



**Sept. 11, 2001**  
When terrorists wiped the Twin Towers from the New York skyline, the Army's suicide rate, at 9.0 per 100,000 soldiers, was the lowest since the service started keeping track 20 years earlier.

Year one of Operation Enduring Freedom toppled the Taliban, but also saw an uptick in the suicide rate.

"Shock and awe" became a national catchphrase, and more than 67,000 soldiers were sent to Iraq.

67 suicides; numbers dip.

87 soldiers took their own lives. The Army wasn't alarmed by the slight increase. Army leaders started to acknowledge for the first time the notion of stigma – that the service's culture was dominated by the sentiment that real men don't have mental health issues.

Leaders got a shock when the next year brought another jump in suicides: 102.

The Army hit an all-time high with 115 suicides. Since late 2001, the Army had lost to suicide about the same number of soldiers as in an infantry battalion, 580. At all-hands meetings across the bases, the brass started talking about suicide awareness. They issued a new suicide prevention guide for commanders.

More than twice the number of soldiers – 143 – killed themselves than in 2004.

**October**  
The Army acknowledged it needed help and reached out to the National Institutes of Health. Together, they launched a five-year, \$50 million study of military suicides with the ambitious goal of revolutionizing knowledge and prevention.

In January and February, there were 39 suicides.

**Spring**  
The Army ordered a servicewide stand-down and convened a Suicide Prevention Task Force with Gen. Peter Chiarelli. Soldiers learned a new mantra: "Ask your buddy, care for your buddy, escort your buddy."

**December**  
The year ended with 162 suicides, another record.

There were 80 suicides through June 30. June was the worst month on record. The Army released a new video that urged soldiers to get help if they are feeling depressed.



Chiarelli

SOURCES: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Army