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Service Women's Action Network: Navy's Delayed Response to Video Five Years Too Late

Capt. Honors' Relieved of Duties Only After Video Became Public; Another Example of the Culture of Impunity regarding Rape, Assaults and Harassment

New York, NY – Service Women's Action Network (SWAN) - a national human rights organization founded by women veterans to advance the equal treatment of all servicemembers and veterans – spoke out today regarding the United States Navy's decision to relieve Captain Owen Honors of his duties aboard the USS Enterprise. SWAN's Executive Director and former Marine Corps Captain, Anuradha Bhagwati called the response, "An easy step for the Navy to make today, after these videos were made public, but where was the military's senior leadership in 2006 and 2007 when these videos were shown to over 6,000 USS Enterprise crewmembers?"

Capt. Owen Honors, serving as Executive Officer of the USS Enterprise during the 2006 and 2007 time period, produced and starred in videos featuring masturbation, a mock anal exam with a stick, anti-gay slurs, explicit language, and footage of women sailors in the shower. The videos were recently made public by the Virginia Pilot, a Norfolk, VA based newspaper.

"Unfortunately, this video is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the culture of sexual misconduct taking place in our military today," said Anuradha Bhagwati, a former Marine Corps Captain and Executive Director of SWAN. "Positive cultural changes based on the acceptance and respect of all servicemembers can only begin with the personal examples set by the highest levels of military leadership. By not holding Captain Honors immediately accountable for his actions when complaints were made by servicemembers in 2006 and 2007, the Navy has yet again highlighted the military's lack of commitment to changing the culture that gives rise to rampant sexual violence and discrimination where the perpetrators are, more often than not, protected and promoted."

This recent scandal comes on the heels of the December 15th release of the Department of Defense's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO) "*Annual Report on Sexual Harassment and Violence at the U.S. Military Service Academies.*" Bhagwati released a statement at the time which in part read, "The vast majority of generals and admirals began their careers as cadets and midshipmen at the military academies. They have been steeped in leadership models and ethical traditions that clearly fail when it comes to issues of discrimination, sexual harassment and gender-based violence." According to Navy records, Captain Honors attended the US Naval Academy, graduating in 1983.

To read the full press release, with a link to the SAPRO report, please visit:

<http://www.servicewomen.org/userfiles/File/SAPRO%20Press%20Release.pdf>

SWAN made headlines earlier last month after filing a lawsuit with the ACLU against the Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for their failure to respond to Freedom of Information Act requests seeking government records documenting incidents of rape, sexual assault and sexual harassment in the military. While over tens of thousands of military service members each year are estimated to experience some form of Military Sexual Trauma, the military and VA failed to release thousands of documents related to Military Sexual Trauma cases. The full press release on the SWAN/ACLU lawsuit can be read, here:

http://www.servicewomen.org/userfiles/File/MST%20FOIA%20final%20press%20release_12_13_2010.pdf

SWAN is a national human rights organization founded and led by women veterans. SWAN's vision is to transform military culture by securing equal opportunity and the freedom to serve in uniform without threat of harassment, discrimination, intimidation or assault. SWAN also seeks to reform veterans' services on a national scale to guarantee equal access to quality health care, benefits and resources for women veterans and their families. You can follow Service Women's Action Network on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/servicewomen>, or on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/servicewomen>.

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