

The DoD Times (Redacted)



Military Intelligence Soldiers Lack Protections at the Defense Intelligence Agency & Army Writ Large

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“Why were you asking for help from your Army commanders?” LTG Laura Potter, Former Army G2 and current Director of the Joint Staff.

The last three years represent the culmination of my Army career, but much more psychologically and even physically damaging: the corruption of my trust in my Army senior leaders. Feeling vulnerable and unsafe in the Army, an organization, and an idea that I did my best to serve these last 26 years, I retired on May 31st, 2024. Like many other veterans, I hesitate to either recommend the Army to a person thinking of joining the military service, or advocate for staying in the Army if asked my opinion by a fellow Soldier.

Despite 20 years of legislation, funding, training and awareness regarding military sexual trauma (MST), harassment, and bullying, I spent the last three years being consistently re-victimized by my Army senior leaders who unequivocally failed to faithfully execute their command and leadership duties to protect and advocate for me, a subordinate officer, who was suffering through these traumas. I was astoundingly disappointed in my Army leadership in that at literally every turn, their answers to my pleas for help were not “let me get you the help you need,” but instead “don’t look to me for help” and/or “you asked the wrong people [my commanders!] for protection and justice and therefore you won’t be afforded it.”

These same Army senior leaders espouse “people first, mission always” ...until I (a senior O5) became a victim of MST, harassment, and bullying. Suddenly, I realized that these senior leaders lied to me on an individual level, and worse, are hypocrites on an Army-wide level. Given the experiences discussed here, I have reached the following conclusions:

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1. The statistically significant Army population most vulnerable to MST (E1-E5) do not have the emotional or financial reserves of an O5 – the toll on these junior Soldiers is unimaginable.
2. There is ZERO incentive for a Soldier to make a complaint given they likely will face career ending reprisal / retaliation, financial burdens, and severe negative psychological / physical strain.
3. The Army's mental health and suicide epidemic have roots in its failed "justice" systems, as I experienced firsthand.
4. The total lack of transparency of the Army's investigatory process reduces the incentive for a Soldier to make a complaint and increases the psychological and physical burden on the Soldier.
5. The Army's lack of support, including legal support, for victims of reprisal and retaliation creates an unnecessary financial burden for Soldiers.
6. I am not the only [victim](#) of toxic [DoD Civilians](#) and a disengaged Army Leadership team.
7. The Army's investment in training commanders and Military Equal Opportunity (MEO) personnel to properly handle allegations of sexual harassment is a failure.
8. The Army's reported emphasis on reducing the issues I experienced, including sexual harassment, counterproductive leadership, etc., is a failure.

For most of my career, I believed the lies that I was told. Starting on December 19th, 1997, when I enlisted in the Army, through West Point, and since commissioning in 2004, I and those around me were told the same lies: duty, honor, country should be your guiding principles; take care of your Soldiers; people and mission come before self; take risks for your team; study hard; run harder, and always set the example. Not only did I believe these lies, I understood that my fellow Soldiers also believed them; after all, how could I trust if this were not so? I am glad that I believed: there is no better way to live than to attempt to live up to the ideals expressed in these phrases. The result is a life in the Army that I am proud of, even with my many mistakes, injuries sustained, lost opportunities to make more money, increased stressors, less stability, and consistent sexual harassment. Imagine the negative impact, then, from the last three years of experiencing the total betrayal of these ideals by my Army senior leaders.

I reported for duty to the Joint Staff J2 on July 9th, 2021. Within two hours of arriving, I was subjected to what evolved into daily harassment, bullying, gaslighting, and manipulation, as well as two instances of sexual harassment perpetrated against me by my directorate chief, a Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) Defense Intelligence Senior Leader (DISL) (grade equivalent to an SES). Capping off our initial conversation on July 9th, which included yelling, swearing, and aggressive gesturing directed against my new subordinates and his own peers, he told me he had "done his research" on me and he understood that I "lack empathy" and "can only see things black and white."

Immediately beginning in July 2021 and increasing in intensity as the months progressed, I began suffering from the physical and psychological impacts of a toxic work environment. These included chest pains, sleep loss, weight gain, persistent joint pain, rapidly graying hair, eczema flare-ups, eye twitches, multiple periods, paranoia, hopelessness, trouble focusing, anxiety, depression, aimlessness, feeling overwhelmed, and culminating in August 2022 of (very) briefly feeling suicidal. I had tunnel vision, and I could no longer see a future outside of the abuse and professional gaslighting within which I spent over half of my waking moments.

