be understood on its own terms.

Perhaps the most enduring lesson of the civil rights struggle is something that has little applicability to the fight for gay rights — and which also underscores its fundamental difference from it. And that has to do with the weight of history — with the legacy of subjugation that is not simply wiped away with the passage of prejudice and time. Decades after the civil rights movement proclaimed victory, blacks are still trapped in ghettos and prisons out of all proportion to their numbers. Black youngsters are much more likely than whites to be stuck in second-rate schools — or in lower tracks in decent schools — and to face a future of joblessness or marginal employment. The obstacles gays face are somewhat different.

Racial identity changes everything

In quest for gay and civil rights, are there striking similarities?

In some sense, the "don't ask, don't tell" program makes the difference clear. The thoroughly discredited policy (most recently repudiated by the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals) essentially ordered gay soldiers to stay closeted — to "pass," in other words, for straight. That would have been roughly equivalent, in racially segregated times, to demanding that black would-be soldiers "pass" for white. And many blacks did pass for white. But most could not. The racial markers were evident enough that, for most people, there was no hiding from the American system of classification. One's racial identity, for the most part, was as clear as the nose on one's face. That ability to instantly and easily (albeit, imprecisely) categorize was one thing that made it possible to organize an entire society around the principle of racial difference. It also allowed the practice of racism to be relentlessly oppressive, as entire communities were cordoned off and disadvantage was handed down through generations.

With gays, we are not looking at roped-off communities or at the intergenerational transmission of disadvantage. We are certainly looking at the workings of prejudice, which, in all its guises, ought to be condemned. But because that prejudice is not linked to a system of economic oppression that will leave gay communities permanently incapacitated, the lack of social acceptance faced by gays

— and even the violence visited upon those identified as gay — will not necessarily haunt their descendants generations after attitudes begin to change. So while the gay struggle is about changing attitudes, and laws that grew out of bigoted thinking, it is not about creating a pathway to opportunity (though gay marriage does confer certain economic rights) where none now exists.

Structural barriers in place

The fight for racial equality was really two altogether different struggles. One was for tolerance and acceptance — and an end to socially sanctioned racial violence. That battle has essentially been won. The tougher battle, for removing structural barriers to opportunity, is far from over.

When it comes to combating intolerance, the gay movement has much in common with the struggle for racial equality. And it can certainly draw hope from that struggle, which taught us that bigotry can be fought, that prejudice can fade — if not in one generation, in the next, provided that a society works at it. And clearly we are working at it. New York's recent sanctioning of same-sex marriage and Rhode Island's passage of a civil union bill are merely the latest signs of that.

This is not to say that certain communities should not work harder, including some conservative sectors of the black community, which have been hostile to gay appeals for acceptance. But as surely as the civil rights movement led to the mainstreaming of easily integrated blacks, the gay movement is leading to the mainstreaming of conventional-minded gays. And, eventually, we will look back, with slightly embarrassed bemusement, at the time when people seriously debated the morality of same-gender couples falling in love. We will chuckle that the U.S. government came up with anything as ridiculous as "don't ask, don't tell," and that we ever believed sexual orientation could tell us anything about another person's worth.

But that moment will not come any sooner by suggesting a false equivalency — or by arguing that the end of one movement has flowed naturally into another. It would be much more fruitful, I think, to ponder how the two movements can co-exist, and perhaps even reinforce each other, as they pursue their related, but also very different, goals.

Ellis Cose is the author of *The End of Anger: A New Generation's Take on Race and Rage*.

Putting profits ahead of hiring vets

The Virginian-Pilot, July 29, 2011

As missions wind down in Iraq and Afghanistan, troops returning home from battle are facing a struggle of a different sort: finding a job.

The unemployment rate for young male veterans is more than triple the overall national unemployment rate, which hit 9.2 percent last month. In the past three months, according to the U.S. Department of Labor, the average unemployment for male veterans ages 18 to 24 is 28.3 percent.

Those figures paint a bleak future for the young soldiers, Marines, sailors and airmen who have served their country and are now eager to transition back into civilian life and continue contributing to society.

