

## Army investigating 14 possible Sept. suicides

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As many as 14 soldiers are believed to have killed themselves in September, three fewer than the month before, the Defense Department announced Thursday.

Of the 14 deaths, seven were active-duty soldiers. So far, one has been confirmed to be a suicide, and the other six remain under investigation.

The other seven deaths were among reserve component soldiers who were not on active duty at the time of their deaths. All the cases are still pending a determination.

Army officials have said that 90 percent of pending cases typically are ruled to be suicides.

In August, as many as 17 soldiers — 11 of them active duty — were reported to have committed suicide. Since those numbers were first announced, four of the 11 active-duty deaths have been confirmed to be suicides.

The Army has been battling suicide using a wide range of tools and programs, including a servicewide stand down, a chain-teaching program, hiring more behavioral health experts and partnering with the National Institute of Mental Health in a \$50 million, five-year study.

But the service still appears to be on track to surpass last year's record of 140 active-duty soldier suicides.

So far this year, the Army has reported 117 active-duty suicides since January. Of those, 81 have been confirmed and 36 are still under investigation.

There were 103 suicides among active-duty soldiers during the same period in 2008.

Among reserve component soldiers who were not on active duty at the time of their deaths, officials have confirmed 35 suicides between January and September. Twenty-five other deaths are believed to be suicides but have not been confirmed.

During the same time period last year, there were 40 suicides among this population of soldiers.

"All our efforts often come down to one soldier caring enough about another soldier to step in when they see something wrong," Brig. Gen. Colleen McGuire, director of the Army Suicide Prevention Task Force, said in a statement. "Soldiers will be willing to do that if they know help is available, if they believe there is no stigma attached to asking for that help, and if they are certain that Army leaders remain absolutely committed to the resiliency of our entire Army family."

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