

Paula Coughlin**US Navy****Featured in The Invisible War**

Paula Coughlin attended the infamous Tailhook conference in Las Vegas in September 1991, and became one of the first of 87 female attendees who reported being sexually assaulted by over 100 U.S. Navy and Marine Corps aviation officers. Coughlin resigned from the Navy in February 1994 after being subjected to continued abuse in retaliation for her allegations – allegations which ultimately led to the end of the careers of over 300 officers and 14 admirals.

“It has to come out of the chain of command, because the chain of command has really become impotent. The chain of command is vested in protecting itself, and so often, the perpetrator of the assault is in the chain of command.” [LINK](#)

Myla Haider**US Army****Featured in The Invisible War**

Before she ever went to war, during CID training, Haider was raped. She decided not to report the attack. A few years later, after she'd become a CID agent, Haider got a phone call from an officer who was investigating a possible serial rapist — the same soldier who raped her. “All of the other women who were involved in the case had been attacked after I was attacked,” Haider said. “So I thought the only right thing for me to do was to be involved. My reporting of it took over my life, ruined my career and wound up, ultimately, getting me kicked out of the Army,” she said. Haider and several other plaintiffs testified, but in the end, the charges were reduced, and the perpetrator avoided going into a registry of sex offenders.

Myla Haider argues that trained military police and lawyers should oversee rape investigations, not ‘convening authorities’ who may have no legal training and are within the chain of command where the assault took place. Until that happens, the victim will keep paying the price, Haider believes. [LINK](#)

Elle Helmer**US Marine Corps****Featured in The Invisible War**

In 2006, when Marine Lt. Elle Helmer reported to her commander that a superior officer assaulted and raped her the night before, her colonel discouraged her from obtaining a rape kit. In spite of his objections, she sought a thorough medical investigation. Helmer appealed to her rapist's supervisor, who still refused to press charges or significantly punish the assailant. Instead of Helmer's attacker being prosecuted, she became the subject of investigation and prosecution. She was ultimately forced to leave the Marine Corps. Her rapist remains a Marine in good standing. [LINK](#), [LINK](#)

Jessica Hinves**US Air Force****Featured in The Invisible War**

Jessica Hinves said an Air Force investigation found enough evidence to warrant a court-martial on rape charges for her assailant. But the colonel in charge of Hinves' unit overruled that

decision. “Two days before the court hearing, his commander called me on a conference at the JAG office, and he said he didn't believe that he acted like a gentleman, but there wasn't reason to prosecute. So, we got -- I was speechless. I didn't even know that was an option. Legal had been telling me this is going to go through court. We had the court date set for several months. And two days before, his commander stopped it. I later found out the commander had no legal education or background, and he'd only been in command for four days.”

After reporting her rape, Jessica Hinves was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder and discharged from the military. During the investigation into the assault, her perpetrator was awarded ‘Airman of the Year’. [LINK](#), [LINK](#)

Ariana Klay

US Marine Corps

Featured in The Invisible War

A former Marine officer assigned to the prestigious Marine Barracks Washington, Ariana Klay graduated with honors from the U.S. Naval Academy and served in Iraq. Forced to attend mandatory drinking outings, Klay was continually subjected to sexual harassment and was assaulted by a senior officer and his friend, her civilian boss. Her assailant was convicted of adultery for the rape. “The thing that makes me the most angry is not even the rape itself; it’s the commanders that were complicit in covering up everything that happened.” [LINK](#), [LINK](#)

Trina McDonald

US Navy

Featured in The Invisible War

Trina McDonald was drugged and raped repeatedly by military police at the remote Adnak Naval Operating Station in Alaska's Aleutian Islands. She did not report the attacks. “The people that were involved in my assaults were police personnel, security personnel, higher-ranking officers, the people that I would have gone to and reported.”

Trina McDonald is calling on Congress to amend the Uniform Code of Military Justice by moving the decision to prosecute military sexual assault out of the chain of command. In a MoveOn.org petition titled ‘Raped in the U.S. Navy: Protect Survivors of Military Sexual Assault,’ McDonald states that rape should never be an ‘occupational hazard.’ The petition calls on the U.S. Senate to address the recent increase in military sexual assaults by making revisions to the military justice system. She will deliver more than 113,000 petition signatures to members of Congress on Wednesday. [LINK](#)

ADDITIONAL VICTIMS

Panayiota Bertzikis

Coast Guard

When Panayiota reported that she had been raped by a fellow coast-guardsman, the commander called her a liar and ordered them to “work out their differences.” After being forcibly discharged for speaking up, she founded the Military Rape Crisis Center. Panayiota Bertzikis received an adjustment disorder diagnosis and was forced out of the Coast Guard in 2006 -- after reporting to her superiors that she had been punched in the face and raped by a shipmate during

an off-duty hike. When she reported the attack, Bertzikis says the chief of her Coast Guard station ordered her and her attacker to clean out an attic on base together and told to work out their differences. "I am the victim of this crime, and then you report it, and then I felt like I was the one on trial -- I was the one who did something wrong," Bertzikis says. "He got a free pass. I was the one fighting to stay in." [LINK](#), [LINK](#)