Multiple factors appear to be at play in keeping many of them out of work, and reversing the trend will require help from all corners: the government, private industry, nonprofits and the veterans themselves.

Federal officials have stepped up efforts to connect more veterans to meaningful work, or at least provide them with a better path toward achieving it. The revised GI Bill provides benefits for veterans to further their education and strengthen their career skills. The Department of Veterans Affairs runs websites advertising job openings and offering career-related counseling, including resume and interview tips.

A Chamber of Commerce program, launched in March, includes job fairs catering to wounded veterans and their spouses.

And, as Reuters recently reported, officials say they're evaluating ways to better inform employers of the specific leadership and technical skills that veterans, from infantrymen to medical technicians, acquire during the course of their service.

Those efforts are necessary, but their effect also will be determined by whether veterans take advantage of them.

More, however, is clearly needed, particularly from private-sector employers unwilling to take a hard look at applicants - those who have worn this nation's uniform and those who haven't.

In recent months, many companies have posted double-digit increases in profit. The strong performance is a result of shedding jobs during the recession and spreading duties across fewer employees, even after the economy began showing signs of improvement.

That strategy has proven stellar for the corporate bottom line and for shareholders. But for nearly everyone else, it has been disastrous. By preventing qualified job-seekers from landing work and a decent wage, it is needlessly suppressing consumer demand and hindering economic recovery.

Worse, it's denying the people who have fought to protect the American Dream from being able to achieve it.

Senate approves Dempsey to lead Joint Chiefs

New JCS vice chair, Army chief of staff, and Chief of Naval Operations also approved

By Rick Maze - Staff writer
Army Times, 2 August 2011

The Senate cleared the decks of thousands of pending military nominations on Tuesday, including confirming Army Gen. Martin Dempsey to become the next chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Raymond Odierno to become Army chief of staff and Navy Adm. Jonathan Greenert to be the Chief of Naval Operations.



Scott Applewhite / The Associated Press Army Gen. Martin Dempsey testifies July 26 on Capitol Hill in Washington before the Senate Armed Services Committee hearing to be the next Joint Chiefs chairman.

The list of confirmations approved Aug. 2 includes Navy Adm. James Winnefeld Jr. becoming the JCS vice chairman; Air Force Gen. William Fraser III to be the U.S. Transportation Command commander; and Army Lt. Gen.

Charles Jacoby to receive a fourth star and become head of the U.S. Northern Command and the North American Aerospace Defense Command.

The approvals came as the Senate was poised to leave until after Labor Day.

In addition to filling the senior posts, the Senate also confirmed 2,698 routine promotions for Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps officers and approved the nominations for two assistant defense secretaries. Madelyn Creedon was confirmed to be assistant defense secretary for global strategic affairs posts and Alan Estevez was confirmed to be assistant defense secretary for logistics and materiel readiness.

The nominations were approved by voice vote and with no discussion, and put in place one of the single-largest changes in decades in military leadership that began with Leon Panetta replacing Robert Gates as defense secretary on July 1.

Dempsey, who will succeed Navy Adm. Mike Mullen as the military's top uniformed officer, has been the Army chief of staff only since April, but was picked for the post when President Obama decided to pass over Marine Gen. James "Hoss" Cartwright, the current JCS vice chairman, as Mullen's replacement.

<http://www.fayobserver.com/articles/2011/07/31/1111772?sac=Mil>

Soldiers and suicide: Widow says despite pleas, help never came

By John Ramsey, Staff writer

Fayetteville Observer, 1 August 2011

Three months before her husband shot himself in the family's garage, Nicole Simmons said, she met with a chaplain and her husband's commanders at Fort Bragg.

Help me, and help my husband, Simmons said she told Lt. Col. Marcus Evans and Command Sgt. Maj. Herbert Kirkover.

Her husband, Sgt. Adrian Simmons, had changed, she said she told them.

Simmons, who is pregnant with their second child, thought he was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. He couldn't control his temper, and his memory was terrible, she said.

