



DACOWITS: Articles of Interest

WELLNESS

[Army Takes On Its Own Toxic Leaders](#)

(6 Jan.) NPR, By Daniel Zwerdling

Top commanders in the U.S. Army have announced publicly that they have a problem: They have too many "toxic leaders" — the kind of bosses who make their employees miserable. Many corporations share a similar problem, but in the Army's case, destructive leadership can potentially have life or death consequences. So, some Army researchers are wondering if toxic officers have contributed to soldiers' mental health problems.

[Navy Sex-Assault Program Gives Victims A Voice](#)

(14 Jan.) Florida Times, By Clifford Davis

The Navy's Victim Legal Counsel (VLC) program, headed by Mayport's Capt. Karen Fischer-Anderson, became fully operational on Jan. 1, 2014.

[New DoD Rules For Handling Rape Cases](#)

(19 Jan.) Navy Times, By Patricia Kime

The 2015 defense policy bill recently signed into law orders some significant changes in the way the Pentagon handles sexual assault and rape cases.

ASSIGNMENTS

[General Officer Assignment:](#) Maj. Gen. Heidi V. Brown, deputy director, Test and Assessment, Missile Defense Agency, Redstone Arsenal, Alabama, to director, Global Operations, J-3, U.S. Strategic Command, Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska.

[Women in Service Review Rollout Due in 2016](#)

(12 Jan.) DoD News, By Amaani Lyle

Following the 2013 repeal of the Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule, the secretary of defense will announce final decisions to integrate remaining closed occupations and any approved exceptions to policy on or about Jan. 1, 2016, a Pentagon official reported. <<[Video of Interview](#)>>

[West Point valedictorian wants to join the infantry](#)

(12 Jan.) Army Times, Kevin Lilley

A West Point valedictorian who received her diploma in May from President Obama. A Rhodes Scholar who studies at Oxford and trains with the university's rowing team. The first American woman to graduate from French Commando School. She will attend the Basic Officer Leadership Course in late 2016, likely with two master's degrees under her belt — will make her a better soldier.

[NPC Boss: Fleet Manning Gap Is Lowest In Years](#)

(13 Jan.) Navy Times, By David Larter

Difficulties in filling gaps in fleet billets are at their lowest point in years, suggesting the service has nearly turned the page on chronic under-manning that has stressed the deckplates for most of the past decade.

[CNP: Boost Enlisted Training, Overhaul Officer Promotion](#)

(14 Jan.) Navy Times, By Meghann Myers

The Navy has been using the same promotion system since 1947 and the service's top personnel officer thinks it's time for a change.

[First Female Officer Reports To Submarine USS Minnesota](#)

(14 Jan.) Stars and Stripes, By Steven Beardsley

The first woman to serve aboard a Navy fast-attack submarine has reported to the USS Minnesota. She is one of six officers expected to join fast-attack crews in the months ahead.

EXTRA

Navy boot camp mulls no longer shaving recruits' heads

(8 Jan.) Navy Times, By Mark D. Faram

Women taking part in a three-month pilot program at Recruit Training Command Great Lakes, Illinois, and Officer Training Command Newport, Rhode Island, will not be required to cut their hair short.

Why More Women Need To Share Their Military Experiences

(14 Jan.) Task & Purpose, By Anna Granville

“While an entire generation of millennials are re-inventing the veterans’ narrative as a whole, women still need to be part of that story.”

New DoD Rules For Handling Rape Cases

(NAVY TIMES 19 JAN 15) ... Patricia Kime

The 2015 defense policy bill recently signed into law orders some significant changes in the way the Pentagon handles sexual assault and rape cases.

The changes grant more protections for victims and revamp administrative and legal procedures to ensure commanders and investigative bodies take allegations of sexual assault seriously and handle criminal procedures properly.

While the new measures fall short of the step sought by some lawmakers and advocates – removing the authority of some commanders to decide whether a sexual assault case should be prosecuted in court – the changes overhaul military rules of evidence and give victims more say in how their cases are pursued.

“This legislation further builds on our sweeping, bipartisan reforms that are changing how the military handles sexual violence,” said Sen. Claire McCaskill, D-Mo., a key proponent of overhauling the Defense Department’s sexual assault prosecution procedures.

According to Pentagon estimates, military sex assaults have surged in the past decade, peaking in 2012 at about 26,000, up 37 percent from the previous year.

Also, a number of high-profile cases, including allegations that a soldier ran a prostitution ring at Fort Hood, Texas, and charges of sexual battery against the head of Air Force sexual assault prevention programs (the officer was later acquitted), pushed Congress to make legislative changes and forced the Pentagon to improve its sexual assault prevention programs and reporting procedures.

Defense officials reported in December that the estimated number of sexual assaults is down to 20,000 while reports increased in 2014 by 8 percent to 5,983 – which they say reflects progress both in preventing attacks and encouraging victims to come forward.

Still, with fewer than one-third of total assaults reported, and a sense that estimates are low since sexual assault is a crime that is commonly under-reported, a bipartisan coalition of legislators in the House and Senate pushed for further reform in the annual defense policy bill.

The new law requires commanding officers’ fitness reports to specify whether commanders establish a unit climate amenable to reporting sex assault allegations; gives victims a say in whether the crime should be prosecuted in civilian or military court; throws out the “good soldier” defense, a tactic that allowed defendants to cite their military character to demonstrate the likelihood of innocence; and provides special counsel to victims.

The law also allows victims to petition the court if they disagree with a case outcome; specifies which medical personnel should conduct forensic sex assault exams; lets victims dismissed from the military who were victims of sexual violence to appeal their discharges to their services’ Board for Correction of Military Records; and creates a Defense Advisory Committee on Investigation, Prosecution and Defense of Sexual Assault.

Still, Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, DN. Y., said she will continue to push for sexual assault and rape cases to be handled by independent military prosecutors with expertise in these crimes.

Before the defense authorization law was signed, Gillibrand stood with a diverse group of senators, including fellow Democrat Barbara Boxer of California and Republicans Rand Paul of Kentucky and Ted Cruz of Texas, vowing to reintroduce her bill, called the Military Justice Improvement Act.

She said the legislation is still needed because victims continue to face retaliation and retribution after reporting alleged incidents and still are reluctant to come forward.

President Obama signed the \$585 billion Defense Authorization Act Dec. 22, funding, among other things, ongoing operations in Syria and Iraq, a 1 percent pay raise for military personnel and limits on the growth of housing allowances.