

Chairman Tillis and Ranking Member Gillibrand, thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today as a survivor of military sexual assault. I am here to share my story and to shine light on the systemic failures that made justice impossible in my case.

I graduated in the top 3% of my class at West Point and soon after arrived at Fort Rucker, AL to begin my career as an Aviation Officer. Throughout flight training, I grew to become close friends with a mentor and flight school classmate of mine who was going through a divorce. He arrived at flight school married to an officer, who was given a leadership role in our battalion. After some time, his wife became my company commander, but the relationship between he and I had already progressed. During their divorce, both he and my company commander sought comforts outside of their marriage.

Then, a different flight school classmate of mine sexually assaulted me. When it occurred, my classmate—married to my commander—was the only person who I trusted enough to tell what just happened to me, to discuss filing a report, and to care for my well-being.

The sexual assault occurred on a Sunday, and I reported it on the following Tuesday. On Friday, I was informed that Fort Rucker's Criminal Investigative Division was investigating *me* for adultery with my commander's husband—not even three days after I reported my sexual assault. It became immediately clear that the Army and its Criminal Investigative Division showed more interest in the affair rather than the sexual assault.

The following conflicts of interest occurred thereafter:

My commander's position of authority gave her immediate access to the higher levels of my command, my prosecutor, the investigators, and my cadre members.

- Prior to my report, my commander contacted the prosecutor who would eventually be assigned to my case about her personal business—seeking advice for a private investigator to investigate her husband's suspected adultery. When her husband came forth as a witness in my case, the prosecutor linked my case to my commander's personal situation, which I believe hurt my case's ability to move forward to trial.
- My commander also had a pre-existing relationship with the installation Commanding General—the two-star convening authority responsible for deciding if my sexual assault case would go to trial. Previously, the general was her Brigade Commander while she was a Lieutenant at Fort Campbell. She requested his audience about the matters of her divorce prior to my sexual assault investigation concluding. This too, I believe, hurt my case's ability to move forward to trial.

Unfortunately, I did not have a unit commander who was able to serve in the best interests of a sexual assault victim due to these and several other personal conflicts. The incestuous nature of the relationships found in my chain of command made it impossible for me to have a truly objective case.

There were many injustices throughout the investigation and thereafter. The most haunting is how the evidence that I volunteered from my body to process my rape kit, was later used to substantiate adultery claims instead of provide justice for the sexual assault. Despite the overwhelming, quantitate evidence of my assailant violating my body, the results only seemed to confirm my mischaracterization as an adulterer. My Brigade Commander initiated a commander's investigation for inappropriate relationships and adultery with both my witness and assailant prior to the conclusion of my sexual assault case.

I was given a General Officer Memorandum of Record from the previously mentioned Commanding General, which was filed in my permeant record and effectively ended my career.

The following are excerpts from the Army's internal investigation into Fort Rucker's sexual assault failures which resulted in response to me reporting these injustices to Congress.

- That Victim Advocates *and* the Criminal Investigative Division at Fort Rucker provided outdated forms to sexual assault victims that did not fully inform them of their rights, particularly if the victims are suspected of misconduct, which includes representation by a Special Victim's counsel.
- The Brigade did not properly maintain hard-copy records of these forms, as required by law.
- The commanding general's extensive travel and improper delegation of SHARP Program duties to levels of command lower than the required TRADOC standard led to a deteriorated monthly Sexual Assault Response Board.
- During the same time, the brigade did not have a Sexual Assault Response Coordinator for a 9-month period.
- Command-subordinate relationships ***show obvious conflict of interest***. This led to lack of lower level command support for victim and confirms her complaint of feeling isolated.

All I ever wanted is to serve my country, lead American Soldiers, and fly the Apache helicopter. The loss of my military career and my inability to trust larger organizations such as our military, has deeply impacted who I am today. I struggle with accomplishing even minor daily tasks, and my quality of mental and emotional health has greatly deteriorated.

I hope this testimony highlights that pre-existing opinions about an individual can greatly influence the execution of justice in our military. This can negatively impact either the victim or the alleged offender. If my case were handled outside of my chain of command, by a truly objective and trained legal professional, I do believe the outcome of my case and life would be different.

Thank you again for you time.