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## The Takeaway

# Fmr. Sgt. Marti Ribeiro on Sexual Harassment in the Military

Wednesday, February 17, 2010 - 02:48 PM

BBC

By [Marti Ribeiro](#)

### RECOMMENDED LINKS

**ON AIR:** [Sexual Assault Still a Major Problem in the Military](#)

*This week the BBC launched [a series about women in the military](#). One of their first pieces was about the prevalence of female service members who have been sexually assaulted and raped while trying to serve their country. We, as well, spoke to former **Staff Sergeant Marti Ribeiro**, who served in Iraq and Afghanistan. In 2006, she was raped by a military colleague.*

I was interviewed by the BBC last week about my experiences with sexual harassment during my time in the military, specifically during my deployments overseas. The interview was rather "regular" in that they didn't ask any questions that I didn't expect and kind of followed the same line of thought that all interviewers travel along.

I completed the interview and didn't think much of it until yesterday.

I guess the BBC reaches a much different audience than the American press that I've spoken with during the past year, because my interview seemed to awaken a section of the population and spur them to communicate back with me – not all in a good way. While I'm to the point in my recovery that I can talk about my experience without re-traumatizing myself, I'm still human. I still get upset when someone sends me a message that is sexually harassing in nature, especially when it's in response to an article about the exact subject.

As of yesterday, my Facebook page was bombarded with messages from men. Some were of support, but most were the type that makes me wonder if we'll ever get to the point that women can serve safely in any military, not just the U.S. It amazes me that anyone would feel it was appropriate to use social media to reach out to me in that manner. Is it a joke to them? Is my experience a joke to them?

During my years on active duty I "dealt" with the harassment. It was part of the job. It was expected. We'd received yearly training on sexual harassment, only to be harassed on the way out of the training. It never ended. Most of it you can deal with, but there are a few guys who cross that line to either make you uncomfortable or invade your personal space. But it seemed for years that the policies in place were there to protect the predator, not the prey.

I'm currently working with the [Service Women's Action Network](#) to change some of those policies and bring awareness to this issue. Military women should not have to "deal" with anything except the rigors of their daily job. They shouldn't have to endure harassment on a regular basis just to be able to serve their country... and those female veterans who are speaking out, shouldn't have to endure harassment when they speak out about this issue. This is clearly behavior that is ongoing and is detrimental to the development of the female population.

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### MARTI RIBEIRO

Former U.S. Air Force Staff Sergeant

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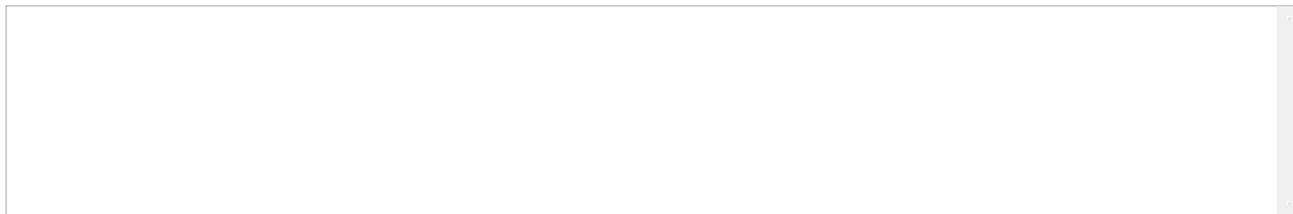
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