

Dear Sir/Ma'am,

My name is [REDACTED]. I am a Staff Sergeant in the USAF, and I am currently stationed at [REDACTED]. I work in the [REDACTED] as a Materiel Manager (Supply). I have been serving in the military for nearly 7 years.

My wife was assaulted by my coworker while I was working at [REDACTED], in the [REDACTED]. I worked in the Equipment Accountability Office. After my wife was assaulted, our entire chain of leadership was supportive of us and what we were going through as a family, as well as what my wife was going through as an individual. That is, they were supportive until her attacker was arrested approximately 5 days after her assault.

When my leadership discovered who had been charged with perpetrating the assault, the support they gave my family changed. There was now a conflict of interest in their minds, so they could no longer be supportive of us because, as they claimed, it would have been taking a side. My wife's assault and my coworker's arrest should have been mutually exclusive events. Yes, he was arrested under suspicion of being the assailant, but my wife never accused him. Her support, and the support for my family, should have been separate from the support that was given to the arrested member. Regardless of who was arrested, she was still a victim of a horrible crime. My family was still suffering very much, and we were neglected by my supervision and my command.

The retaliation we faced wasn't because my wife reported her assault; it was due to who was arrested. The individual was considered an upstanding citizen. He had a wife and a daughter, he was a charismatic person, and he was attractive. The case was resolved through Court Martial where the defendant was sentenced to 34 years, of which he would serve a maximum of 20 due to a plea deal he made with the prosecution.

Before and after the trial we faced retaliation. Each type was different. The first type I experienced was upon my return to my work section after my R&R (rest and relaxation from returning from deployment). I was told that I was to be responsible for completing Hodge's work while he was in confinement because I was the most experienced on those programs. I told my supervision that I was uncomfortable doing his work, even if he wasn't guilty yet. I was told by my Non-Commissioned Officer In-Charge (NCOIC), a Master Sergeant, that I would do the work I was ordered to do, and that it was just as hard on everyone else and that work should be a place of escape from what was going on in my personal life. Additionally, I was told that if I were to talk about it anymore then I would be brought before leadership and would be receiving paperwork for violating the commander's gag order. The only person I had spoken with was my immediate supervisor and my NCOIC, both of which happened behind closed doors. I was given the impression that I was not allowed to talk to my NCOIC or supervisor about the decision and that if I did it would incur disciplinary or punitive action against me.

Due to the stress of these events, my wife relayed what had happened to her SVC and our installation SARC. These individuals took the situation to my Wing Commander. As a result, I was moved

to a new section shortly afterwards. At the time I wasn't aware that I could tell anyone about the retaliation I had faced. There was no training that covered retaliation or what to do if you experienced it. It would have been extremely helpful for me to know what retaliation was and that it was prohibited, and how to report it. If I had known this I would have reported the incident as soon as it had happened to rectify the situation. I did consider going to the IG about it, but I never did, and I never considered going to the EO office because I didn't think this would fall under the categories of protected rights.

To make matters worse was how my squadron command handled the situation. The retaliation didn't end with my NCOIC. It continued with my leadership, because they told me on numerous occasions that I was responsible for being the person who people looked to as an example during this time. I was told that I was supposed to be the strength for other people, and that my actions weren't in line with this goal. I was a secondary victim in a horrible crime, yet I was supposed to be strong for other people who were less related to the incident; this didn't make any sense to me.

Furthermore, I was instructed that if we moved to a new house on base then we would be forfeiting our opportunity to have a humanitarian PCS later on if we chose to. We were forced to live out of suit cases for 3 months because our house was considered a crime scene, yet if we decided to move to a new house then we would be unable to move to a new base later on? This is completely against the regulations for these situations but this is what was explained to me, despite my protests. It was the PCS that ultimately ended the retaliation that I faced.

If we knew then what we do now, I would have done things very differently. It was my wife's decision to report the assault, and it was her propagative. If she did decide to report, I would have immediately requested to be moved to a different section as soon as an arrest was made. I also would have told my commander that I could not have had as much expected of me as had been previously. My family needed to come first, and I had a hard time doing that because of the responsibility placed on me. I also would have started working with the SAPR office in [REDACTED], because the annual SAPR training we had was very nearly a complete waste of time. I don't remember anything about it, but I know that most people considered it something to forget or ignore.

The worst part of the whole experience was how my supervision and command handled the situation after my coworker was arrested. I was given the chance to deal with the trauma to my family. I was allowed to go to the legal meetings, but that was it. No one in my chain of command sought out to make sure I was taken care of mentally. Due to this incident, I do not plan to stay in the military. I find it extremely hard to trust people, and I cannot trust the military as an institution to protect my family if I were to deploy again. I am untrusting of my leadership and those who are in authority over me.

I believe there needs to be a training for supervisors, both front line and management, which discusses how these situations should be handled, because there is currently nothing to teach NCOs how to act towards their troops who have made an unrestricted report. They don't know how to treat and act around these individuals who require some special consideration. Supervisors need to be able to say, "Do you have a victim advocate? Would you like one?" Right now, unless you have training above what is currently taught, by going through the Victim Advocate training or a sexual assault experience

yourself, a supervisor won't know that their troop is even allowed to have someone such as an advocate. I know from my own experience that the person I trusted the most through the experience was my own victim advocate, which was in stark contrast to the fact that my leadership was the group that I trusted the least.

It has been a long road to even begin my recovery, but I have recently started counseling for what I've gone through. I originally started seeing an on base provider, but was transferred to an off base counselor. The road to recovery is going to be a long and difficult one, and the fact that an already bad situation was made worse by the actions of those in authority over me will just make my journey that much harder. Something needs to change so that those who experience the trauma of an assault don't have to experience the trauma of retaliation and failed actions from leadership as well.

Very Respectfully,

A solid black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.