



The 167th Theater Sustainment Command Judge Advocate General (JAG) section culminated a yearlong training exercise on 7–8 August 2018 at the Calhoun County Courthouse in Anniston, Alabama. Presided over by military judge Lt. Col. Brian Howell, the 167th JAG section and the Alabama National Guard Trial Defense Service carried out a mock trial as if it were a real-life case, going through the entire legal process that the Uniformed Code of Military Justice would require. (Photo by Sgt. Jeremy Dunkle, U.S. Army National Guard)

A Still-Faltering System

How the Lack of Institutional and Individual Accountability Surrounding Sexual Assault Harms the U.S. Armed Forces

Alan Cunningham
Barbara Snow, Esq.

The U.S. Armed Forces is facing a significant crisis. The military is finding its recruitment strategy challenged due to a variety of factors, with threats to a new armed conflict between the United States and Mexico to increasingly vehement and rather baseless public attacks on “wokeism.”¹

Coupling this environment with the controversial campaign to end the U.S. war in Afghanistan and the problematic mission and implementation of the Global War on Terrorism, the fact that the military cannot meet their recruitment and retention goals is a “long-term [consequence] of the choice to send our forces overseas absent clear, articulate, and realistic objectives against which to align resources and hard power, to a war that was unwinnable but spent lives in the endeavor anyway.”² This is one of the most difficult challenges facing the U.S. military today, attempting to find a way in which to continue and to improve upon the physical readiness of the military force.

While numerous op-eds and commentaries have been written about how factors like “forever wars,” political extremism, and health concerns have affected recruitment, few have focused on how sexual assault, harassment, and other forms of such abuse pose problems for sheer military numbers. Acknowledging the significant concerns regarding the right to bodily autonomy and dignity, few have considered how resolving this situation could highly benefit military recruiting and retention.

The Issue of Sexual Assault in the U.S. Armed Forces

It has been an open and prevalent nonsecret for many years that the U.S. military has an immense problem with how sexual assault and harassment cases are handled. The 1991 Tailhook scandal, the 2003 U.S. Air Force Academy assault scandal, and the 2009 U.S. Air Force Basic Training scandal are key and high-profile, public instances of such problems.³ However, it was not until the murder of Spc. Vanessa Guillén in 2020 that real, measurable reform started to take place.

Meaningful reforms include the I Am Vanessa Guillén Act, parts of which became law in late December 2021, chief among them the criminalization of “sexual harassment under the Uniform Code of Military Justice [and removal of the] decision to prosecute sexual misconduct cases from service members’

chain of command.”⁴ So far, the new teams of independent prosecutors have been well received and been able to secure some substantial sentences for sex offenders.⁵

Nonetheless, sexual assault and related offenses remain a serious issue among the services. News stories reveal a disturbing trend of field- and flag-grade officers engaging in various kinds of charged sexual misconduct against another service member, a subordinate, or in some cases, against children. Even more troubling than reports of seemingly endemic behaviors in the military, this behavior consistently goes unpunished or receives leniency based upon one’s rank, retirement status, longevity of service, and the units they have been able to serve with; the higher the rank or status, the lesser punishment the individual has received.

One of the most notable sexual assault cases in recent memory involved then-Maj. Gen. William Cooley of the U.S. Air Force. Cooley, then in command of the Air Force Research

Laboratory, was relieved of his post in January 2020 and eventually charged with multiple counts of abusive sexual contact stemming from an August 2018 incident in which he drunkenly informed a woman (later revealed to be his sister-in-law) he “fantasized about having sex with her ... pressed her up against the driver’s side window, forcibly kissed and groped her through her clothes.”⁶ Cooley was found guilty by a military

Barbara A. Snow, Esq., was an active duty and then reserve judge advocate in the U.S. Army JAG Corps. She has spent the last fifteen years as a criminal defense attorney, first in the U.S. military and then as civilian counsel in Colorado. Her own experience with an unsafe senior military leader in the U.S. Army JAG Corps resulted in her coming forward about her experience and led to the formation of Lifting the Silence(d): A MST Resistance Coalition Inc., a nonprofit committed to providing trauma-informed therapy and psychoeducation/self-defense and other prevention services, and legal assistance to female, male, and nonbinary active duty, reserve, and veteran survivors of military sexual trauma.

