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### Soldier suicides rise in 2011 at Lewis-McChord

Joint Base Lewis-McChord saw more suicides in 2011 than any previous year. Twelve suicides were recorded at the base this past year. That's up from nine in 2010 and nine in 2009, The News Tribune in Tacoma reported.

By The Associated Press

**JOINT BASE LEWIS-MCCHORD** — Joint Base Lewis-McChord saw more suicides in 2011 than any previous year.

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Army I Corps spokesman Lt. Col. Gary Dangerfield says the total could grow as the Army completes investigations ahead of its annual suicide report next month.

"We take suicide very seriously," Dangerfield said. "We're going to continue to push the envelope to make sure soldiers get the resiliency training they need."

The toll at Lewis-McChord rose despite new efforts to counsel soldiers when they come home from war, including the creation of a suicide-prevention office.

Leaders at the base established plans to help soldiers readjust to stateside life as major homecomings took place in the summer of 2010.

In early 2011, Madigan Army Medical Center reported a rising number of soldiers and military family members seeking behavioral-health services, a trend officers interpreted as a sign that people were becoming more open to asking for help.

Lewis-McChord's surge in suicides followed its busiest year of combat deployments. More than 18,000 soldiers from the base served in Iraq and Afghanistan in 2009-10.

The base is also larger than ever, with some 34,000 soldiers stationed there, up from 19,000 before the war in Iraq started.

The numbers here shadow an Armywide trend that has seen more soldiers taking their own lives since 2005.

The most public suicide involving a Lewis-McChord soldier this year took place in April, when medic Sgt. David Stewart killed himself and his wife on Interstate 5 south of Tumwater. Their son was later found dead in their Spanaway home.

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