



**DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE  
AIR COMBAT COMMAND  
LANGLEY AFB, VA**

9 July 2021

**MEMORANDUM FOR SENATOR TAMMY DUCKWORTH,  
SENATOR GARY PETERS,  
REPRESENTATIVE SEAN CASTEN,  
REPRESENTATIVE RASHIDA TLAIB,  
MEMBERS OF THE SENATE SELECT COMMITTEE ON  
INTELLIGENCE,  
MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE PERMANENT SELECT  
COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE,  
MEMBERS OF THE SENATE ARMED SERVICES  
COMMITTEE  
MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES  
COMMITTEE**

**FROM: Lt Col Ryan Sweazey, Deputy Chief, Flight Operations Division, Air Combat  
Command, Joint Base Langley-Eustis, VA**

**SUBJECT: Results of Solicitation to Defense Attaché Service (DAS) Members Regarding  
Toxic Leadership**

Dear esteemed members of Congress,

On 7 June 2021, I solicited inputs (found in Attachment 27a.) from approximately 170 former and current members of the Defense Attaché Service (DAS), specifically focused on members of [REDACTED], requesting their experiences regarding toxic leadership in the DAS.

To follow, are the results of the responses I received from 31 individuals, as of 9 July 2021:

Respondents reported the following issues concerning the Defense Attaché Service (DAS) and its pipeline training program, the Joint Military Attaché School (JMAS):

1. Civilian leaders within the DAS, especially at the Geographic Division level, systematically direct Operations Coordinators and operations support staff in DAOs, as well as other subordinates within DIA Headquarters, to collect and report derogatory information on attachés and coworkers to these civilian leaders circumventing the military chain of command. This information is then used by civilian DAS leadership to exercise unauthorized authority over the DAS to further their own personal career interests.

- a. Reference Inputs 1, 3, 9, 16, 19
2. DAS and JMAS leaders who, although alerted to a wide array of cultural issues within the organization, lack the desire and/or ability to effectively address those issues; many times taking retributive action against those who raised the issue(s).
  - a. Reference Inputs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 18, 19, 20, 21
3. A widespread fear of retribution within the DAS – conveyed either directly through members’ responses, their request for anonymity, or their request to not have their testimony go on record.
  - a. Reference Inputs 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 20, 21
4. A lack of faith in the DIA/IG system and DAS chain of command to equitably, fairly and thoroughly address issues in a timely manner which was free from retribution.
  - a. Reference Inputs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 15, 18, 19, 20, 21
5. The promulgated measure of performance within the DAS not being mission-focused nor derived from the DIA mission statement, but rather simply avoiding “being sent home.” Also, DAS members who would capriciously use as leverage direct and/or veiled threats of returning DAS members from their post abroad.
  - a. Reference Inputs 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 9
6. A dysfunctional system of formal, quantitative and consistent feedback from the DAS to its members serving on-station abroad.
  - a. Reference Inputs 1, 2, 10, 11, 12, 13
7. A dysfunctional system to collect and implement lessons learned within the DAS to ensure continuous improvement of the DAS mission.
  - a. Reference Inputs 1, 2, 3, 6, 10, 11, 12, 20
8. A lack of respect shown towards JMAS students by school staff.
  - a. Reference Inputs 6, 11, 12, 18
9. A failure of the DAS to operationally and/or administratively support field offices.
  - a. Reference Inputs 1, 3, 6, 8, 11, 16, 19, 21
10. Inadequate screening/training for Defense Attachés, leading to subsequent dereliction of duty and gross mismanagement by said Defense Attachés.
  - a. Reference Inputs 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12, 15
11. Violations of HIPAA.
  - a. Reference Inputs 4, 10, 12
12. Gender/race/medical/religious discrimination/bias.
  - a. Reference Inputs 2, 4, 8, 10, 12, 17

13. Government civilians who abused authority and/or exercised powers not within their authority.

a. Reference Inputs 1, 4, 6, 9

Also noteworthy is that 93% of respondents expressed their concern regarding retribution / reprisal in the DAS and the potential backlash they would receive for making a protected communication, as defined in 10 USC 1034.

Of the 31 individuals who responded to the solicitation for information:

-- All individuals had served or were currently serving in the DAS

-- The average time in service of the respondents over 19 years

-- 20 individuals requested anonymity\*

\*1 response was from a DAS member who provided input on behalf of 12 DAS members

Respondents varied in rank; the breakdown was approximately:

-- 40% Officer

-- 40% Government civilian (GS),

-- 10% Warrant Officer,

-- 10% Noncommissioned officer

The effects of the above issues all culminate in impacts to the individual, impacts to the unit, a significant degradation in mission execution, and a threat to national security. Given the high response rate combined with the widespread perceived high threat of retribution/reprisal within the DAS, the data suggests that:

1. The number of respondents represents only a fraction of those who share the same concerns about toxic leadership in the DAS,

2. The toxic culture of the DAS extends to beyond the one geographic division targeted for inputs, and,

3. There is a clear and present danger posed to national security due to the mission degradation being caused by a myriad of systemic issues in DIA.

Given the high number of responses to my inquiry, the gravity of the claims made in the testimonials, and the apparent unwillingness/inability of the Agency to address known systemic issues in a timely manner free of retribution/reprisal, I am respectfully requesting immediate Congressional intervention in ensuring that much-needed and much-overdue change occurs in the Defense Attaché Service, both in the purging of toxic personnel as well as the eradication of the caustic culture of the organization. The dedicated and devoted American professionals of the Defense Attaché Service deserve it, as does the nation.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "R. Sweazey", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Lt Col Ryan Sweazey, USAF  
Deputy Division Chief, Flight Operations