Alan Cunningham is a doctoral candidate at the University of Birmingham’s Department of History. He is a graduate of Norwich University and the University of Texas at Austin and a military sexual assault reform advocate.

court in April 2022 “of one specification of abusive sexual contact,” while acquitted on two other specifications.⁷ This was a massive success and vindication for victims and victims’ rights advocates everywhere across the service, as it was the first time in the U.S. Air Force’s history a general officer had been court-martialed, and it was the first significant conviction of a high ranking military officer for sexual misconduct.⁸

However, the punishment doled out did not seem to match with the crime Cooley committed. The judge presiding over the case did not sentence Cooley to jail time, instead ordering a formal reprimand and mandating an approximately \$55,000 forfeiture of pay, for which Cooley seemed to express relief.⁹ This was done against “a request from prosecutors to expel him from the [A]ir [F]orce with a demotion and without retirement benefits, including his pension.”¹⁰ While part of this sentence was remitted by the U.S. secretary of the Air Force, who demoted Cooley from his two-star general officer rank to that of a colonel (itself a commendable action), Cooley still was able to retain a pension (albeit, at a substantial cut), able to retire in lieu of a dishonorable or bad conduct discharge, and not required to register as a sex offender on any state registry.¹¹

While there are aspects of this case that are highly commendable for the U.S. military leadership, namely in demoting a flag officer for misconduct and after taking a case to trial resulting in the conviction of that commissioned officer, it is distinctively regrettable that these punishments of forfeiture of pay and an official reprimand—especially in a case involving someone whose leadership could have set an example of how a safe leader behaves—are seen as successes in this modern day of reform. What is particularly disheartening is the fact that such lax, disproportionate punishment is not an anomaly but rather commonplace.

In September 2022, Lt. Col. Jacob Sweatland, the head of the California Polytechnic State University’s Reserve Officers’ Training Corps detachment, was arrested after a sixteen-year-old girl in a San Luis Obispo teen retail store found and turned in “a key fob with a hidden camera” containing “images and video from other dressing rooms in the area.”¹² Sweatland’s case was quickly turned over to the U.S. Army (a jurisdiction in which local authorities believed the charges would be more severe), which removed Sweatland from his post-ing but kept him administratively assigned to the 8th

ROTC Brigade until he pled guilty to “one specification of indecent visual recording and one specification of conduct unbecoming an officer” in January 2024.¹³ Sweatland received a general officer memorandum of reprimand, which, while viewed as a career killer, does not automatically preclude him from receiving an honorable discharge and, if received, would allow him to “hold onto his full retirement and any benefits and disability.”¹⁴

In another instance, Capt. Billy Joe Crosby Jr. of the Louisiana Army National Guard repeatedly made several lewd sexual remarks about a subordinate junior enlisted woman, including disparaging comments about her chest, over the course of several months in 2021 while on assignment in Jordan.¹⁵ A day after the soldier declined a formal ceremony for being promoted to sergeant, Crosby confronted the soldier in her workplace, placed the rank between her chest, and proceeded to place “his face between [her] breasts [and] vigorously moved his head from side to side.”¹⁶ Crosby was initially “charged with abusive sexual contact and conduct unbecoming an officer” but was later permitted to plead guilty “to conduct unbecoming an officer and assault consummated by battery” and sentenced to “30 days confinement” with “no fines, reduction in rank or reprimands [and no requirement] to register as a sex offender.”¹⁷ He retired from the Army National Guard upon completing his confinement and can collect full benefits as a retired captain.