So, in October 2022 I provided to a long-time mentor, LtGen Dimitri Henry, two memorandums for record (MFR) that outlined aspects of my toxic work environment, including sexual harassment. I believed LtGen Henry knew me well, so I hoped for an outside perspective and advice given I knew I was suffering from tunnel vision. From this point on, I witnessed firsthand how utterly broken our system still is, despite over two decades of legislation, training, and remediation.

"As I have previously informed you, I have a timeline and deadline to meet." DIA SES Assigned as Investigating Officer for Administrative Investigation into My Concerns.

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Without my consent, the two MFRs I provided to LtGen Henry were sent to the DIA legal team. Without my knowledge and without first interviewing me, the DIA Chief of Staff (CoS), Mr. John Kirchhofer, initiated an Administrative Investigation into the information outlined in my MFRs. Where was my Army leadership during this period? My division chief, an Army O6, for the most part disappeared; the directorate vice chief, an Army O6, avoided me diligently as if I had leprosy; the Joint Staff J2 CoS, an Army O6, told me an investigation had started and asked me why I had hired a lawyer given the investigation was not against me, and my Army commander, COL Bradley Isler, was entirely absent.

Officially, I was completely alone. I had no experience lodging a complaint and neither my Army nor DIA leadership provided support or advocacy. As I was left to fend completely for myself, I felt forced to hire a lawyer. At the outset of the investigation the DIA SES assigned as the Investigating Officer (IO) threatened not to interview me stating, "I need to reiterate that I have a timeline to maintain and if you are unable to or unwilling to discuss your complaint with me then I can forgo this step." Contrary to protocol, I was the last person the IO interviewed. This placed me on the defensive against the alleged offender's claims and accusations already heard and processed by the IO.

During a December 1st, 2022, interview with the IO, I presented additional evidence to him, evidence I had not provided to LtGen Henry since I had only shared the two MFRs to ask for guidance. The IO told me that he was likely not going to investigate the new information because he had a "timeline to keep" and I (me) had already forced him to ask for one extension. Taken aback, I expressed that I thought investigations were supposed to consider all the issues raised by the victim. The DIA legal officer who was in the room (a female SES) told me that while they would consider the additional evidence, they intended to make sure that the timeline did not unfairly keep the DISL under investigation due to additional evidence. Two things became very clear to me at the outset: 1) The investigators placed far more emphasis on maintaining an arbitrary timeline over actually serving justice, and 2) as the victim, I was an annoyance / inconvenience to those tasked to oversee / execute the investigation.

I somehow felt like a fool, like I had screwed up, and I cried on the drive home. Two short weeks later, the J2 CoS informed me that DIA found that my allegations were unsubstantiated. Moreover, the IO recommended the DISL and I attend conflict resolution classes together so we could "learn to communicate with each other better."

"You are under investigation for using an anti-gay slur against an employee." COL Bradley Isler, Commander, DIA Army Element, and a DIA EEO Officer.

My work environment became progressively worse. In addition to the on-going bullying by the DISL and apathy / isolation from my Army leadership, I discovered that the DISL was asking leading questions of my team, specifically whether I am homophobic or racist. These poisonous seeds carefully planted by the DISL blossomed in February 2023. It was then that my Army commander, COL Bradley Isler, informed me that I was flagged as of December 2022, only one and a half months after I shared the MFRs with LtGen Henry, and under an Army IG investigation for allegedly using an anti-gay slur against an employee. As a result of the flag, I was unable to PCS, go to school, receive awards, etc., until the investigation was over. In late February 2023, I also received an email from the DIA Equal Employment Opportunity Office (EEO) informing me that I was under investigation by their office for the exact same allegation. This was the first time that I spoke with either COL Isler or the DIA EEO office.

"We cannot help you because you are military." DIA EEO Officer.

Recovering from the news that I was under investigation and still believing the DISL was a serial abuser, I emailed the DIA EEO office to file a formal EEO complaint against the DISL. I provided the EEO team with a chronology of events and their impact on me. Within five minutes of my email, a DIA EEO officer responded that their office was unable to help me because I am in the military. She added a Military Equal Opportunity (MEO) person (an E6) to her email and did not engage with me further. Months later, I asked this same EEO person if

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there exists a DIA policy that prevented her from helping me: no such policy existed. Three days later, the E6 had not contacted me, so I emailed him directly.

"We cannot help you because you made the complaint against a DoD Civilian." COL Bradley Isler, Commander, DIA Army Element.

