

STATEMENT OF TERRI ODOM, PROTECT OUR DEFENDERS

Response Systems To Adult Sexual Assault Crimes Panel

Dear Panel members,

My name is Terri J. Odom. I am a survivor of rape in the military. Currently I serve as volunteer veteran advisor at the St Louis VAMC. I was given an office and work directly with our exe team leaders. I only have asked for complete transparency. And received it! I meet with both male and female MST veterans both young and old. Their stories hurt to the core! They always say, Terri, my COC and the fall out from reporting my rape was a thousand times worse than the assault!

The lack of support and retaliation was hard to take. Being a victim of rape in the military is a career ender! The veterans I meet with; are broken and their trust of anyone is very low! I help them with VHA health care and VBA info. Often they find it easier to open up to me as I too; have been in their boots. This is also part of my healing journey. I am committed to serving our heroes! I am humbled that the VA allows me to serve in my small way. Serving my country is all I ever wanted and is my passion. I hope with my real life experience with COC failure to victims and zero justice-I can continue to offer my ear, heart and voice to these noble brave veterans.

The pain in their eyes from a system that turned their back on them is heartbreaking. As I struggle with my own PTSD from MST, this volunteering keeps me alive! I see veterans from every era! Some getting discharged currently still many with errant M/H dx's! Still as we see in the military victim blaming is the norm! Many COC's that have failed victims have blood on their hands! Suicide among MST veterans is an epidemic

My story:

A much higher-ranking NCO; that had befriended me offered to walk me to my apartment from the beach down a very narrow and dark alley way. I had grown to trust him! He was much older and spoke of his wife and children often. He was somewhat of a Father figure. And I respected his stellar Navel Career! Several of my neighbors and other Sailors were gathered on the beach for a bomb fire and nighttime swim. I had to leave early as I had duty on base the next morning.

Once we reached my apartment; he asked me if he could sleep on the sofa and If I could possibly drop him off at his barracks the next morning? I of course said yes! He was TDY in Sicily and had stayed on the sofa a few times. I trusted him completely! I offered him blankets before going to my bedroom. He said he was fine and asked if I had coffee? I made us a small pot. We drank it. Then as I said good night! ALL HELL BROKE LOOSE!

I was wearing a robe and my PJ's. He pulled me close and kissed me hard! I pulled away! And he instantly said I am so sorry! At that moment I think I was more shocked than

afraid? I told him, "It was ok-just please never again!" Then as I started to walk away-he grabbed me and ripped my robe-he pulled me by the hair after punching me in my mouth down the hallway into my bathroom. It was being updated. I realized he was going to hurt me. I tried screaming, pleading, he informed me he was in charge! Not me! He punched me several times-And I fought back with all I had! I was out matched! He raped me vaginally and in my rectum several times-Defecated and urinated in my mouth while holding my head under water in the toilet.

I remember my face being right under an exposed pipe from the sink. He took pliers and pulled my fingernails off and extracted several teeth--The pain was horrible--Then he took his service knife and cut my clitoris and raped me with a copper pipe and took the knife and made puncture wounds all over my body. He poured pain thinner into my vagina and the cut. I finally had decided death was better than living through this! No matter how much I did what he asked! He just hit me more and harder! I tried to bite his penis off in defense and anger!

He then hit me with a hammer to the left of my head. His last words were, "Don't feel special! You aren't the first! and you won't be the last!" I passed out. Woke up in the bathtub covered in blood and his feces! I vomited and cleaned up to hurry to get to base! I knew I could not be late for duty and I needed medical care. I was so afraid he was still in the apartment. To this day I am afraid. Do not know how I had the strength and will power to drive to base? I guess human survival kicked in and my adrenalin was on over drive.

Once I reported to duty I tried to report what had happened and asked for medical help, I was in shock and really didn't even know a crime had taken place? I was wearing long sleeves to hide the bruises and cuts-The Chief in charge of duty was going to write me up for being out of uniform! He told me I must have had a good roll in the hay to take an aspirin and sleep it off in the bunkroom. Which was co-ed. People were laughing at me because of my swollen mouth and black eyes! I felt like everything I knew of mankind had been taken away!

The next morning I reported to the XO of the base and he asked me if I was wearing perfume. I had vaginal blood running down my legs. He said call it a bad period and that how could I dare try to tarnish the career of a good man! He told me I could spend the rest of my life in a military prison for falsely reporting a crime and adultery charges since my rapist was a married man. He gave me a medical chit to go home for three days! The scene of the crime! That was my first suicide attempt-I could not sleep nor shower. I tried to drown myself.

I went back to duty a few days later and was just in a fog-I saw my attacker-since I had to work for him. He was shocked to see me alive! And seemed pissed off! He made it clear that he would finish the job and kill me if I didn't stop saying he had raped and beaten me! I eventually went to the base chaplain and he had two MP's hand cuff me and take me to the flight line to medevac me to Germany for being suicidal. From Germany, I was airlifted to Andrews AFB-It was there blood work determined I was pregnant from the

rape. My doctor said if I wanted to keep my Navy Career I had to stop using the rape word and would have to have an abortion. The fetus was too much DNA proof. She made the abortion appointment and called personnel to get me paid. I had to pay for the abortion. I was taken in hand cuffs in an AF ambulance with an off duty Air Force nurse from the mental ward-she lit my cigarette for me. And told me it would be ok and just keep my head down at the protesters. She said remember this is your career to save.

I was numb and felt what empty and liveness means. I had the abortion! After about a week or so I was transported to Bethesda Navel Hospital. I had complications from the abortion! A OBGYN military doctor informed me this was God's way of punishing me for killing my child! After several months of fighting to save my career I was eventually honorably discharged against my will! I was sent to a 6 week substance abuse program but dropped by the LTC in charge because he said I was not an addict or alcoholic. He ordered me back to full duty. But my psych. doc was very pissed!

I did everything they asked me to do! And still lost my career from being raped! This is the last time I will ever write about my rape again. Please! I beg the military to fix this horribly broken zero justice system! No one should go through this HELL!

Thank You!

Terri J. Odom
Missouri