"I said, 'Something is wrong with my husband. He is saying he wants to blow his brains out. He is getting so short-tempered, so short-fused, anything will make him blow,' " Simmons said she told the commanders. "I said, 'I think he needs a psychological evaluation.' "

Soon after that meeting, the 24-year-old Simmons said, a soldier came to the family's Hoke County home to confiscate her husband's personal guns. Hoke County Child Protective Services visited and determined that the couple's 2-year-old son was safe as long as the guns remained out of the house.

But the Army never sent her husband to a counselor, Simmons said.

Now she's fighting for answers. So far, she said, she's not getting any.

Simmons said that after her husband died July 5, soldiers told her the Army was opening an investigation into what happened. But she wasn't contacted for an interview until Wednesday, hours after the Observer sent an email to the 82nd Airborne Division asking why no one had talked with her.

"How can they be doing an investigation if nobody has been to the most important person who went to the command?" Simmons asked. "I want to know why, when I went to command, no one admitted my husband for an evaluation."

The 82nd Airborne Division didn't respond to questions about Simmons' allegations or requests to talk to her husband's chain of command. It has a policy of not discussing ongoing investigations.

Suicide prevention has been a major focus in the Army since 2008, when the number of soldiers who killed themselves doubled from four years earlier. The Army is spending millions of dollars to study suicides and millions more on programs aimed at treating soldiers who may be at risk.

At Fort Bragg, eight active-duty soldiers are thought to have committed suicide this year, which is on pace to match or surpass the 14 who took their lives in 2010.

Col. Chad McRee, who leads Fort Bragg's suicide prevention task force, took over the position from a civilian, he said, in part to change the perception of suicide prevention. It's seen as a mission now instead of a service, McRee said.

Fort Bragg has several programs aimed at helping soldiers who may be thinking of suicide, McRee said.

Soldiers carry a card with instructions for helping their friends. It's called an ACE card, for "ask, care, escort."

Other soldiers are trained in suicide-intervention programs. Fort Bragg also has placed behavioral health clinics in primary care facilities and other nontraditional places to try to reduce the stigma of seeking mental health care.

<http://www.fayobserver.com/articles/2011/07/31/1111772?sac=Mil>

No one seems to have an explanation as to why Sgt. Adrian Simmons - whose job was to dole out weapons to other soldiers - fell through the cracks.

Nicole Simmons is the only person speaking publicly about the case. She has nothing documenting that she met with her husband's commanders and the chaplain to discuss his behavior. She has only her word.

Todd Conormon, a Fayetteville lawyer who specializes in military law, said it doesn't make sense that investigators had not interviewed Simmons.

Her account of the meeting with commanders is troubling, too, Conormon said.

"If that's true that they didn't follow up on that (meeting) with an evaluation to determine whether there is some risk, that would be surprising to me," Conormon said. "If there's indication that they didn't, that probably should be investigated."

Rajeev Ramchand, who studies military suicides for the RAND Corp., said a situation such as the one Simmons describes raises serious questions.

Many people say things about killing themselves after a hard day at work and dismiss it later as a joke, so it can be hard to tell who's being serious, Ramchand said.

"(But) if she's concerned enough to bring it to someone's attention, she knows it's probably more than a thing that you say after a stressful day," he said. "When you hear of cases that don't involve behavioral health care, you kind of have to ask why. Involving the behavioral health system as soon as possible is very important."

Nicole Simmons said the April meeting with commanders wasn't the first time she asked the Army to help her husband.

In 2009, a year after they were married, she said, he told her he wanted to shoot her.

She called Fort Bragg's Family Advocacy Program. They sent him to anger-management classes, which only made him angrier, she said.

Simmons said she asked Family Advocacy for a copy of her file after her husband died but was told she needed a court order to get it.

Simmons said she stayed with her husband because she didn't think the temper was his fault. She thought it was caused by PTSD.

Simmons said she had once seen him reduced to tears when talking about his squad leader being killed in Iraq. He just needed help to get back to normal, she thought.

For a time, she said, her husband seemed to get better. But after two deployments to Iraq and eight years of jumping from airplanes without a major injury, Sgt. Adrian Simmons slipped in a drainage ditch and broke his leg and ankle while walking to his office last winter.