In December 2023, Lt. Col. Jonny Gonzalez of U.S. Army South was “found guilty of one count of conduct unbecoming an officer [for] having oral sex, among other sexual acts, with a junior enlisted trainee [and kissing] another junior enlisted naval trainee.”¹⁸ By pleading out his case, Gonzalez received a reprimand and the service confirmed he was in the midst of retiring, likely at his current rank “and hav[ing] full access to benefits.”¹⁹

Multiple other cases abound, including

- a lieutenant colonel sentenced to only two months in prison for “groping a sergeant under his command”;
- a lieutenant colonel sending inappropriate photographs of himself and making lewd comments to a female subordinate and receiving a reprimand; and
- a senior NCO committing numerous crimes, including sexually assaulting both a female superior and a subordinate and forging signatures on

retirement forms but allowed to plead guilty to simple assault, harassment, and adultery charges, resulting in a ninety-day sentence to confinement and reduction in one rank.²⁰

All of these high-ranking leaders retired with a pension, benefits, and a major semblance of dignity intact after having committed one or more inexcusable crimes that violate another human being's and service member's bodily autonomy and dignity while bringing discredit to their service. None of the individuals mentioned received more than six months of jail time nor are listed on a sex offender registry. These cases are not aberrations but are commonplace in a system that seemingly is designed to protect high-ranking accused individuals at nearly all costs. In many cases, the convicted service members have been able to lead productive lives, obtaining positions of leadership and respect in the private sector while facing almost no social stigma in civilian life and gain a substantial or significant pension. While making rehabilitation available for all is consistent with fundamental principles of justice, the sentences in these cases fall short of meaningful justice or the equally important objective of more general criminal deterrence, both in and out of the military services.

A sexual misconduct conviction should not result in a slap on the wrist. It should be commensurate as much as can be realized by factoring in the many times increased severity of the victim's pain and anguish given the perpetrator's positions of power over their subordinates based on rank and authority.

These previously described situations showcase a demonstrated inclination by the U.S. military in effectively facilitating officers' and senior NCOs' escaping punishment with the kinds of repercussions one would reasonably expect given the nature of the crime, and for conduct that should never—in a “zero tolerance environment”—occur within the ranks. That this phenomenon harms the integrity of the military force and contributes to stalling recruitment efforts is, in truth, a matter of common sense.

How the Prosecution of Sexually Based Crimes Harms the U.S. Military and Impacts Recruiting

Data from the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) in 2022 showed that, one of the main reasons listed as

to why potential recruits were tentative about serving in the military was “the possibility of injury or death, and fear of developing PTSD or other psychological problems.”²¹ While these results do not specify what kinds of injuries or psychological problems potential recruits believed would arise, a fall 2021 DOD survey found that “30 percent of Americans aged 16 to 24 said that the possibility of sexual harassment or assault was one of the main reasons why they would not consider joining the U.S. military.”²²

While that survey came before passage of the I Am Vanessa Guillén Act, it is nonetheless a notable percentage of individuals who, in viewing sexual misconduct as a dissuading concern, the U.S. military has been unable to sway in any successful recruitment efforts. Persistent cases of senior military officers and higher-ranking enlisted leadership evading proper—or what is socially seen as acceptable or equal forms of justice for serious crimes against persons—is undeniably problematic for recruiting new individuals. In a rhetorical but very practical sense, who would want to serve in a military that fails to appropriately punish perpetrators of sexual misconduct? Even potential military recruits who consume these news stories can understand that the military gives undue and unfair preference to service members based upon their rank. While sexual assault occurs outside of the military branches, an individual has the choice of service in the Armed Forces. Witnessing these unfair and unjust sentencing structures can surely make an individual reconsider their decision to serve.

Looking at retention, the U.S. military is not in as serious or precarious of a position as it is with recruiting. According to internal DOD data that includes 2022, the U.S. Army “surpassed more than 100% of its retention goals every year since 2017 ... [convincing] 58,000 soldiers to extend their service time,” using appealing incentives and bonuses to obtain that number.²³ However, a 2021 RAND study, commissioned by the DOD's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, found that “exposure to sexual assault ... doubled the likelihood that a service member would leave the military within 28 months.”²⁴ Sexual assault compromises unit cohesion at all levels. It results in the loss of that critical element of trust in the entire command structure. In the event a commander or other offender is brought to justice before a criminal court, the fact that

the sentence imposed is considered by the victim and others as being incongruent with the crime results in further loss of confidence in the command, in the entire military justice system, and in the military itself as an institution. It is not surprising then that members of the U.S. military exposed to sexual assault and related offenses would not want to reenlist.