Rebecca Blumer

US Navy

Rebecca Blumer was drugged and raped by three Army officers she met in a bar not far from base. After waiting more than a year for the results of her rape investigation, the end came swiftly for Blumer when she found herself sitting across a desk from a new rape investigator. The new agent assured her that she'd read through Blumer's file, questioned her if there was any way she could have imagined it. Within days the JAG informed Blumer that the investigation had concluded there was no evidence that her assault had taken place. Found guilty by default of a DUI, Blumer was discharged from the Navy 10 days later. Instead of receiving her final paycheck on her way out, Blumer says she was handed a bill for \$14,000 – re-enlistment bonus money she now owed for the three years remaining on her Navy contract. Blumer fell through the cracks and spent the next seven months homeless. [LINK](#), [LINK](#)

Valerie Desautel

US Army

Valerie Desautel was allegedly raped at an on-base hotel at Fort Lee near Petersburg, where she was stationed, in 2002. She had met the alleged rapist hours earlier at a nightclub. She reported the alleged assault, but an Army investigator insinuated that the sex might have been consensual, the lawsuit alleges. In response, she revealed that she is gay. During the investigation, Desautel was forbidden from discussing the case with anyone besides a chaplain. Ultimately, Desautel was discharged as a homosexual under the military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy, which has since been repealed by Congress. No one was ever prosecuted for the alleged rape and the case was closed, the lawsuit says. [LINK](#), [LINK](#)

Ayana Harrell

US Army Veteran

Harrell was drugged and gang-raped by fellow soldiers and Marines at a training base in Alabama. She reported the incident to her drill instructor, but he failed to assist her. It took her three weeks to drum up the courage to report the rape, she says, because she had been trained to believe that soldiers are not allowed to feel or behave like victims. By the time Harrell told her senior drill sergeant what had happened, she had discovered that she was pregnant from the assault.

Survivors of sexual assault in the military have long advocated for such action because they believe the current system prevents some from reporting their assaults out of fear of retaliation. "I feel if I didn't have to report to my chain of command and if military sexual trauma assault

was not so hush and was being talked about more, I would have said something,” Ayana Harrell, a U.S. Army veteran who was raped while serving in the military, said. [LINK](#)

Rebekah Havrilla
United States Army

Rebekah Havrilla was stationed in Ft. Riley, KS before she deployed to Afghanistan from 2006 to 2007. She was the only female member of a bomb squad in eastern Afghanistan and was attacked by a colleague at Salerno Forward Operating Base near the Pakistani border. Before her sexual assault she was subjected to sexual harassment. As part of her sexual assault, her fellow U.S. Army sergeant took photographs of her, and posted them on a pornographic website. She reported the man that raped her and also reported her supervisor under the restricted reporting option, because starting an official investigation would lead to criticism and ostracism. Later, she officially reported the assault and the official investigation started but took a long time and concluded that they could only charge her perpetrator with adultery. In June 2010, she learned that the commander had decided not to prosecute – charges were never pressed against her assailant. As she said at a March Senate Armed Services Committee hearing, "What we need is a military with a fair and impartial criminal justice system. One that is run by professional and legal experts, not unit commanders." [LINK](#)

Greg Jeloudov
US Army

Greg Jeloudov was a new American citizen who emigrated from Russia and reported for basic training in 2009 with a fresh sense of patriotism. The soldiers in his unit called him names and homophobic slurs. Less than two weeks after arriving on base, he was gang-raped in the barracks by men who said they were showing him who was in charge of the United States. When he reported the attack to unit commanders, they told him, "It must have been your fault. You must have provoked them." [LINK](#)

Tara Johnson
US Marine Corps

Tara Johnson, 40, a Marine Corps veteran, said she experienced sexual trauma in the military repeatedly — including at the hands of a senior officer while an officer candidate — before reporting what had happened to her command. Her experiences with VA facilities have scarred her so deeply, she said, that she refuses to return. “I was assigned a male provider who was new to the VA. During my first appointment through tears and fear I again disclosed my experience with MST,” Johnson said of a 2012 visit to a VA facility. “The provider looked at me, widened his eyes, sat back in his chair and said, 'Well, do you really think you were raped?’”

