

# MILITARY: Marine Corps reports record number of suicide attempts

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More U.S. Marines have attempted to take their own lives this year than ever before, according to the service's latest report from its suicide prevention program.

The report said that 176 Marines attempted suicide through November, more than double the 82 reported in 2002, the first year the Marine Corps began recording and reporting the statistics.

Officials say better reporting procedures and heightened awareness is largely responsible for the higher numbers. In 2010 there were 172 attempted suicides, up from 164 in 2009 and 146 in 2008.

The report also said three active-duty Marines committed suicide in November, raising the number of self-inflicted deaths for the year to 32.

Thirty-seven Marine suicides were reported in 2010 compared with a record 52 in 2009 and 42 in 2008.

Defense Department officials have struggled to prevent and reduce suicides among active-duty and reservists troops as well as veterans.

Last month, the [Center for a New American Security in Washington](#), which analyzes Pentagon statistics, said service members or veterans were taking their own lives at a rate of one every 36 hours between 2005 and 2010.

This week, the issue went before the House Committee on Veterans Affairs in Washington, where an official with the [Military Officers Association of America](#) said a decade of war in Iraq and Afghanistan has placed unprecedented demands on troops and their families.

"The statistics are disturbing and point to an even greater need to wage an all-out battle to end suicide," said Rene Campos, the association's director of government relations. "What is required is a sustained national commitment at all levels of government to help veterans cope with the psychological and traumatic conditions that threaten their well-being and that of their families."

The Washington-based association wants the Pentagon to establish a single strategy and suicide prevention office, rather than each branch of service having its own. The group also is calling for expanded mental health services and enhanced efforts to reach at-risk troops and veterans.

Eleven Marines who have taken their own lives this year were stationed at Camp Pendleton or assigned to a unit headquartered at the base, an official with the suicide prevention program said last month.

Mental health specialists attribute the rise in military suicides and attempted suicides to the exposure to violence, the stress of long and frequent deployments, and family and relationship issues.

Substance abuse also is seen as a major contributor, because many troops "self-medicate" to help cope with the stresses from their combat experience.

A telephone help line activated last year for Marines and their family members in the Western region of the U.S. is averaging 800 calls per month, officials have said.

The "[DSTRESS](#)" hotline (877-476-7734) is staffed by Marines, and its success has prompted the service to expand its access worldwide.

The Marine Corps also is launching a "psychological autopsy" early next year that will examine every self-inflicted death recorded in 2011.

All of the Marines who've killed themselves this year were male, according to the latest report.

Most were white and between the ages of 17 and 25. Fourteen were married.

The vast majority, 18, used a gun to take their lives. Six others hanged themselves, according to the report.