Furthermore, justifiable disillusionment of current service members not only impacts retention but can also roll back onto recruiting. It has been reported multiple times through nonprofit, nongovernmental organization surveys that military families are less likely to recommend a military career or military service to their family members than they have historically been. In 2021, the Military Family Advisory Network's Military Family Support Programming Survey reached out to "8,638 active-duty members, retirees, dependents and veterans," revealing that "while 63% of those surveyed would recommend military life to someone considering, that number was down from 75% in 2019 [and] that enlisted members and their spouses were significantly less inclined to recommend military service than officers and their families."²⁵ Blue Star families, which has tracked this issue since 2016, reports that "only 32% of families said they would recommend their sons and daughters to go into the military," and that 31 percent "of families said they would [affirmatively] not recommend service to their loved ones" in 2023.²⁶ Having individuals who have served or are currently serving not recommend military service to family members or friends is quite problematic.

For the most part, military leadership does seem to recognize that there is a correlation between sexual misconduct with recruiting and retention problems. In September 2022, then-Secretary of the Army Christine Wormuth commented on the impact sexual misconduct and abuse crimes have on the U.S. Armed Forces, saying, "I do think there is information out there that Generation Z sees and they're like, 'Why would I want to be part of that?' ... I do think we have to both get the positive things out there for the Army, but also frankly ... we need to show that we are doing something about sexual harassment and sexual assault in the Army."²⁷ Wormuth, for her part, has admirably worked to make positive changes in stopping sexual harassment and assault by reshaping the culture, notably by firing the Army's inaugural lead special trial counsel

Brig. Gen. Warren Wells after it was revealed he made inappropriate comments in an email a decade prior in which he vented against perceived "false allegations and sobriety regret."²⁸

Despite many beneficial efforts at change, there remains an institutional problem in the military when it comes to sexual assault and related offenses that mandates resolution. In the *Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military for 2022*, the service branches "charged fewer suspected sexual assault perpetrators with crimes" that year when compared to previous years.²⁹

In the United States, where there is currently a stronger economy, an abundance of jobs, and considering the many psychological and physical problems veterans and service members face while serving and also upon leaving service (to include because of sexual assault and related offenses), it should not at all be surprising that soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines would not want to continue on in such a profession.

The question becomes, "How can the U.S. Armed Forces, the Pentagon, and the U.S. Congress build upon the efforts already taken, to make even greater strides toward resolving the persistent scourge that is sexual assault, sexual harassment and related offenses in the Armed Forces?"

Where to Go in Sexual Assault Reform for 2025

Clearly, sexual assault and related offenses pose a problem for the military, from a recruiting and retention lens but even more detrimentally from a warfighting, institutional, and national defense posture. Service members injured by other service members are, even if temporarily, taken out of the fight, while perpetrators not adequately punished can be ticking time bombs for harm to other service members. There have been great leaps and advancements in military sexual assault reform, but there are still steps that must be taken. In its 2021 report to the secretary of defense, the Independent Review Commission (IRC) on Sexual Assault in the Military identified two areas that it indicated need additional review for rectification: (1) sexual assault prevention and (2) mental health services for sexual assault victims.³⁰

Certainly, eradicating the lack of accountability surrounding certain cases of sexual assault involving senior leadership works to address the first of these two



Supporters of Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month from Naval Support Activity Philadelphia and its tenant commands, including Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) Troop Support, create a “sea of teal” on their annual awareness walk across the installation on 23 April 2019 in Philadelphia. Employees and service members wore teal and walked to show their support for survivors of sexual assault and to demonstrate their commitment to eliminating sexual assault from the workplace. (Photo by John Dwyer III, DLA Troop Support Public Affairs)

