



PRESS RELEASE

Vietnam Veterans of America

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 16, 2017

No. 16-57
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301-996-0901

VVA: Enact Gillibrand's *The Military Justice Improvement Act* Now

(Washington, DC) – “Military Sexual Trauma is eroding the unity of force, its mission capability, our service members’ trust in one another, and the honor of all those who serve our nation in uniform. We, at Vietnam Veterans of America, have grown very weary of the Department of Defense claim that it has ‘zero tolerance’ toward Military Sexual Trauma,” said John Rowan, VVA National President.

“Military Sexual Trauma will not abate without changes to long-standing procedures, regulations, and legal systems, and these changes must be accorded a total buy-in by all military brass, Most importantly, leadership must be held accountable at all levels of the command structure,” said Rowan.

“Last month, we learned of a case of sexual harassment and assault by a senior officer at Maxwell-Gunter Air Force Base that was the kind of misconduct Pentagon leaders had promised Congress and the public it would no longer tolerate,” said Rowan. “Air Force investigators confirmed much of the victim’s account, and under military law, charges would have automatically resulted in a court-martial. However, the decision on what to do rested with a three-star general, 600 miles away, who did not charge the perpetrator with abusive sexual contact, or any crime at all. Instead, he imposed ‘non-judicial punishment,’ discipline for minor offenses. There would be no trial, no publicity, and no public record. This incident is ample evidence for why the legislation Senator Gillibrand (N.Y.-D) is introducing today is needed,” Rowan said.

“*The Military Justice Improvement Act* removes the prosecution of military sexual violence cases from the chain of command and allows for prosecution to be led by experienced criminal justice professionals, thus ensuring victims of MST an avenue to seek justice. It’s well past time for Congress to enact this needed reform,” said Rowan. “VVA calls on the Senate to take another look at the deplorable statistics and pass this legislation. Only then, will the corporate culture in our military begin to evolve toward justice.”