Thus began an isolating journey that led me to conclude:

1. Army personnel assigned to support DIA should ensure they are only sexually harassed / harassed by someone serving in the Army – otherwise, the perpetrator is completely insulated from punishment.
2. U.S. federal law does not matter if the DoD can get away with ignoring it.
3. The Army and DIA will invest incredible energy in protecting their self-serving mediocrity.

I was hopeful and optimistic during a March 2023 conversation with COL Isler about my EO complaint. He told me that he would ensure my complaint was investigated properly with his personal command oversight. Unaware at that time that U.S. federal code ([10 U.S.C. 1561](#)) directs **commanders** to investigate all allegations of sexual harassment whether the subject is military or a DoD civilian, I believed COL Isler when he told me that he (the Army) did not have authority to investigate my allegation of sexual harassment given the subject is a DoD civilian. Nor, he said, did he have the authority to investigate any of my other allegations (bullying, harassment, discrimination based on gender, abuse of authority, unethical hiring practices, HIPAA violations, etc.) for the same reason. COL Isler told me that the DIA CoS, Mr. Kirchhofer, would appoint an Investigating Officer (IO) on the Army Element's behalf and promised me that he would retain authority over the conduct and substance of the investigation. "I am going to make sure this is done right. I just need you to trust me," he told me during a phone call in late March 2023. Comforted and trusting COL Isler, I met with the IO in April 2023.

"Criteria for not [conducting Administrative Investigations for] allegations of senior official misconduct include ... the allegations involve issues that are more properly addressed in other channels [such as] the equal employment opportunity (EEO) office." [DoDIG Administrative Investigations Manual](#), September 23, 2022.

My first surprise came when the IO, another DIA SES, informed me that he was conducting an Administrative Investigation (AI) instead of an EO investigation. "Isn't this an EO investigation," I asked the IO. He said, no, and said that DIA Inspector General office was managing the investigation. He said the IG chose to conduct an AI. Hoping to confirm COL Isler's promises, I asked the IO if he was conducting the investigation on behalf of COL Isler. The IO told me he had never spoken with COL Isler. Still hopeful [naïve], I provided the IO with all my records, including the MFRs that the previous AI IO refused to consider due to his "timeline." The IO told me he needed to speak with the DIA legal office about what he felt was an expanded scope of his investigation. I heard nothing more until June 2023.

"I am going to make sure this is done right. I just need you to trust me." COL Bradley Isler, Commander, DIA Army Element.

In a [gross violation of my privacy](#), the DIA IG provided the J2 CoS the records of my EO complaint. The CoS informed me in June 2023 that DIA determined my allegations were unsubstantiated. Nothing was provided in writing and there was no debriefing from COL Isler who had promised he would retain authority over the investigation. In fact, when I informed COL Isler of my conversation with the J2 CoS, he said, "I was not tracking the investigation was closed." I received no offer for help or assistance, nor was I provided with the mandated information on how to appeal or seek redress – the priority was not justice for the victim. Instead, I once again saw the priority was my Army and DIA leadership wanting to get my problems off their plate. Whether they followed laws or protocol was irrelevant.

"I'll be honest, I have not actually read your rebuttal; it's really long." COL Bradley Isler, Commander, DIA Army Element.

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During this same conversation, COL Isler informed me he planned to re-initiate interviews for the Army IG investigation against me that I had rebutted in May 2023. COL Isler told me he decided to expand the scope of the investigation to determine not just “*if* you said what you said, but also to determine *why* you said what you said.” Stunned, I reinforced my rebuttal response that the allegations were false and that I had provided a corroborating witness statement. COL Isler responded, “I’ll be honest, I have not actually read your rebuttal; it’s really long.” It was that evening that I first spoke with Lt Col (Ret) Ryan “Count” Sweazey”, a Whistleblower advocate and founder of the Walk the Talk Foundation. With Ryan’s help, I began to understand what I was experiencing: my Army was failing me.

I remained under investigation by the Army between Dec 2022 – Nov 2023 when I was favorably cleared of all allegations. In a further show of contempt for his command responsibilities, COL Isler did not send me this notification: he assigned this duty to his deputy. The DIA EEO continued their investigation for the same allegations addressed in the Army investigation, plus an additional allegation that I retaliated against the complainant because I requested letters of support to defend myself during the Army investigation. It’s like double jeopardy with a cherry on top.

“I have included my Staff Judge Advocate, COL Toby Curto, on this reply.” MG Trevor Bredenkamp, Commander, United States Army Military District Washington.

