

MCLEAN, Va., Dec. 28, 2013 /PRNewswire/ -- Military.com released their picks for the top Military stories of 2013 this week.

The collection features 20 stories that put the military and defense industry in the spotlight and includes bitter fights over new service medals, benefits for same sex partners and a high profile Army official being cleared of wrongdoing in a sex scandal.

"This was a significant year for defense stories that weren't just for military audiences. Many of these stories grabbed the attention of civilian and military alike and some, like the Navy Yard shooting, were stories that led the news for days on end," said Ward Carroll, Editor of Military.com

The full list includes the [top 20 stories of 2013](#) , but a peek at the top ten stories are below:

1. [Hagel Takes Helm at Pentagon after Bitter Fight](#) In February, Chuck Hagel was sworn in as defense secretary - President Barack Obama's third in just over four years – and said that one of his highest priorities will be ensuring fair treatment of troops, veterans and their families. Republicans had opposed their onetime colleague, casting him as unqualified for the job, hostile toward Israel and soft on Iran .
2. [IG Clears Allen of Wrongdoing in Email Case](#) Marine Gen. John Allen, the coalition commander in Afghanistan Afgh

, was cleared of any wrongdoing following an investigation into his email correspondence with a Florida

socialite connected to the sex scandal involving former CIA Chief

David Petraeus

. The IG found no professional misconduct by Allen in the voluminous email traffic he kept up over several years with

Jill Kelley

, a

Tampa

socialite.

3. [Case Dismissed Against IG Convicted of Sex Assault](#) The conviction and sentence of the 31st Air Wing former inspector general convicted in November of sexual assault was set aside by the Third Air Force commander in February, releasing the fighter pilot from jail and reinstating him into the Air Force. A military jury had sentenced Lt. Col.

James Wilkerson

to a year in jail, forfeiture of all pay, and dismissal from the service.

4. [Obama Signs New Stolen Valor Act](#) President Obama signed into law the latest version of the Stolen Valor Act in June, which makes it a federal crime for people to pass themselves off as war heroes by wearing medals they didn't rightfully earn. The legislation passed both houses of Congress with overwhelming majorities.

5. [Rape Scandal at the Naval Academy](#) A rape scandal involving a female midshipman and several members of the Navy football team led to issues of unlawful command influence in the military justice system – including that of commander-in-chief President Obama, who said he expected "consequences" for alleged inappropriate actions.

6. [Drone Service Medal Shot Down](#) Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel repealed a medal created just two months earlier to recognize the achievements of drone pilots and cyber specialists, ordering that a separate "distinguishing device" be used instead. Veterans groups complained that the medal would unfairly be ranked above the Bronze Star with Combat "V" and the Purple Heart.

7. [DoD Offers Benefits to Same-Sex Partners](#) The Department of Defense elected to extend the same benefits to same-sex married couples as it does to heterosexual married couples, from factoring in the spouse for housing allowance to burial at Arlington National Cemetery, the Pentagon announced in June.

8. [Bradley Manning Gets 35 Years in WikiLeaks Case](#) Army Pfc. Bradley Manning, who was found guilty of passing classified intelligence to the website WikiLeaks, was sentenced to 35 years in prison and will be dishonorably discharged from the military. The 25-year-old soldier was sentenced in August at

Fort Meade, Md.

Manning admitted to leaking thousands of battlefield reports and diplomatic cables while serving as an intelligence analyst in

Iraq

9. [Navy Yard Shooting](#) A Navy contractor named Aaron Alexis was identified as the lone gunman in a shooting spree that took the lives of 12 employees at the Navy Yard in Washington DC

in September. Although no motive was established for the horrific crime, the investigation revealed that Alexis, shot dead by police on site, had undergone mental health treatment in the months before the shooting.

10. [Syria Weapons Deal Averts US Military Action](#) A diplomatic breakthrough on securing and destroying Syria's chemical weapons stockpile averted the threat of U.S. military action and might have swung momentum toward ending a horrific civil war. Marathon negotiations between U.S. and Russian diplomats at a Geneva hotel produced a sweeping agreement that will require one of the most ambitious arms-control efforts in history.

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