



## PRESS RELEASE

Vietnam Veterans of America

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### VVA Responds to Ft. Hood Independent Review Committee Report

(Washington, D.C.) "We, the women veterans of Vietnam Veterans of America, read with deep disappointment and ire, the recent ['Ft. Hood Independent Review Committee Report,'](#) directed at sexual assault, sexual harassment, and high crimes in the aftermath of the murder of Vanessa Guillen," said Kate O'Hare Palmer, chair of the VVA Women Veterans Committee. "We have read reports like this for the past forty years. This is not new information. Military Sexual Trauma and Sexual Harassment are not treated as crimes and adjudicated at full force within the military. There are no consequences, no accountability, and no laws that are enacted and followed."

For years, VVA has testified before Congress, advising that crimes involving Military Sexual Trauma be adjudicated outside the military chain of command. It comes as no surprise that the investigation found 14 leaders at Ft. Hood to be culpable and relieved of their command, after this recent investigation revealed the rot in the system. Included in the report, on Page 97, is a graph showing that rates of Sexual Assault and Attempts to be at 86 percent and Violent Sex Crimes at 76 percent. This would never be tolerated in the private sector.

VVA has had women in leadership roles since our founding. In testimony before Congress in the early 1980s, VVA Women Veterans Committee members--Dr. Linda Schwartz, Rose Sandecky, and Lily Adams--addressed Sexual Assault and Harassment. In these intervening years, nothing has changed. Our sister and brother veterans continue to be victimized. It is intolerable that this latest report dares to offer 70 recommendations to change the "current climate." To say that there were "missed opportunities" for awareness of these problems is outrageous.

*The Military Justice Improvement Act*, first introduced by Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) in 2013, has been repeatedly thwarted on Capitol Hill. Again, no consequence and no accountability have led to appalling increases of these crimes. The victims of these crimes are our brothers, sisters, relatives, and friends. Often, they do not report these attacks for fear of retribution. Frequently, they are released from the military with a dishonorable discharge and loss of benefits. Subsequent depression, drug abuse, homelessness, and suicide are just some of the consequences following their mistreatment while in the military.

"We are proud of our military service," said O'Hare Palmer. "We are not proud of these long-lasting, horrific crimes to our fellow active-duty personnel and veterans. We will continue to battle for the reform of the military justice system in the 117th Congress, and we look forward to working with the next administration on this important issue as well. We encourage everyone to call your federal and state representatives to voice your opinions on the findings of this egregious report."

*Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) is the nation's only congressionally chartered veterans service organization dedicated to the needs of Vietnam-era veterans and their families. VVA's commitment to all veterans is exemplified in its founding principle. "Never again will one generation of veterans abandon another."*