In the intervening months, I desperately and repeatedly asked my Army leadership team for help. I told my brigade and General Court Martial Convening Authority (GCMCA) commanders (COL Isler and MG Trevor Bredenkamp, respectively) that I believed the investigations against me and the sudden removal of me to another directorate in April 2023 were reprisals for making a complaint against the DISL. No action was taken on these complaints. Based on Ryan’s guidance, I asked COL Isler and MG Bredenkamp to properly investigate my allegations of sexual harassment ([10 U.S.C. 1561](#)) and numerous EO violations.

I additionally asked for a change in my rating scheme because I felt that the same DISL I made a complaint against continuing to serve as my senior rater was a conflict of interest and would result in a career ending evaluation. I asked for a timely evaluation given it was already being signaled to me that my J2 leadership intended to delay my evaluation pending the outcome of the Army IG investigation, a decision which is in violation of Army regulations. Upon my Army team ignoring my request to change my rating scheme and my finally receiving (past the 90-day window) the expected career ending evaluation, I requested a Commander’s Inquiry from MG Bredenkamp into the justness of the evaluation.

MG Bredenkamp and COL Isler’s response to these desperate and persistent pleas for their help was to either ignore me or to defer all matters to DIA, including the sexual harassment complaint, the EO violation allegations, and my request for a Commander’s Inquiry into my evaluation. Their repeated justification was that they had no authority to help me, an assertion proven to be false when in January 2024, I discovered that COL Isler *had* conducted a Commander’s Inquiry for a different Army officer who also made a complaint against a DIA SES.

In November 2023, I used Google to find the Fort Myer Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (SARC) and emailed her a sexual harassment complaint using the DA FORM 7746, the Army’s sexual harassment complaint form. Since October 2022, none of my Army command or MEO leadership directed me either to a SARC or asked me to fill out the DA FORM 7746, decisions that are in violation of DoD Policy.

MG Bredenkamp and COL Isler could have intervened many times to make me believe that they cared to execute their duties in line with law, policy, regulations, and the ideals I believed we all held. Instead, I was treated as radioactive material, to the point that MG Bredenkamp even ignored my invoking his open-door policy to request

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an office call. The only communication I received from MG Bredenkamp was to refer me to his Staff Judge Advocate, COL Curto.

“MG Bredenkamp has very limited authority to help you.” LTG Laura Potter, Former Army G2 and Current Director of the Joint Staff.

Believing my experience highlighted the lack of command protection afforded to military intelligence Soldiers assigned to support the DIA, I contacted the then Army G2, LTG Laura Potter. In a December 2023 office call, her response, summarized, was that I should have done more to protect myself by speaking “to the right people.” She also asked me why I asked for help from MG Bredenkamp, stating that he had “limited authority to help” me. How is it possible that a major general who is my GCMCA has “limited authority to help” me, but has enough authority to jail me? “I feel betrayed by my Army leadership, Ma’am”, I said. “I feel the Army is no longer a safe place for me because I know my Army leadership does not have my back in a time of crisis.” I do not believe this message got through.

So, how does someone who is a hardcore West Point Long Grey Line and All the Way, Airborne paratrooper suddenly lose all trust and faith in her Army leadership? She finally realized their great hypocrisy: they told her lies that she still believes, thank God, but that they themselves do not believe. What a terrible disappointment, and how terribly sad. The question I asked LTG Potter remains: if Army leaders are willing to treat an O5 with such arrogant disregard, how can you expect them to treat our E1-E5 and junior officer population?

They are just kids; so completely naïve. And, unfortunately, they are also the population statistically most vulnerable to the depredations of predators, suicidal thoughts, isolation, and despair.

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Snapshot of LTC Francesca Graham's Considerations Since Arriving to DIA Army Element / JS J2 on 09 JUL 2021 to Present

BLUF: U.S. Army Soldiers lack legal, policy, and Army regulatory protections while assigned to support the Defense Intelligence Agency. In Oct 2022, LTC Graham raised concerns through her Army leadership regarding sexual harassment and a counterproductive work environment perpetrated against her by her Senior Rater (DoD (DIA) Senior Civilian (DISL1)) in the Joint Staff J25. Since Oct 2022, LTC Graham has endured reprisal, retaliation, and a lack of support from her Army Command team.