IRC-identified concerns—sexual assault prevention. One of the biggest complaints in this area is the lack of prosecutorial experience by attorneys of the Judge Advocate General’s Corps in prosecuting sexual misconduct cases. Don Christensen, the former president of the sexual assault advocacy organization Protect Our Defenders and a retired Air Force prosecutor, detailed in an interview with *Army Times* that “unlike the civilian justice system, the prosecutors, many of whom are captains, are not directly involved in deal-making ... [and] some staff judge advocates lack the prosecutorial experience to effectively gauge whether a case could be lost at trial,” while also mentioning that judges are incapable of rejecting plea deals beyond a select few circumstances.³¹

In this sense, prosecutorial and judicial reform would be a must to ensuring that sexual assault cases provide the level of accountability the public, service members, and their victims desire and deserve. At the least, it is imperative prosecutors (the services’ special trial counsel) have more trial experience and have stronger, more practical (rather than theoretical)

experience in contemplating extending and otherwise agreeing to plea deals, best understanding the strengths and weaknesses of their evidence, to then be the most effective counsel for their institution, especially considering the public outcry. Inevitably, certain cases will be harder to get to an agreement that will satisfy the demands of justice, while still others will not be appropriate for resolution by plea agreement. Looking at the cases referenced earlier, considering the nature of the crimes and the positions of power those accused individuals wield, some would agree that limited confinement to no confinement or general reprimands are not punishments with the goal of equitable or true justice in mind. Plea deals with inadequate sentencing provisions give the appearance to both service members and civilians alike that the goal is not to protect victims or uphold a fair and equal justice system but rather is simply to inappropriately streamline the process for the benefit of the legal professionals involved and those accused but not the victims.

To the extent the U.S. military is engaging in reform of its larger sexual assault prevention apparatus,

including the hiring of upward of two thousand psychologists over the next several years to engage in more hands-on, smaller group training and what appears will be direct, empirical work with commanders in identifying specific unit prevention needs, it would do well to marry those efforts with military justice work, ensuring military justice practitioners have and keep visibility on institutional trends that should inform their prosecutorial and, for judges, sentencing decisions where appropriate.³²

This also impacts recruiting. Lt. Julie Roland of the U.S. Navy wrote in the U.S. Naval Institute's monthly magazine *Proceedings* that

Pop culture and the media has portrayed the military as "a hyper-masculine organization where rape myths and rape culture are acceptable." Even if this ethos is a matter of media presentation, it is possible that recruits are joining an institution they expect will be "soft on rape." ... [Changing this belief] could start by creating a media campaign that portrays the military as an organization where rape culture is unacceptable and work to recruit those committed to upholding this mentality.³³

She further encourages that there are tactics individual recruiters, review boards, and boot camp instructors can take in assessing an applicant's strong "moral character" and overall encouraging not only sexual assault prevention but also how to treat a toxic work culture as both are inherently, closely related.³⁴

In this context, the training, wording, and entire presentation of how the military talks about sexual assault and harassment needs updating. Angela Martinez, a member of the DOD's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, detailed in a Task and Purpose article that their material is still "from the 90s [and] needs to be updated to reflect the current time period."³⁵ Having material that is incredibly outdated and not relevant to the generation of soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines currently joining is hugely problematic.

If the military desires to better improve the recruiting standing, a concerted and well-tuned effort at repairing the military's culture and healthcare (medical and mental health) responses for victims and military justice system reforms are some of the best solutions for combating sexual misconduct within and among the ranks.

As the military justice system continues to roll out its Office of Special Trial Counsel, the office having the authority to prosecute sexual assault and related offenses, the issue of mental health treatment for victims of military sexual trauma needs further addressing.³⁶ Changes to the Uniform Code of Military Justice contain provisions for accused military personnel to subpoena the mental health records of named victims under certain circumstances; this disclosure of mental health records carries the risk of service members preemptively not seeking mental health counseling out of fear their personal records will be leaked or used against them in some way. The special trial counsel and victims counsel will need to ensure only records relevant and necessary to the charged offenses are released so victims are not subject to unnecessary fishing expeditions that could further traumatize them or be used against them by others. Furthermore, having a victim's legal counsel with the authority in law and in practice to advocate for their clients in legal and administrative proceedings would make for greater victim representation and amplify their voices in and outside of the courtroom.