Simmons had always wanted to be a police officer after leaving the military. But the injury ended that dream. Once an infantryman in the 2nd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, Simmons was spending his days in an arms room around millions of dollars worth of weapons.

Nicole Simmons said her husband's broken ankle and leg started him on a downward spiral. She said he should have been removed from the arms room immediately after she met with his commanders. He told her that working in the arms room made him want to kill himself, she said.

Her husband was supposed to leave the Army on Feb. 9, Nicole Simmons said, but his leave date kept getting extended so he could continue with medical treatment. Aug. 9 would have been his last day in the Army.

<http://www.fayobserver.com/articles/2011/07/31/1111772?sac=Mil>

Instead, Simmons woke up on the morning of July 5 and noticed that her husband's bag, shoes and computer were still at home. She looked outside. The truck was still there. She called his mother, then went to get their son some juice and noticed a note on the refrigerator. It directed her to look at his computer. On the desktop was a suicide note:

"I am not sorry. I mentally was not here anymore. My temper is going and my memory was too. I didn't need help. I just wanted it to stop."

Experts say it's difficult to evaluate whether the Army's suicide-prevention efforts are working.

Armywide, suicides rose from 139 in 2008 to 162 in 2009 and remained nearly steady with 155 in 2010. This year, through six months, 77 soldiers have committed suicide.

Although the rate has not dropped, researchers and military officials say it's impossible to know whether it would have kept climbing if not for the prevention programs.

In October 2008, the Army began a partnership with the National Institute of Mental Health for a \$50 million study to analyze risk factors for suicide and factors that help prevent it. Known as the Army Study to Assess Risk and Resilience in Service members, it is three studies under one umbrella. Researchers at the National Institute of Mental Health and four universities are looking at historical data to see if there are common links to determine if specific risks link soldiers who attempt or commit suicide.

They also are surveying and following new soldiers in a longitudinal study that begins the second day of basic training. In addition, they will study soldiers who have been in the Army to research how different experiences affect soldiers psychologically.

Michael Schoenbaum, a senior adviser at the National Institute of Mental Health, said the idea is to be able to target at-risk soldiers and get them help or to figure out if some risks can be reduced without compromising the military's mission.

Researchers have found that married soldiers are less likely to commit suicide than single or divorced soldiers. Relationship problems, on the other hand, are common in cases of suicide. But they're also common in cases that don't end in suicide, so it's impossible to narrow the field of at-risk soldiers by simply pinpointing ones with relationship troubles, Schoenbaum said.

If researchers find factors with recruiting or training, those risks could be addressed, said Schoenbaum, who is among the researchers working on the Army STARRS study.

Pinpointing risks that lead to suicide isn't easy.

"Suicide isn't like food poisoning where you just figure out what is the spoiled ingredient in the salad bar and you go and you remove the tuna salad and then you've solved the problem," Schoenbaum said. "There are many complex factors underlying suicide. Most people who experience any of those factors never attempt to kill themselves, let alone actually kill themselves."

David Rudd, dean of the University of Utah department of psychology, is a former Army psychologist and former president of the American Association of Suicidology. He also is part of a current study treating soldiers who attempt suicide at Fort Carson, Colo.

Rudd said the most important thing he has learned so far is that help can be more effective the sooner someone responds to a problem.

In many ways, he said, the uptick in suicides is related to the past decade spent fighting two wars.

Experts know deployment increases the risk for mental health problems, and mental health problems increase the risk for suicide, he said.

<http://www.fayobserver.com/articles/2011/07/31/1111772?sac=Mil>

Another way to look at it: There have always been suicides in the military, at a rate of about 10 per 100,000. But the spike in suicides has been seen among all troops, including those who have never deployed. It's not just soldiers who have seen the horrors of war.

So the question becomes, to what extent is the increase in suicides attributable to the current conflicts, Rudd said.

Even though about a third of people who commit suicide in the Army have never deployed, the wars still may play a part in their stress, he said.

"The stress is felt by the system as a whole. It's not just isolated to those that are doing the fighting," Rudd said.

The research commissioned by the Army and the Department of Defense has the potential to change the way the nation treats suicide prevention, a subject that Rudd believes hasn't had enough rigorous scientific study in the civilian world.

