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Subject: Jessica Hinvies Testimony  
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I joined the Air Force in 2007 when I was 24 years-old. I come from a military family whose attitude is anyone who can join the military should, so I left my job and home in Texas in order to serve. Because I love mechanics and fixing things, and my Grandfather was a bomber mechanic in Korean War, my Step dad an Army Pilot, I decided to be a jet mechanic. I loved my job and felt if I worked hard and kept my head down, I would get respect. I ignored the routine harassment that took place in the male dominated environment.

That changed when I was on temporary duty in Las Vegas in 2009. An inebriated airman broke through an adjoining hotel room and sexually assaulted me. I have told the story of my assault before in order to advocate for change in the justice system, but I have not talked about the retaliation I experienced after my assault until my final day in the military April 23, 2011.

After my assault, I planned to make a restricted report because I knew I would be ostracized if I told. I worked and lived with the perpetrator and his friends so I felt I could not report. However, when I got back from the hospital, my roommate in the adjoining room had told so the report was unrestricted.

After that, my peers at Nellis Air Force Base called me a "bitch" and said I was "getting him (my perpetrator) in trouble" and "ruining his career". I was put in a room at the end of the runway and subjected to rape scene played on continuous repeat from a movie called Hostage. My truck was tampered with so I had to walk everywhere. I was told I "better sleep light." I spent a night in a hospital because nowhere was safe. I was told by an expeditor MSgt. Robinson I just want you to know Crew Chiefs will eat their own!" I told my 1st Shirt, who in the Air Force is a special duty held by a senior enlisted member who reports directly to the unit commander about the harassment and was able to get a humanitarian transfer. I was coached to not report everything so a separate investigation was not opened because they could not assure my safety on the military installation which terrified me. The people who threatened and harassed me were never punished for what they did. Meanwhile, my perpetrator was awarded "Airman of the Quarter" while the investigation was going on. He actually got a standing ovation. Being betrayed by people whom I would give my life for was one of the hardest parts of the experience.

When I got to my new base in Virginia, I heard from TSgt. out of my chain of command that my new commander had been told "You are getting a bad egg. She is under investigation." The time I spent on interviews for the criminal investigation interfered with my ability to do my job and I was taken off my duty maintaining jets. A court date was set for 2010. However, just before the date, the commander said "While he didn't act like a gentleman, I see no reason to prosecute this case." I asked the JAG officer what to do next. She said to contact the base IG to do an investigation.

I contacted the I.G. on base about my experience and was told they were too busy to handle rape cases.

Though I was still able to perform my job and was even getting awards, my commander recommended I be medically retired. He said "We are just going to say you can't function without supervision and you will get disability." However, I did not want to leave service because I was really committed to my career. Nonetheless, I was put on disability for PTSD. I was given mental health

treatment but they did not understand many of the dynamics of military functions and it was hard to coordinate schedules for appointments. The flight line schedule changes weekly based on flight schedules. I had to make appointments a month in advance and sometimes I was reprimanded for having to leave when I was severely needed on the flight line due to short manning or jets breaking. This caused tension with my Chain of command as well as my comrades and hindered my focus on counseling. I also had to return to my job after speaking about my trauma and I found it increasingly hard to switch gears. I requested inpatient care to deal with the trauma head on and was sent to Portsmouth Naval hospital. The floor was all males and we could not lock our doors at night. This was the problem of the core of my trauma. Having a military member break into my room and rape me, I needed help processing the trauma in a safe environment with counselors who deal with military sexual trauma specifically. Considering statistics this is not an unreasonable request.

The last day I was in the military I took leave and I was filmed for the documentary the Invisible War. 3 weeks after the premiere, I got called in to a reevaluation for a disability assessment. I hoped maybe I was being called back into service. Instead, I was subjected to a 45 minute exam and told I was being dismissed for "borderline personality disorder" Although 45 minutes was not long enough to diagnose personality disorder, they said because I had participated in a group therapy for my military sexual trauma that was sometimes also used for personality disorder, I could be considered to have it and was being administratively discharged. I was told I would be losing my disability benefits, my honorable discharge, could not even be buried in a military cemetery, I was basically wiped from the military service and excluded from the VA services offered to veterans. the only thing I would be qualified for at that point would be counseling for MST as the VA had availability from their service connected veterans ranging in order of priority. I would be at a rank below priority and not assured a consistent counselor and given interns rotating through the VA system.. With the help of a private lawyer, I was able to appeal my discharge to the Discharge Review Board. I had a full psychological screening done which concluded that I had no preexisting conditions and in fact had PTSD from rape which occurred while serving the military. I not only one my case for retaliation but was given an immediate increase for PTSD to 70% according to DOD and VA standards. I was originally given 50% upon discharge and told I could accept that or get out with nothing but discharge was imminent, When I was decreased to a BPD my rating went so low that I had to go on welfare, get rid of cable, cellphone, and any extra expenses other than housing, food, electricity, and water. For many veterans this is the point that the bottom tips over and they are homeless.

As for support, my Victim Advocate deployed three weeks after my assault. She told me anything I told her could be used against her. I did not have an SVC. I did not have anyone supporting me. My VA counselor told me I would be better off seeing a civilian counselor because her notes could be used against me.

Because of my role in the Invisible War and as an advocate, I hear from a lot of survivors. One thing I often hear is that retaliation is a huge problem and often worse than the assault itself. I know of experienced decorated service members who have been threatened and had to move after reporting their assault. Until the problem of retaliation is addressed, survivors will not be willing to come forward and the problem will remain. Service members should not be forced to choose between their careers and reporting a sexual assault.