

The DoD Times (Redacted)

 NEWSLETTER 

SATURDAY, 16TH AUGUST 2025

ISSUE 84.

INSIDER THREATS





Lt Col (Ret) Ryan Sweazey (Retired, Air Force – United States Air Force Academy), President and Founder of the [Walk the Talk Foundation](#), authored this article. (Published August 16th 2025)

Check out our Podcast, *The Star Chamber*, on: [Apple](#) | [Spotify](#) | [YouTube](#)

Insider Threats

August 2021. Marine Attaché to Italy, LtCol Chad Brooks, was working feverishly to assist our Afghan partners and their families with their desperate attempts to flee the country. And as our interpreters, some of whom had worked for Brooks in past deployments to Afghanistan, were literally running for their lives, and as Americans and allies were losing theirs, in walked the Acting Defense Attaché to Italy...

“You need to get out of the business of helping people get out of Afghanistan,” he ordered Brooks. Taken aback, but quickly regaining his composure, Brooks said he could not comply. The superior, an Army O-6, repeated the order. Brooks again said he would comply once he was sure the people he was assisting, who were in imminent danger, would be safe.

SUBJECT: Attempted Interference of Afghanistan Evacuation Assistance by members of the Defense Attaché Service (DAS)

On 2 September 2021, I received the following report from a member serving in the Defense Attaché Office [REDACTED]:

During evacuation assistance operations [REDACTED] on or about 15-30 August 2021, the Acting Defense Attaché to [REDACTED], likely at the direction of DAS leadership, ordered [REDACTED] Attaché to [REDACTED] to cease and desist with all evacuation support efforts, citing that it was not the mission of the DAO to assist with the operation. At the time this order was given, the member was on the phone with the family featured in this CNN story by Christian Amanpour, <https://www.cnn.com/videos/tv/2021/10/21/amanpour-afghanistan-escape-thirty-birds-foundation.cnn>. The family was in danger of being taken by the Taliban and were at a Taliban checkpoint with [REDACTED] on the phone with them, described at 6:30 into the video, when [REDACTED] ordered [REDACTED] to stop assisting the family. [REDACTED] knew what [REDACTED] was doing at the time and reiterated the order. [REDACTED] told [REDACTED] that he was unable to obey the order without risking peoples' lives and that he would be unable to assist [REDACTED] until the family was safely on Hamid Karzai International Airport. [REDACTED] later that same day ordered [REDACTED] “to get out of the business of helping get Afghans out of Kabul.” According to sources in DAO [REDACTED] who obtained information from HQ DIA, [REDACTED]'s intervention likely came at the behest of DAS [REDACTED] Division Chief [REDACTED] who directed DAS [REDACTED] branch chief [REDACTED] to attempt to force the attachés in DAO [REDACTED] to cease evacuation assistance operations.

After the dust had settled, it understandably took Brooks, a veteran with multiple year-long deployments to Afghanistan, some time to process what had occurred:



an *American* officer, a superior, had ordered him, multiple times, to cease and desist with the evacuation operation. And over time, he had discovered that the officer in question was likely being directed by managers at the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) to deliver those orders to Brooks and his attaché colleague who was also assisting the operation.

And if you'd like to hear more about Chad's story, I'd invite you to listen to our special episode on the Defense Intelligence Agency, titled "With Friends Like These...". But this story begins where that fateful exchange in 2021 ended: the fallout and the cover-up. [With Friends Like These \(Remastered\)](#).

In February 2022, the then-director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, LTG Scott Berrier, [during a House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence briefing regarding "Emerging Threats"](#) was directed by Representative Jackie Speier to report to her what he was doing to address a toxic culture within the DIA's Attaché Service, a subordinate division within the Agency. Speier and the Committee were alerted to a swath of alleged wrongdoings several months prior when, in June 2021, I submitted a Congressional complaint entitled ["Toxicity in the Defense Attaché Service and the Resultant Threat to National Security."](#) After having received it, Berrier said and did nothing. In the report, I raised my concerns that if the caustic elements within the Agency were not addressed, lives could be put in jeopardy.

I had no idea when I wrote that report, how prophetic those words were.

For just two months after the report, the Afghanistan evacuation began and the attempted interference by the DIA's miscreants within the Attaché Service played out – putting American lives in danger...just as I sadly predicted it would.

Fast forward to April 2022 – ten months after I had blown the whistle, and eight after the Afghanistan evacuation. I received a call from MG Michelle Schmidt, the then-Director of Operations of DIA. She conveyed to me that she was tasked by Berrier to investigate the allegations within my report which, at that point, [had enumerated over 150 allegations of wrongdoing, raised by over 60 current/former members of the Agency.](#) (The timing of the investigation was no coincidence. Berrier, after having sat on his hands for over six months, was embarrassed into action when the Congressional report was highlighted on the front page of the Wall Street Journal in February 2022).



