

11/25/2024

To: DAC-IPAD:

Re: Summary of Comments for the Upcoming December Committee Meeting

****Summary of Comments for the Committee****

I will share my experience going through the court-martial and follow-on administrative processes. My comments will outline the systemic flaws in the military justice process, focusing on issues of due process violations, Unlawful Command Influence (UCI), and external pressures driven by pervasive media coverage.

I will recount the events that began in December 2019, followed by months without detailed information about the charges, a trial in August 2020, and a conviction based on insufficient evidence. Notably, after the trial, a senior military official anonymously admitted to the press that "based on the evidence they had, they did the most they could with this," acknowledging the lack of physical evidence or eyewitness accounts.

Despite being sentenced to a one-rank demotion and no punitive discharge, I faced additional administrative processes, including a rushed discharge board that was the first of many due process violations. The board ultimately chose to retain me. However, these proceedings were influenced by media and organizational pressures. Even after the board's decision, extraordinary actions continued, delaying my retirement 18 months and culminating in the Secretary of the Air Force's decision to strip me of another rank and force retirement, creating a punishment harsher than the court-martial adjudged.

I will emphasize the corrosive role of UCI throughout his case. Senior officials' public comments and the handling of my case were shaped by public perception rather than justice. I will question the impartiality of the appellate review process, particularly given the Secretary of the Air Force's authority over the Judge Advocate General and Air Force judges.

I will advocate two key reforms:

1. ****Increased transparency and procedural protections**** for service members, particularly in high-profile cases influenced by media and command pressures.

2. ****Strengthened appellate review mechanisms**** to ensure decisions are based on case merits rather than external pressures.

I will conclude by advocating for an independent third party to review post-trial processes. This would restore trust in the system and ensure no other service member endures similar injustices.

I will express my willingness to assist in reforming the military justice system and thank the panel for its attention and dedication to fairness.

For an appellate procedural history, see Air Force Court of Criminal Appeals ACM 21014

Sincerely,

Jeremy Zier