



NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU

1636 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON DC 20301-1636

SEP 06 2017

To All Members of the Army and Air National Guard

Thank you for everything you do in support of our communities, States, and country. Your dedication and response in the wake of Hurricane Harvey in Texas and Louisiana has been inspiring. It also highlights the fact that the National Guard (NG) cannot accomplish our missions at home or abroad without every single member. September marks the observance of Suicide Prevention Month, and I ask that you all take time to reflect.

Suicide is one of the leading causes of death in America, and within our own military community, 22 veterans commit suicide daily. As of August 28, 2017, 80 NG Soldiers and Airmen have committed suicide in 2017. If these trends hold true, we will end 2017 with as many as 120 deaths by suicide, which overwhelmingly effects enlisted, Caucasian males (95-97%) between the ages of 17-24 in the Army National Guard, and ages 25-44 in the Air National Guard. This means that thousands of our Airman and Soldiers will come into drill, with a heavy heart, trying to answer the fundamental questions of why, and what they could have done to prevent it.

We all must remain vigilant and ready to personally engage our fellow guardsman. It is especially important because recent research suggests that the majority of suicides are NOT marked by rapid behavioral changes. Instead, in most cases the behaviors have gone on long enough for those around the suffering individual have become acclimatized to their behaviors. It is key for those experiencing suicidal ideations or who are spiraling downward, to have connection and community, and the engagement and support of those around them.

I am encouraged when I see improved intervention across the force. We have a host of resiliency tools and resources available to help soldiers and airman. When we help people before the point of no return and intervene before tragedy, we truly take care of our National Guard family.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Lengyel", is positioned above the typed name.

Joseph L. Lengyel
General, U.S. Air Force
Chief, National Guard Bureau