Schmidt opened the conversation by telling me she was under a time crunch due to her impending assignment to the Pentagon and reassured me that she and the Attaché Service Director, SES Michael Bochna, were committed to addressing the issues. The exchange was laughable on several levels, but I complied with her request to contact the witnesses to see if they'd be willing to speak with Schmidt. Brooks was one of those witnesses. He, of course, recounted the events to Schmidt, just as he has on several occasions to include our podcast episode: he was assisting the operation when a superior officer, under the direction of DIA management, ordered him to stop. In the podcast episode, I labeled the actions of both manager and superior officer as treasonous. Chad corrected me, but I honestly don't know what to label a person who attempts to order an American to cease assisting their brothers- and sisters-in-arms who are in life-and-death situations. I know what *I'd* label them. I also know what I'd label Chad – the person who personified incredible moral courage to do what he did: a hero.

What did the Agency think of his heroics, though? They pulled his next assignment and ran him out of the Intelligence Community forever. A year and half went by. I never received a follow-up from Schmidt. Those who were interviewed by Schmidt received the same non-communication. Then, in September 2023, a year and a half after the internal investigation, the DIA provided the following update:

**DEFENSE INTELLIGENCE AGENCY**

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20340-5100



U-23-0150/OCC-1

September 19, 2023

Representative Robert Wittman
2055 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Wittman,

Thank you for your inquiry regarding Lt Col Ryan Sweazey, USAF (Retired) identified as a former employee of the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA).

The DIA Directorate of Operations (DO) conducted two administrative investigations related to the Defense Attache Service (DAS). The recommendations that stemmed from those investigations are complete. As appropriate, officers were counseled and received remedial training to ensure future adherence to DoD and DIA policies and procedures.



“...officers were counseled.”

Those words leapt off the page and slapped me. “Officers,” who had directed Americans to abandon their teammates in the heat of battle were “counseled.”

Incensed, I contacted Representative Wittman’s defense staffer stating that the response was woefully inadequate, as were the so-called remedial measures of “counseling.” His response: “we just have to accept the DoD’s response.” (for the audio of that exchange, listen to the Star Chamber episode referred to above).

I then filed a FOIA request for the Schmidt-led investigation in February 2024. The updated status as of last week is below:

F -DIA FOIA
RE: FOIA Request - DAS Internal Investigations May 2022
To: Ryan Sweazey, Cc: ogis@nara.gov

Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
=====

Greetings,

Thank you for contacting our Agency.

The review status for FOIA requests are as follows:

1. Initial Processing
2. Records Search/Review
3. FOIA SME Review
4. Record Processing
5. Referred for Consultation Review
6. Quality Control Review
7. Additional Action Required
8. Processing Actions Complete
9. Delivery to the Requester

Your request is currently in stage 1.

Stage 1. In other words: just sitting there. For the last 18 months. (Or, should I say: “being stalled there for the last 18 months”?)

If you are a fan of the Star Chamber, or the DoD Times (Redacted) newsletter, I venture to guess there’s not a lot new here. But if you’re a new subscriber/fan/listener, the lesson here is severalfold:

1. The failures of the Afghanistan debacle aren’t just going to go away. I, like tens of thousands of veterans, will continue to press for transparency, truth, and accountability (much of which we have had zero of, now 4 years on). The DIA scandal is no exception. Americans put American lives at risk. Period. And for that, we are determined to see through justice.



2. The DoD has one tactic in its main arsenal when it comes to deflecting culpability and abdicating responsibility: to outwait and outspend those who seek answers and justice. Our countertactic is straightforward: **grit**. And our grit isn't going anywhere anytime soon.

I had a conversation recently with someone working high up in the Intelligence Community and told her that of all the things I've come across in my work at the Walk the Talk Foundation, the DIA affair is the one that keeps me up at night. And it's not because of my checkered past with the Agency, or my disdain for the miscreants therein, it's because of this:

The actions, or inactions, of the Defense Intelligence Agency leadership, leading up to, during, and following the Afghanistan evacuation operation personify a dangerous value system emerging within our Defense Department leadership echelons, which is that self- and career preservation out-prioritize *everything*: the mission, the people, and *even American lives*.

That, my friends, is a dangerous precedent to “just accept.” And that is why leaders who embody these values I very much label: **Insider Threats**.



If you would like to help us fight these issues, please consider donating to the Walk the Talk Foundation [HERE](#). We greatly appreciate your support. As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, your donation is 100% tax deductible.

Send this newsletter to your elected officials if you believe they need to correct the issues discussed.

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

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

Feel free to reach out privately at francescagraham@walkthetalkfoundation.org or in the comments.

PETITIONS: [SIGN THIS PETITION](#) demanding that our leaders in Congress change the DoD's unjust administrative investigatory system.



All our articles are posted on [LinkedIn here](#) and [Online here](#). Be sure to subscribe to the newsletter on LinkedIn and follow us on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), and [X \(Twitter\)](#).

Graphics: <https://www.ausa.org/people/ltg-scott-d-berrier>
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michelle_A._Schmidt
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Defense_Intelligence_Agency