



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

17 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: Toxic Culture in the Defense Attaché Service and the Resultant Threat to  
National Security**

Dear esteemed members of Congress,

The Defense Attaché Service (DAS), a subordinate service within the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), touts itself as the “crown jewel of DIA.” It is not. It is an organization tainted by toxic leaders whose value system is self and job preservation over mission accomplishment. It is an organization that arbitrarily and capriciously punishes its members without due process while its leaders feign ignorance and/or retaliate against those who whistleblow. It lacks codified feedback and self-improvement mechanisms, wastes government resources, and squanders the amazing talent of its dedicated attaché and staff corps. In its current state, it resembles more an embarrassment than a “crown jewel”; a military organization overtaken by a toxic civilian cabal whose impact on the mission of the agency has resulted in the forfeiture of strategic advantage over our adversaries and ultimately bred a significant threat to national security.

In the documents that follow, you will read from dozens of current and former DAS members about the rampant toxicity in the DAS and the effects those have had. You will read how careers were irreparably derailed, family lives disrupted, and how whistleblowers were victims of reprisal; all while higher-level leaders turned a blind eye and the Agency’s Inspector General system consistently failed to carry out its “watchdog” role.

During the last two years of my assignment as an attaché in the DAS, I consistently raised issues of gross mismanagement, dereliction of duty, toxic leadership, fraud/waste/abuse, and reprisal to my chain of command. These reports graduated in the level I addressed them to as well as the severity of the claim. Each engagement with my chain of command resulted in either leadership ignoring the issues and/or punishing me for raising them. Along the way, I watched other DAS members suffer the same fate as I, to include officers, enlisted and our locally-employed staffers serving abroad. From September 2019 through today, I have requested intervention in the aforementioned mission-impacting issues from my supervisor [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. Without exception, there was no resolution enacted and, in most cases, my reports of wrongdoing were not even acknowledged. At the same time, the DIA/IG investigation that began as a result of my complaints in August 2020 has moved at a glacial pace, now entering its eleventh month with no conclusion in sight. Additionally unnerving regarding the IG investigation is that early on in the process, the DIA/IG office scoped the investigation to only two of the nine allegations, referring to command six and dismissing one, however, there have been no actions taken by command in response to those six referrals.

Because of the constant failures within DIA and the Office of the Inspector General to address the wrongdoings I, and many others, raised over the course of two years, I was left with my only remaining option: to file Congressional-level complaints against the Defense Intelligence Agency. In doing so, I solicited members of the DAS requesting their inputs regarding toxic leadership. As of the submission of this document, I have received inputs from over 30 current and former DAS members, citing toxic leadership, fraud/waste/abuse, abuse of authority, dereliction of duty, subversions of the chain of command, a highly retributive culture, and an inability of DIA's chain of command and IG to address DAS member complaints. The overall effect of this culture is significant mission degradation, the squandering of resources and talent, and, ultimately, a threat to national security.

Ladies and gentlemen, I undertook this years-long endeavor to root out toxicity in the DAS because I still believe in the amazing potential of the Attaché Service and what, when supported adequately, an attaché can achieve in the field. Brave and courageous DAS members who provided their testimonials share that same devotion. Sadly, the state of today's DAS is a far cry from the "crown jewel of the DIA" it touts itself to be. Many of the dedicated and professional members of the organization live in constant fear of retribution, doled out arbitrarily and capriciously and without due process. Its members needlessly suffer as does the mission of the organization. I have gone to great lengths and at great personal and professional cost to help bring about change to the organization I still believe in. I adamantly request that my, and my fellow Americans' efforts and sacrifices in this endeavor, are not in vain. My dedicated colleagues still serving in the DAS deserve the respect and support commensurate with having been hand-selected by their respective services to represent them abroad. The nation expects much of those Americans and they deliver – the organization tasked with supporting them, the Defense Intelligence Agency, has done them and the American people a disservice by not fulfilling their role as the supporting entity, instead marginalizing and impeding them and their contribution to the mission. Only through personnel and cultural changes in DIA can the agency's strategic advantage, prestige, and mission effectiveness be recouped.

To follow, please find my report on toxic leadership in the DAS, presented in two parts: **Part I** contains all documentation regarding the aforementioned Inspector General complaint alleging nine counts of reprisal, gross mismanagement, and abuse of authority in the DAS. **Part II** contains collated inputs from over 30 DAS members regarding toxic leadership within the organization. It is my hope that these reports will be the catalyst for much-needed and much-overdue change in DIA – the success of the mission and defense of the nation depend on it.

Thank you for your engagement in this matter.

Respectfully,



Lt Col Ryan Sweazey, USAF  
Deputy Division Chief, Flight Operations  
Air Combat Command



46. Input 18 ( [REDACTED] feedback to JMAS)
47. Input 19 ( [REDACTED] IG complaint report and response)
48. Input 20 (Discussion with Anonymous DAS staff member)
49. Input 21 (Anonymous testimony)
50. Input 22 ( [REDACTED] Testimony)