But programs geared toward issues such as reducing the stigma against seeking help take a long time to work their way through the force.

Another part of the problem is people don't know what to do when someone is suicidal, Rudd said.

"People are more likely to respond to someone having a heart attack than they are to respond to someone having warning signs of suicide," he said.

A major aspect of Fort Bragg's suicide prevention programs, McRee said, is making sure people do know how to respond to those warning signs.

After meeting with the commanders in April, Nicole Simmons said, her husband became calmer than he had been in months. At the time, Simmons thought he was working through his personal issues. Now, she thinks he was resigned to end his own life.

Without telling anyone, he had changed his life insurance policy to put his mother in charge of the funeral. Simmons wonders why nobody noticed the change at such an odd time, weeks before he was set to leave the military.

After her husband's death, Simmons began wearing his dog tags around her neck. She hasn't removed them since he died. The last note he wrote remains on the refrigerator. She can quote his suicide letter nearly by heart.

She often wonders what she could have done differently.

"I'm his wife. I feel like I should've been able to do something. I should've been able to stop him," Simmons said. "What could I have done differently that would've made my husband want help before he took his life?"

Just as often, the 24-year-old pregnant widow wonders why leaders in the 82nd Airborne Division didn't refer her husband to a counselor.

She's living minute by minute, because the future is so hard to think about.

She has a baby due in February and a 2-year-old son to raise.

To make matters worse, she said, she was told last week that she won't be eligible for military benefits if investigators conclude that her husband's death was unrelated to the Army.

So she is fighting back and looking for answers to what she believes is the one central question: Why didn't the Army help her husband?

"I refuse to not let my husband be heard anymore," Simmons said. "This is people's lives and mental issues that need to be dealt with and need to be helped."

Vets with PTSD, government reach settlement

By **KIMBERLY HEFLING** Associated Press
Army Times, 29 July 2011

WASHINGTON—More than a thousand Iraq and Afghanistan veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder would be given lifetime disability retirement benefits such as military health insurance under the terms of a settlement reached between the government and the veterans.

Attorneys for the veterans, the Justice Department and the military jointly filed a motion on Thursday that spelled out the terms. The settlement must be approved by a judge to be final.

It also affects another thousand veterans who already had lifetime retirement benefits, but would receive a higher disability rating from the military. All of the veterans affected by the settlement would potentially receive new monthly disability compensation.

The settlement stems from a 2008 class action lawsuit filed in the U.S. Court of Federal Claims in Washington by veterans unable to serve, at least in part, because of the anxiety disorder who said they were illegally denied benefits.

The law requires the military to give a disability rating of at least 50 percent to troops discharged for PTSD, but each of the plaintiffs received a disability less than that, said Bart Stichman, co-executive director of the National Veterans Legal Services Program, a nonprofit organization that represented the veterans.

As part of the lawsuit, the military in January 2010 said it would expeditiously review the cases. But attorneys for the veterans grew concerned about the pace in which the cases have been reviewed by military boards. One of the boards reviewing the cases was moving so slow, it was going to take seven years for all the cases to be reviewed, Stichman said. That led to settlement talks.

Timothy Martin, 32, a former specialist in the Tennessee National Guard, who struggles with panic attacks and nightmares related to his war service in Iraq, would benefit from the settlement. He said the health care benefits from the settlement would help with health care for his kids, ages 2 and 5.

"The extra money, the back pay, the insurance, it's going to really help change our lives," Martin said.

Each of the veterans in the suit was released from the military between Dec. 17, 2002, and Oct. 14, 2008.

PTSD is an anxiety disorder that can develop after a terrifying event in which a person felt physically harmed or threatened.

Religion

Air Force yanks nuclear ethics course

Biblical content puts presentation under fire

By Markeshia Ricks - Staff writer
Air Force Times, 4 August 2011

The Air Force has pulled an ethics training course for new nuclear missile officers because it contains Christian-based themes that some airmen objected to.

The course was taught to about 150 students a year by a chaplain at Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif. For the past two decades, all missile officers have taken the ethics training as part of their orientation.