Total # of Months before DA FORM 7746 was completed after LTC Graham reported Sexual Harassment to her Senior Officers, including two Commanding Officers: **15**

Total # of Months the Army investigated any of LTC Graham's Complaints, to include an allegation of Sexual Harassment: **0**

Total # of Months the Army Investigated LTC Graham after she made Oct 2022 complaint against DoD (DIA) Senior Civilian : **12**

Total # of Months the DIA Investigated LTC Graham after she made Oct 2022 complaint against DoD (DIA) Senior Civilian : **10+**

Note: The Army IG EO investigation closed 13 Nov 2023 with No Findings of Misconduct. The status of the DIA EEO investigation (containing the exact same allegations) is unknown.

LTC Graham's Oct 2022 Core Complaints

- > Sexual Harassment
- > Reprisal
- > Retaliation
- > Hostile Work Environment
- > Harassment
- > Abuse of Authority
- > Unethical Hiring Practices

Army Officer/MEO Notification Timeline

- > 24 Oct 2022 – JS J2 CoS
- > 10 Feb 2023 – COL Bradley Isler (DIA Army Element CDR)
- > 05 Mar 2023 – MSgt Brian Corbin (DIA Army Element MEO)
- > 31 Mar 2023 – SFC Brian Manahl (USA MDW MEO)
- > 02 Sep 2023 – MG Trevor Bredenkamp (USA MDW CDR)

No Person in this List Referred LTC Graham to the SARC/SHARP Team and/or Initiated a Sexual Harassment Investigation

Forced Errors

- > Failure to investigate LTC Graham's complaints through command and GCMCA channels
- > Failure to handle the complaint of sexual harassment in the appropriate command and SHARP/SARC channels – LTC Graham found the Fort Myer SARC via Google
- > Failure to appropriately document, track, or act on repeated allegations of reprisal and retaliation
- > Failure to properly document and track LTC Graham's complaints of unlawful harassment, including intimidation, ridicule, and insults that create both a hostile and abusive work environment
- > Numerous violations of LTC Graham's privacy

Overall Impact on LTC Graham

Psychological / Emotional		Physical		Professional
Briefly Suicidal	Overwhelmed	Chest Pain	Hair Rapidly Graying	Total Loss of Trust in Army Leadership
Depression	Aimless	Sleep Loss	Eczema Flare-ups	Desire to Retire
Anxiety	Hopeless	Weight Gain	Eye Twitches	
Paranoia	Feeling like no Future	Persistent Joint Pain	Carpal Tunnel Flare-ups	
Isolation	Struggle to get out of Bed	Multiple Periods		
Feeling of being Trapped	Trouble Focusing			
Feeling like a Failure				

For Consideration

- > There is ZERO incentive for a Soldier to make a complaint given they likely will face career ending reprisal and retaliation, financial burdens, and severe negative psychological and physical strain
- > The total lack of transparency, including clear timelines, of the Army's investigatory process further reduces the incentive for a Soldier to make a complaint, and increases the psychological and physical burden on the Soldier
- > The Army's lack of support, including legal support, for victims of reprisal and retaliation creates an unnecessary financial burden for Soldiers
- > The statistically significant Army population most vulnerable to sexual harassment (E1-E5) likely does not have the emotional or financial reserves of an O5 – the toll on these junior Soldiers is unimaginable
- > The Army's investment in training commanders and MEOs to properly handle allegations of sexual harassment is ineffective
- > The Army's emphasis on reducing the issues LTC Graham's experienced – sexual harassment, counterproductive leaders, etc. – is ineffective
- > LTC Graham is likely not the only victim of the subject DoD Civilian and a disengaged Army Leadership team

Question to Consider: How Can the Army Hope to Retain or Recruit Talent Given this Story?

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Compiled by LTC Francesca Graham, JS J2X, 520-226-6838: CAO: 13 Dec 2023 1

Graphic Used During December 2023 Discussion with then Army G2, LTG Laura Potter

If you feel that you have been a victim of these types of concerns, feel free to reach out privately at francescagraham@walkthetalkfoundation.org, or share your story in the comments.

If you would like to help us fight these issues, please consider donating to the [Walk the Talk Foundation](https://www.walkthetalkfoundation.org/) via either [Venmo](https://www.venmo.com/WalkTheTalkFoundation) or [PayPal](https://www.paypal.com/). We greatly appreciate your support.

Also, [SIGN THIS PETITION](#) demanding that our leaders in Congress change the DoD's unjust administrative investigatory system, and [SIGN THIS PETITION](#) demanding real anti-harassment reform in the Military and Coast Guard now!

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