While the U.S. military's primary mission is to fight the next war, that mission is one that cannot be accomplished by an organization that seems more concerned with the perception of appropriate behavior rather than the actual practice and enforcement of appropriate and acceptable behavior.

Conclusion

Stopping the crisis of sexual assault, harassment, and other forms of sexual misconduct in the U.S. Armed Forces is one of the most important tasks the military faces in resolving internal, institutional issues. While sexual misconduct is a problem that will likely never be fully resolved in the military, eradication to the furthest extent possible is the end goal of every advocate, and it should be the end goal of every military officer, non-commissioned officer, junior enlisted, civilian executive, and anyone in the national defense community and industry. Realistically, continued sexual misconduct runs the risk of only getting worse and becoming even more endemic as long as perpetrators receive minor punishments and do not face any real or true justice or repercussions for their actions—that is to say, as long as the U.S. military is complicit through apathy, it is an implicit and explicit endorsement.

Sexual misconduct damages not only the integrity, capability, and cohesiveness of the military unit affected, but it also causes individuals who are considering a military career or serving their country as a uniformed member to be rightfully mistrustful. It causes them to reconsider their willingness to be at personal risk in what has been, for generations, an honorable

profession. Cases of individuals accused of sexual misconduct or impropriety, and in the face of corroborating evidence of clear malfeasance, effectively facing little punishment for their crime(s) and being able to retire honorably with benefits and with a rather intact reputation, do nothing to build or restore trust in the institution. ■