The Air Force halted the course July 27 — the same day Truthout.org [published an article](#) and posted training materials that contained images of a Christian saint and quotes from the Old and New Testaments of the Bible.

Truthout.org received the training materials from the [Military Religious Freedom Foundation](#), which obtained them through a Freedom of Information Act request.

Air Force officials decided to stop the training and review it as soon as they were made aware of the content of the presentation, said Maj. Rosaire Bushey, an Air Force spokesman. The material contains “discussion points regarding ethical considerations and uses Old and New Testament examples,” Bushey said in an email. “It’s being reviewed to determine the need for the training and if so, the most appropriate approach,” Bushey said.

Mikey Weinstein, founder and president of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation and an advisory board member to Truthout.org, said 31 airmen had contacted the foundation about the training. The foundation had complained to top Air Force brass and was prepared to file a lawsuit if the training continued, he said.

Former Air Force Capt. Damon Bosetti, who told truth-out.org that he went through the training in 2006, said he and other airmen referred to the religious portions of the training as the “Jesus loves nukes” speech.

The training material includes a 43-slide PowerPoint presentation that draws upon examples from the Bible and discusses St. Augustine’s qualifications for a just war and the Christian just-war theory. In the Old Testament, for example, “David is a warrior who is also a ‘man after God’s own heart,’” and “Hebrews 11:32-34 uses as examples of true faith those OT believers who engaged in war in a righteous way,” one slide says.

Another slide quotes German rocket scientist and former Nazi Party member Wernher von Braun after his surrender to Americans in June 1945: “We wanted to see the world spared another conflict such as Germany had just been through, and we felt that only by surrendering such a weapon to people who are guided by the Bible could such an assurance to the world be best secured.”

The PowerPoint also cites George Washington, Union Army Gen. Joshua Chamberlain and Confederate Gen. Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson as examples of men with strong religious convictions who fought in wars.

While much of the presentation is aimed at preparing airmen for potential internal conflicts over their faith and job responsibilities that could involve killing others, one slide notes that fewer than 20 percent of soldiers in World War II shot at the enemy.

Another slide, toward the end of the presentation, shows the “Poised for Peace” missile wing patch with a reminder underneath: “The focus is not ‘making war,’ but ‘keeping peace.’”

http://www.usatoday.com/news/opinion/forum/2011-07-31-atheism-morality-evolution-religion_n.htm

As atheists know, you can be good without God

By Jerry A. Coyne

USA Today, 1 August 2011

One cold Chicago day last February, I watched a Federal Express delivery man carry an armful of boxes to his truck. In the middle of the icy street, he slipped, scattering the boxes and exposing himself to traffic. Without thinking, I ran into the street, stopped cars, hoisted the man up and helped him recover his load. Pondering this afterward, I realized that my tiny act of altruism had been completely instinctive; there was no time for calculation.

We see the instinctive nature of moral acts and judgments in many ways: in the automatic repugnance we feel when someone such as Bernie Madoff bilks the gullible and trusting, in our disapproval of the person who steals food from the office refrigerator, in our admiration for someone who risks his life to save a drowning child. And although some morality comes from reason and persuasion — we must learn, for example, to share our toys — much of it seems intuitive and inborn.

Many Americans, including Francis Collins, director of the National Institutes of Health and an evangelical Christian, see instinctive morality as both a gift from God and strong evidence for His existence.

As a biologist, I see belief in God-given morality as American's biggest impediment to accepting the fact of evolution. "Evolution," many argue, "could never have given us feelings of kindness, altruism and morality. For if we were merely evolved beasts, we would *act* like beasts. Surely our good behavior, and the moral sentiments that promote it, reflect impulses that God instilled in our soul."

So while morality supposedly comes from God, immorality is laid at the door of Charles Darwin, who has been blamed for everything from Nazism to the shootings in Columbine.

Why it couldn't be God

But though both moral and immoral behaviors can be *promoted* by religions, morality itself — either in individual behavior or social codes — simply cannot come from the will or commands of a God. This has been recognized by philosophers since the time of Plato.

