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Service Women's Action Network

July 22, 2011

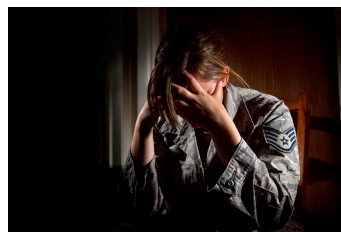


Dear Friends of SWAN,

Our efforts to hold military leadership accountable for rape, sexual assault and sexual harassment in the ranks are making significant headway both in terms of litigation and legislative reform. However, bias against victims and a desire to sweep incidents under the rug remain a continued threat to victims and an obstacle to institutional progress.

I want to talk to you today about the issue of Personality Disorders. In recent weeks, SWAN has been hearing from increasing numbers of active duty women and men whose careers have ended after reporting their rapes and assaults. In these cases, servicemembers have been sexually assaulted, and then almost immediately after reporting their attacks, have been diagnosed by military medical providers with a "Personality Disorder."

Why should we care? Personality Disorders make one ineligible for military service as well as veterans' benefits. Rape and assault survivors who are diagnosed with this condition are then routinely discharged from service. Their careers end practically overnight.



What I want to emphasize here is that Personality Disorders are pre-existing conditions that do not appear out of the blue. As we have seen with combat veterans, sexual assault survivors are often times misdiagnosed with Personality Disorder, instead of being properly diagnosed with PTSD or another medical condition that accurately reflects their symptoms.

Let's be clear. In the cases we are talking about, at both Military Academies and throughout the military itself, these are not diagnoses that correlate with the facts of a servicemember's military or medical record. In fact, all evidence suggests in these cases that the diagnosis of a Personality Disorder is meted out to a military sexual assault survivor as **retaliation**. It appears to be a way for the military to get rid of troops who are simply reporting a violent crime committed by a fellow servicemember.

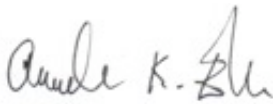
SWAN is working with legislators to ensure that the military will never again be able to get rid of sexual assault survivors as if they are dead weight. But we need your help. If you would be so kind as to forward these questions to your networks, so that we

can properly examine and identify cases of negligence, we would be truly grateful:

1. Are you a veteran who suffered a sexual assault while in the military and was subsequently diagnosed with a Personality Disorder by military medical personnel and discharged because of it?
2. Do you consider your diagnosis itself to be a form of retaliation related to your sexual assault?
3. Have you been denied VA benefits because of this diagnosis?
4. Have you unsuccessfully attempted to have this diagnosis changed or removed from your records by consulting with another military doctor, a VA doctor, or a private mental health provider?
5. Have you successfully had the diagnosis removed from your records and still had your disability claim denied by the VA even though you have another diagnosis (such as PTSD) that is related to military sexual assault?

If you answered YES to the first question AND any subsequent questions, please contact us at peersupport@servicewomen.org with your story.

Many thanks for your continued support,



Anu Bhagwati
Executive Director, Service Women's Action Network

(Photo by Leah Hogsten)

Donate Now

Donate Now

SWAN is a 501(c)3 organization that urgently needs your financial support. Your tax deductible donation will help SWAN ensure equality, fairness, and justice for women in the military and dramatically improve resources for women veterans.



About Us

SWAN is a 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 find the Service Women's Action Network on our [homepage](#), on [Twitter](#) or on [Facebook](#).

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