Notes

1. Brandon P. Buck "From One Endless War to Another: Trump's New Military Frontier in Mexico?," Cato Institute, 04 February 2025, <https://www.cato.org/blog/one-endless-war-another-trumps-new-military-frontier-mexico>; Risa Brooks, "How the Anti-Woke Campaign Against the U.S. Military Damages National Security," War on the Rocks, 7 April 2023, <https://warontherocks.com/2023/04/how-the-anti-woke-campaign-against-the-u-s-military-damages-national-security/>; Richard Sisk, "The Military Recruiting Outlook Is Grim Indeed. Loss of Public Confidence, Political Attacks and the Economy Are All Taking a Toll," Military.com, 22 January 2024, <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2024/01/22/uphill-battle-boost-recruiting-military-faces-falling-public-confidence-political-attacks-economic.html>.
2. Ethan Brown, "The Ghost of GWOT Haunting the Military Recruiting Crisis," Modern War Institute, 28 December 2023, <https://mwi.westpoint.edu/the-ghost-of-gwot-haunting-the-military-recruiting-crisis/>.
3. Alan Cunningham, "The Hidden Issue: A Historical Analysis of Sexual Assault and Harassment within the U.S. Armed Forces," Combat Sexual Assault, 7 May 2022, <https://combatsexualassault.org/blog-your-expression/f/the-hidden-issue>.
4. Nicole Acevedo, "I Am Vanessa Guillén Act Brings 'Historic' Military Reform as Calls for Justice Persist," NBC News, 20 January 2021, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/vanessa-guillen-act-brings-historic-military-reform-calls-justice-pers-na12952>.
5. Steve Beynon, "Army's New Special Prosecutors Hit Ground Running with Case Netting 20-Year Sentence for Rape, Assault," Military.com, 22 February 2024, <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2024/02/22/armys-new-special-prosecutors-hit-ground-running-case-netting-20-year-sentence-rape-assault.html>; Rachel VanLandingham, "The U.S. Military Moves Closer to Just Military Justice—But More Work Remains," Just Security, 5 January 2024, <https://www.justsecurity.org/91004/the-u-s-military-moves-closer-to-just-military-justice-but-more-work-remains/>.
6. Jesus Jiménez and Vimal Patel, "General Convicted of Sex Abuse Forfeits Pay but Avoids Prison," New York Times, 26 April 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/26/us/air-force-general-william-cooley-sentenced.html>.
7. Thomas Gnau, "Air Force Maj. Gen. William Cooley Sentenced to Reprimand, Forfeiture of Pay in Court-Martial," Stars and Stripes, 26 April 2022, <https://www.stripes.com/branches/air-force/2022-04-26/air-force-maj-gen-william-cooley-sentenced-court-martial-5806551.html>.
8. Ayesha Rascoe, host, *Weekend Edition Sunday*, "A Court-Martial Ends With the First Conviction of an Air Force General," NPR, 24 April 2022, <https://www.npr.org/2022/04/24/1094539753/a-major-general-is-the-first-air-force-general-convicted-of-a-crime-in-a-court>.
9. Gnau, "Air Force Maj. Gen. William Cooley Sentenced to Reprimand."
10. Ramon Antonio Vargas, "US Air Force General Convicted of Abusive Sexual Contact Losing Ranking on Retiring," Guardian, 1 June 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/jun/01/william-bill-cooley-air-force-general-lose-ranking-retiring>.
11. Rachel S. Cohen, "Air Force Two-Star to Retire as Colonel After Sex Crime Conviction," Air Force Times, 30 May 2023, <https://www.airforcetimes.com/news/your-air-force/2023/05/30/air-force-two-star-to-retire-as-colonel-after-sex-crime-conviction/>.
12. Matthew Gault, "An Army Officer Faced Time in Jail for Spying on Girls. Then the Pentagon Stepped In," Vice, 8 February 2024, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/z3m588/an-army-officer-faced-jail-time-for-spying-on-girls-then-the-pentagon-stepped-in>.
13. Steve Beynon, "Army ROTC Instructor Who Pleaded Guilty to Hiding Camera in Changing Room Gets Reprimand," Military.com, 26 January 2024, <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2024/01/26/army-rotc-instructor-who-pleaded-guilty-hiding-camera-changing-room-gets-reprimand.html>.
14. Jeff Schogol, "Army Officer Gets Reprimand for Secret Camera in Dressing Room," Task and Purpose, 5 February 2024, <https://taskandpurpose.com/news/army-rotc-jacob-sweatland/>.
15. Matthew Gault, "National Guard Officer Allowed to Retire After Motorboating a Subordinate," Vice, 20 May 2022, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/y3vy4b/national-guard-officer-allowed-to-retire-after-motorboating-a-subordinate>.
16. Ibid.
17. Davis Winkie, "Officer 'Motorboated' Subordinate at Promotion Ceremony, Retires After Guilty Plea," Army Times, 18 May 2022, <https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2022/05/18/officer-motorboated-subordinate-at-promotion-ceremony-retires-after-guilty-plea/>; J.P. Lawrence, "Army Captain Jailed After Lewd Assault of His Soldier During Promotion," Stars and Stripes, 18 May 2022, <https://www.stripes.com/branches/army/2022-05-18/army-kuwait-jordan-court-martial-6047553.html>.
18. Steve Beynon, "Sex Offenses for 3 Senior Army Officers End with Plea Deals and Reprimands," Military.com, 15 February 2024, <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2024/02/15/army-lieutenant-colonels-just-got-relatively-soft-punishments-sex-offenses.html>.
19. Ibid.
20. Rose L. Thayer, "Prison Term for Fort Johnson Lieutenant Colonel Sparked by Groping Accusation from Sergeant," Stars and Stripes, 29 June 2023, <https://www.stripes.com/branches/army/2023-06-29/fort-johnson-lieutenant-colonel%C2%A0groping-10592340>.

[html](#); Tim Callery, "Court Martial Documents Detail Charges Against NH National Guard Commander," WMUR, 19 March 2024, <https://www.wmur.com/article/court-martial-nh-national-guard-commander-31924/60249039>; Davis Winkie, "Devil's Bargain: How Sex Crime Plea Deals Let These Soldiers Retire and Avoid Registries," *Army Times*, 4 August 2022, <https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2022/08/04/devils-bargain-how-sex-crime-plea-deals-let-these-soldiers-retire-and-avoid-registries/>.