Religious people can appreciate this by considering Plato's question: Do actions become moral simply because they're dictated by God, or are they dictated by God because they are moral? It doesn't take much thought to see that the right answer is the second one. Why? Because if God commanded us to do something obviously *immoral*, such as kill our children or steal, it wouldn't automatically become OK. Of course, you can argue that God would never sanction something like that because he's a completely moral being, but then you're still using some idea of morality that is independent of God. Either way, it's clear that even for the faithful, God cannot be the source of morality but at best a transmitter of some *human-generated morality*.

This isn't just philosophical rumination, because God — at least the God of Christians and Jews — repeatedly sanctioned or ordered immoral acts in the Old Testament. These include slavery (Leviticus 25:44-46), genocide (Deuteronomy 7:1-2; 20:16-18), the slaying of adulterers and homosexuals, and the stoning of non-virgin brides (Leviticus 20:10, 20:13, Deuteronomy 22:20-21).

Was God being moral when, after some children made fun of the prophet Elisha's bald head, he made bears rip 42 of them to pieces (2 Kings 2:23-24)? Even in the New Testament, Jesus preaches principles of questionable morality, barring heaven to the wealthy (Matthew 19:24), approving the beating of slaves (Luke 12:47-48), and damning sinners to the torments of hell (Mark 9:47-48). Similar sentiments appear in the Quran.

http://www.usatoday.com/news/opinion/forum/2011-07-31-atheism-morality-evolution-religion_n.htm

Now, few of us see genocide or stoning as moral, so Christians and Jews pass over those parts of the Bible with judicious silence. But that's just the point. There is something else — some other source of morality — that supersedes biblical commands. When religious people pick and choose their morality from Scripture, they clearly do so based on *extrareligious* notions of what's moral.

Further, the idea that morality is divinely inspired doesn't jibe with the fact that religiously based ethics have changed profoundly over time. Slavery was once defended by churches on scriptural grounds; now it's seen as grossly immoral. Mormons barred blacks from the priesthood, also on religious grounds, until church leaders had a convenient "revelation" to the contrary in 1978. Catholics once had a list of books considered immoral to read; they did away with that in 1966. Did these adjustments occur because God changed His mind? No, they came from secular improvements in morality that forced religion to clean up its act.

Where, then?

So where does morality come from, if not from God? Two places: evolution and secular reasoning. Despite the notion that beasts behave bestially, scientists studying our primate relatives, such as chimpanzees, see evolutionary rudiments of morality: behaviors that look for all the world like altruism, sympathy, moral disapproval, sharing — even notions of fairness. This is exactly what we'd expect if human morality, like many other behaviors, is built partly on the genes of our ancestors.

And the conditions under which humans evolved are precisely those that would favor the evolution of moral codes: small social groups of big-brained animals. When individuals in a group can get to know, recognize and remember each other, this gives an advantage to genes that make you behave nicely towards others in the group, reward those who cooperate and punish those who cheat. That's how natural selection can build morality. Secular reason adds another layer atop these evolved behaviors, helping us extend our moral sentiments far beyond our small group of friends and relatives — even to animals.

Should we be afraid that a morality based on our genes and our brains is somehow inferior to one handed down from above? Not at all. In fact, it's far *better*, because secular morality has a flexibility and responsiveness to social change that no God-given morality could ever have. Secular morality is what pushes religion to improve its own dogma on issues such as slavery and the treatment of women. Secular morality is what prevents ethically irrelevant matters — what we eat, read or wear, when we work, or whom we have sex with — from being grouped with matters of genuine moral concern, like rape and child abuse. And really, isn't it better to be moral because you've worked out for yourself — in conjunction with your group — the right thing to do, rather than because you want to propitiate a god or avoid punishment in the hereafter?

Nor should we worry that a society based on secular morality will degenerate into lawlessness. That experiment has already been done — in countries such as Sweden and Denmark that are largely filled with non-believers and atheists. I can vouch from experience that secular European nations are full of well-behaved and well-meaning citizens, not criminals and sociopaths running amok. In fact, you can make a good case that those countries, with their liberal social views and extensive aid for the sick, old and disadvantaged, are even more moral than America.