When asked by California Rep. Jackie Speier at a recent House hearing if they’d support removing cases from units’ chains of command. All four victims testifying, (including Johnson) agreed, raising their hands. Two, Wilkins and Lewis, raised both their hands. [LINK](#)

Rebecca Johnson-Stone

US Army

Rebecca, an army intelligence analyst, suffered a Traumatic Brain Injury when a fellow service member sexually assaulted her. In addition to her obvious emotional ordeal, Rebecca suffered lasting physical effects from the attack, including brain damage that causes her to experience random blackouts and near-constant headaches. “You get used to your injuries,” she calmly explains. “I don’t think they’re ever going to go away.” [LINK](#), [LINK](#)

Jessica Kenyon

US Army

During training Kenyon's teaching sergeant began to harass her. He constantly touched her, and made sexual jokes and comments to her. She did not believe it would be effective to report the teaching sergeant because her unit commander was openly misogynistic. He was known to say “this unit never had any problems until females came into it.” In December 2005, while Private Kenyon was home for the holidays, she was raped by a member of the Army National Guard. At that point, she reported both the sexual harassment by the drill instructor and the rape to an Army sexual assault response coordinator. The Army official advised her to put the rape "on the back burner" and focus on the sexual harassment. Private Kenyon then discussed the rape with Command, who advised that it would be used against her in promotional reviews if she chose to pursue prosecution. After she reported the harassment and rape, she was ostracized and retaliated against by her fellow soldiers. She was reassigned and when she arrived, the sergeant advised that he had received calls warning him about her. He then made a unit-wide announcement cautioning everyone that they “should be careful who you talk to because they might report you.” Later she was sexually assaulted and Kenyon reported the assault to Command. The assailant denied the sexual assault and failed a lie detector test as a result. He then recanted his testimony and admitted to the harassment. He was charged with "lying on a sworn statement" and given only a non-judicial punishment. He was demoted two ranks but remained on active duty. The assailant got to keep his job. Private Kenyon got Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. [LINK](#)

Brian Lewis

United States Navy

Lewis was raped by a superior non-commissioned officer and forced to go back out to sea after the assault. As his complaint moved up the chain of command, it was met with increasing hostility. They did not deny he had been raped but sought to get him off the vessel by saying it had affected his discipline. A year after this crime, Brian was misdiagnosed with a Personality Disorder and discharged.

In May, appearing at a press conference in support of Senator Gillibrand’s MJIA, he stated, “I am proud to be standing here in support of this new legislation designed to mandate fundamental change within our broken military system by requiring commanders to immediately forward reports of assault to investigators and by removing the authority to decide whether to prosecute and convene trials from the chain of command. The current system is broken. As in my case, commanding officers often fail to report rape and sexual assault because of personal biases and conflicts of interests.

“Survivors in turn are afraid to report out of fear of being retaliated against, labeled with errant medical diagnoses, such as personality or bipolar disorder, and involuntarily discharged.

“The military has proven time and again that it is not capable of punishing the perpetrators or stopping the sexual assault epidemic. It is time to implement fundamental change and start doing right by our men and women, brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers in uniform. This legislation is a major step in that direction.” [LINK](#)

Karley Marquet
West Point

Karley Marquet was a first-year cadet when she was raped. Only a few months at the academy Karley was betrayed. She was raped by a West Point upper classman that she knew and thought she could trust. He repeatedly went to her room and asked her not to talk about the rape. She also heard other West Point upperclassman talk about another female cadet who had reported being raped. They called the victim a slut who was asking for it. But Karley was not intimidated. She reported the crime to her chain of command, but no serious action was taken to assist her. West Point did not move the perpetrator from Karley's company so she had to see him every day. As a result of the rape and the hostile environment, Karly began to suffer Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and she resigned less than a year after becoming a cadet. [LINK](#)

Jenny McClendon
United States Navy

McClendon was raped on a Navy ship at sea. She reported the attack directly up her chain of command, but her senior chief accepted the man's denials and refused to take the word of a lower-ranking woman. When the assaults continued, McClendon went all the way up to the ship's captain, who ordered a criminal investigation. Nevertheless, the case lacked evidence because the ship carried no rape kits. The perpetrator finally admitted to “consensual sex” and got knocked down one rank. McClendon said she was assaulted again by an investigator while based in Norfolk, Va. This time, when she reported the attack, her lieutenant called her a “whore” and sent her to a Navy therapist, who suggested that she was a bad fit for the Navy. “Essentially, I was diagnosed with a personality disorder for failing to adjust adequately to being raped,” McClendon said. [LINK](#), [LINK](#)

BriGette McCoy
United States Army

BriGette McCoy was assaulted by a non-commanding officer while stationed in Germany. She initially did not report the incident. Later, she was sexually harassed, which she reported to her NCO to let them know she couldn't work with the sergeant because his sexual advances made her feel unsafe. She also reported her sexual assault. Within a few weeks of reporting these incidents she was first ridiculed and separated from the other soldiers, then given duty outside the parameters of her job, and then lastly given the opportunity to exit service. Her first sergeant threatened filing charges against her. She was released with an honorable discharge but her attacker went unpunished. At a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing in March she testified, “I have to say I no longer have any hope that the military chain of command will

consistently, prosecute, convict, sentence and carry out the sentencing of sexual predators in uniform without absconding justice somehow.” [LINK](#)