21. Matt Seyler, "Military Struggling to Find New Troops as Fewer Young Americans Willing or Able to Serve," ABC News, 2 July 2022, <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/military-struggling-find-troops-fewer-young-americans-serve/story?id=86067103>.

22. David Barno and Nora Bensahel, "Addressing the U.S. Military Recruiting Crisis," *War on the Rocks*, 10 March 2023, <https://warontherocks.com/2023/03/addressing-the-u-s-military-recruiting-crisis/>.

23. Steve Beynon, "The Army Is Having No Issue Retaining Soldiers, Amid a Crisis Recruiting New Ones," *Military.com*, 26 September 2022, <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2022/09/26/army-having-no-issue-retaining-soldiers-amid-crisis-recruiting-new-ones.html>.

24. Jennifer Hlad, "'Broken Culture' Keeps Troops at Risk of Sexual Assault, Advocates Say," *Defense One*, 9 December 2022, <https://www.defenseone.com/policy/2022/12/broken-culture-keeps-troops-risk-sexual-assault-advocates-say/380541/>.

25. Patricia Kime, "Military Families Less Likely to Recommend Joining Up, Survey Finds," *Military.com*, 14 July 2022, <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2022/07/14/military-families-less-likely-recommend-joining-survey-finds.html>.

26. Anastasia Obis, "Fewer Active-Duty Military Families Encourage Young People to Enlist," *Federal News Network*, 19 March 2024, <https://federalnewsnetwork.com/defense-main/2024/03/fewer-active-duty-military-families-encourage-young-people-to-enlist/>.

27. Christine Dunn, Jillian Seymour, and Elena Rouch, "The Military's #MeToo Reckoning Is in Full Swing," *Stars and Stripes*, 25 March 2024, <https://www.stripes.com/opinion/2024-03-25/military-me-too-reckoning-13427772.html>.

28. Patty Nieberg, "Army Fires Top Prosecutor for Military Sexual Assault Cases," *Task and Purpose*, 6 December 2023, <https://taskandpurpose.com/news/army-fires-lead-sexual-assault-prosecutor/>; Clare Hymes and Eleanor Watson, "Army Secretary Fires Top Prosecutor for Over 2013 Email Questioning Sexual Assault Claims," *CBS News*, 7 December 2023, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/army-secretary-fires-prosecutor-war-ren-wells-2013-email-questioning-sexual-assault-claims/>.

29. Meghann Myers, "Sexual Assault in the Military Keeps Rising While Prosecutions Fall," *Military Times*, 27 April 2023, <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-military/2023/04/27/sexual-assault-in-the-military-keeps-rising-while-prosecutions-fall/>.

30. Independent Review Commission, *Hard Truths and the Duty to Change: Recommendations from the Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military* (Independent Review Commission, 2 July 2021), 6–7, <https://media.defense.gov/2021/Jul/02/2002755437/-1/-1/0/IRC-FULL-REPORT-FINAL-1923-7-1-21.PDF/IRC-FULL-REPORT-FINAL-1923-7-1-21.PDF>.

31. Winkie, "Officer 'Motorboated' Subordinate at Promotion Ceremony."

32. Zara Abrams, "U.S. Military Is Hiring Thousands of Psychologists to Help Reduce Sexual Assault," *Monitor on Psychology* 55, no. 2 (March 2024), <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2024/03/military-sexual-assault-prevention-efforts>.

33. Julie Roland, "Reimagining Recruiting to Prevent Sexual Assault," *Proceedings* 148, no. 11 (November 2022), <https://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/2022/november/reimagine-recruiting-prevent-sexual-assault>.

34. Ibid.

35. Jenna Carlton, "Military Sexual Trauma Cases Have Been Removed from the Chain of Command—But There's More Work to Do," *Task and Purpose*, 29 March 2024, <https://taskandpurpose.com/opinion/military-sexual-trauma-chain-of-command/#>.

36. Vianna Davila et al., "The Army Increasingly Allows Soldiers Charged with Violent Crimes to Leave the Military Rather than Face Trial," *Texas Tribune*, 10 April 2023, <https://www.texastribune.org/2023/04/10/military-army-administrative-separation/>.