



Silenced by Command: How Military Leaders Can Use Gag Orders to Suppress Whistleblowers and Shield Themselves from Scrutiny

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Did You Know: Department of Defense and Coast Guard leadership can issue No Contact Orders and Military Protective Orders to prevent whistleblowers and/or subjects of an investigation from communicating with their co-workers who were witness to the event(s) under question.

Here are some potential implications of this fact:

1. Obstruction of Whistleblowing and Accountability

- Silencing Whistleblowers: When NCOs and MPOs are misused to prevent whistleblowers from gathering evidence or speaking with witnesses, it undermines their ability to expose misconduct, creating a chilling effect on reporting.
- Inhibiting Investigations: Restricting communication between subjects and witnesses will limit the ability of individuals to present a complete defense or uncover additional evidence.

2. Undermining Fairness in Investigations

- Due Process Concerns: Restricting communication without clear justification will disadvantage the accused or whistleblower, denying them the ability to fully understand the allegations or gather exculpatory evidence.
- One-Sided Investigations: When subjects cannot communicate with witnesses, investigators will rely on incomplete or unchallenged testimony, leading to biased outcomes.

3. Damage to Workplace Dynamics



The DoD Times (Redacted)



- Erosion of Trust: Overuse or misuse of these orders will create suspicion and fear among service members, weakening unit cohesion and morale.

- Isolation of Individuals: Subjects or whistleblowers subjected to NCOs/MPOs will feel ostracized and unsupported, exacerbating stress and mental health challenges.

4. Cultural and Ethical Concerns

- Cultural Suppression of Reporting: This practice will signal to service members that reporting misconduct leads to punitive or isolating measures, discouraging future reporting.
- Erosion of Transparency: Leadership use of these tools to control narratives will harm organizational credibility and ethical standards.

5. Legal and Institutional Risks

- Potential Legal Challenges: Misapplication of NCOs/MPOs may lead to legal claims for violations of constitutional rights (e.g., First Amendment or due process rights).
- Erosion of Oversight: Misuse of these orders will shield wrongdoing, undermining public and institutional oversight mechanisms.

The Army covered-up the [Mỹ Lai Massacre](#) for nearly a year despite having first-hand accounts of the event, most notably from helicopter pilot [Chief Warrant Officer Hugh C. Thompson Jr.](#) and his crew. Chief Warrant Officer Thompson saw the massacre underway, landed and placed his helicopter + guns between the attacking U.S. soldiers and the helpless Vietnamese villagers. Cover-ups like this are possible because of policies like the one highlighted in this newsletter that give military commanders the discretion to abuse their authority. **We encourage you to bring this topic to the attention of your elected officials.**

Find your Representative here: <https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>

Find your Senator here: <https://www.senate.gov/senators/senators-contact.htm>

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.

PETITIONS:

1. [SIGN THIS PETITION](#) urging the Supreme Court of the United States to hear the case of Staff Sergeant Ryan Carter who was paralyzed from the chest down following a routine surgery at Walter Reed.

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