Darchelle Mitchell

US Air Force

After being continually sexually harassed, within the first 3 months of her tour in Italy, Mitchell was raped by another service member. She did everything in accordance to the training provided by the military and reported the incident to NCIS and obtained a rape kit. The rapist’s DNA was found in her rape kit and his fingerprints found throughout my room and ripped clothing, yet the service member was found not guilty. The explanation given to me was “it is reasonable to believe that he thought he had your consent.” [LINK](#)

Jennifer Norris

United States Air Force

Jennifer Norris encountered four different predators in the first two years of her career. Because of the prolonged exposure to the predators and others who retaliated after she reported the crimes, Jennifer developed PTSD.

Her mission is to take the investigation and prosecution of violent crimes out of the Chain of Command so the military can focus on the mission at hand. “When I did come forward to my command, I became one of far too many who fall victim to manipulation and abuse of authority by perpetrators who are higher ranking and have more credibility than those who are in charge.” [LINK](#)

Terri Odom

United States Navy

Terri Odom reported a rape to her superiors in 1986 while working as a Seabee at Naval Air Station Sigonella in Italy. Still cut and bleeding from the attack, she covered herself with a long-sleeved shirt before seeking help at her duty office, she said. When she told her shift supervisor about the rape and asked for medical treatment, he threatened to write her up for being out of uniform and instructed her to take two aspirins and lay down on an office cot, she said.

After the shift ended, she reported the rape to the second ranking commander on the base, who ordered her to rest for three days at home, where she had been attacked. “He said you don’t want to tarnish a good man’s career,” she said. Her descent into depression began. When she returned to the naval base, she confided in a chaplain that she had attempted suicide. She was medically evacuated to the U.S. and discharged in 1989 for borderline personality disorder.

“You don’t just wake up one day from a severe trauma and suddenly come down with personality disorder,” Odom said. “They re-victimize you.”

After she went to therapy, her superiors disapproved. She was reprimanded for faking an illness to avoid work. She did not return for help until months later, after her command’s dismissal of the assault and harassment reports left her feeling defeated.

“If I had the appropriate treatment, I would have been able to recuperate completely, but because of everything I was put through afterwards, it turned into severe PTSD,” she said. [LINK](#), [LINK](#)

Sarah Plummer**United States Marine Corps**

Sarah Plummer served two years of Marine Corps ROTC, nearly seven years of Active Duty service, and two deployments to Iraq. She was raped two months before her 22nd birthday. A few days after it happened, she went to her MOI and told him she didn't want to be a Marine anymore but was unable to tell him she was raped. She hadn't reported the rape right after it happened because she was confused. She told herself to push it down – “suck it up” Several months later, Plummer found herself at The Basic School, listening to a JAG talk about Marines raping Marines. Although she belittled the victims and told the stories sarcastically, a lot of the stories sounded a lot like Sarah's. And it hit her, “What if the guy who raped me comes here and does that to someone else? I will never be able to live with myself.” She simply felt like it was a duty to report it to protect any potential future victims. So, she reported it to the JAG and it was all downhill from there for a while. On NBC Nightly News on May 8, she said, “Having someone within your direct chain of command handling the case, it just doesn't make sense. It's like your brother raping you and having your dad decide the case.”

Victoria Sanders**US Army**

Victoria Sanders said she was raped at age 20 while stationed at Fort Carson, Colo. “When you report a rape, you become public enemy No. 1... Even if your rapist is punished, harassment is limitless. It followed me through three transfers in nine months.” Sanders said that while her rapist was reprimanded — receiving a reduction in rank, lost pay, and confinement to barracks — he still remained on duty. “This is an example of chain of command harassment because the barracks he was confined to is the one where he worked,” she told lawmakers. “I still worked in the office next door.”

When asked by California Rep. Jackie Speier at a recent House hearing if they'd support removing cases from units' chains of command. All four victims testifying, (including Sanders) agreed, raising their hands. [LINK](#)

Lisa Wilkins**US Air Force**

Lisa Wilkins said she and other service members who were sexually assaulted were “rape survivors of friendly fire. I use those terms not to make a joke of it, but to bring it home that we were all assaulted by someone who wore the [same] uniform as we wore, and not all people wear the uniform as honorably as you do.”

When asked by California Rep. Jackie Speier at a recent House hearing if they'd support removing cases from units' chains of command. All four victims testifying, (including Wilkins) agreed, raising their hands. [LINK](#)