Clearly, you can be good without God.

Jerry A. Coyne is a professor in the Department of Ecology and Evolution at The University of Chicago. His latest book is Why Evolution is True, and his website is www.whyevolutionistrue.com.

In Striving for Diversity, Don't Forget Muslims

BY Captain Kevin Eyer, U.S. navy (Retired)
USNI Magazines, August 2011

There is an urgent call for the immediate and full implementation of diversity throughout the military. Apparently, not only is the diversification of our ranks a moral, legal, and ethical imperative, but we also are told that it is both edifying and an inescapable necessity if we are to ensure sufficient end-strength in the future.

Still, the military is a historically reactionary organization, and this thrust toward diversification has only achieved a sort of critical mass in recent years. Whether it was African-Americans, women, or now, gays, acceptance only occurred when a sufficient and persistent external pressure was applied. Until forced, the military resisted, convinced that these inclusions would disrupt combat efficiency. Regardless of the motive force, though, the military does not do things in half-measures, and today there is an almost religious zealotry attached to the implementation of diversity.

Yet despite this enthusiasm, it is a highly specific sort of diversity that is practiced in the military. While carefully protecting and nurturing identified special groups, there are still those who are on the outside, looking in. For example, while considered to be coarse by some uniformed personnel, it is still perfectly acceptable to openly denigrate and slur Muslims. Just as was the case with gays until very recently, no one inside the military really seems to care. Since Muslims are virtually nonexistent in our ranks—there are twice as many Wiccans in the Air Force as there are Muslims—there is really no one *to* complain. More than that, even American Muslims may be considered by many Americans to be the enemy. Look at the evidence: In November 2009, Major Nidal Malik Hasan killed 12 and wounded 30 at Fort Hood, Texas. Can there be *any* compelling reason to seek to bring more Muslims into the military?

There is. In the case of the Muslim community, the opportunity exists for the military to assume a position of national leadership, rather than reaction. Reaching out to the Muslim community is the right, ethical, moral, and American thing to do, especially for the military, which is a great, if rude, leveling institution of the United States. But if a better reason is required for us to extend a hand to this particular element of our society, then here it is: Consider it to be an initial, important act of national self-preservation.

Examine France, a Western democracy. France is a country roiled with homegrown terrorism. These terrorists are not immigrants freshly arriving from Madrassas in the Sudan, either. They are mainly French citizens, many of whose families have lived in France for generations. Yet despite this, they remain physically, economically, socially, and educationally segregated. They are held apart. The same problem exists in the United Kingdom, which also holds its Muslim population separate from society at large. It seems evident that when Muslims in Western societies are marginalized, they become vulnerable to proselytization and capture by those who would destroy those societies from within.

Of course, the problem is more complex than simply encouraging Muslim enlistment in the military. We will have to work. As it turns out, while we may not be interested in them, they may be equally uninterested in us. According to Ibrahim Hooper of the Council of American-Islamic Relations, “there is a general reluctance to join because Muslims think there is bias against them and career prospects are limited.”

<http://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/2011-08/now-hear>

Resolving this impasse will require a long-term program of outreach to the Muslim community. It must be done, though. While the 1.2 million American Muslims may be seen as a drop in the bucket of the U.S. population, we are, like it or not, waging war with the external Muslim world. At the end of the day, if we cannot win the hearts and minds of our own countrymen, someone else might. And how can we gain the trust of Muslims in Indonesia, Libya, or Egypt if we fail to win the trust of our own?

Ask yourself: What sort of effect would it have in the Muslim community were the Navy to openly court its service? What if Muslims actually *believed* that we want to embrace them as good citizens of the United States? What might that mean to them, as individuals and as a group? It seems that for every Muslim midshipman, petty officer, chief, or captain, the image of the United States as *their* country too must surely grow more assured. Meanwhile, we will have demonstrated that we are good enough to practice diversity—and not just because it is politically expedient.

Captain Eyer retired from the Navy in 2009. He commanded the USS *Chancellorsville* (CG-62), *Shiloh* (CG-67), and *Thomas S. Gates* (CG-51). He is a frequent contributor to *Proceedings*.