

Retired General Demoted 2 Ranks After Sexual Assault Investigation



FILE – Then Gen. Arthur Lichte, Air Mobility Command commander from Scott Air Force Base, Ill., talks to Airmen in the U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center on Fort Dix, N.J., Jan. 22, 2008. (U.S. Air Force Photo/Master Sgt. Bob Lorusso)

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Retired [Air Force](#) Gen. Arthur Lichte has been demoted to the rank of major general and will forfeit roughly \$5,000 a month in retirement pay after the service's Office of Special Investigations found that he [engaged in inappropriate sexual acts](#) while in uniform.

Lichte, who retired Jan. 1, 2010, after more than 38 years of service, could have been charged with conduct unbecoming an officer, adultery, and having an unprofessional relationship under the Uniform Code of Military Justice, but those charges have a statute of limitations, Air Force spokeswoman Ann Stefanek told Military.com on Wednesday.

Larry Youngner, Lichte's attorney, said they intend to appeal the Air Force's decision.

OSI ordered an investigation into the retired general in August after being notified that a female officer -- who initially had filed a restricted report in July to her sexual-assault response coordinator -- changed her report to unrestricted to involve law enforcement.

The investigation found that Lichte engaged in inappropriate sexual acts with the female officer twice in 2007, while holding the rank of lieutenant general as the service's assistant vice chief of staff and Air Staff director at the Pentagon. In 2009, Lichte, then a four-star general, once again had an inappropriate sexual relationship with the same female officer under his command, the service found.

Lichte was head of Air Mobility Command, headquartered at [Scott Air Force Base, Illinois](#), between 2007 and 2010.

[Media reports](#) identified the victim as a female colonel. The victim "felt she had no choice to engage in sexual contact with [Lichte] due to his rank and position in the AF," according to the heavily redacted OSI report.

The Air Force has not released the victim's name due to privacy considerations, Stefanek said.

Lichte's actions "did not rise to the level of rape," as deemed by OSI, and are not a criminal offense, Stefanek said. The UCMJ does not have a statute of limitations for rape charges, but does have a five-year limitation on related sexual misconduct. In this case, the service used administrative action and issued a letter of reprimand, in addition to the demotion in rank.

As a four-star, Lichte received \$18,000 a month in retirement pay, according to the Defense Department's 2009 pay scale for a retiree of 38 years. After the demotion, his pay will be reduced by about \$5,000, Stefanek said.

Youngner, of Tully Rinckey PLLC, issued a statement on Wednesday saying the firm intends to "appeal the Air Force's wrong decision concerning this unsworn accusation." "My client did not commit a sexual assault and vehemently denies the unsworn allegations made against him regarding consensual events that happened over eight years ago," Youngner said in a statement provided to Military.com. "Although my client is not proud of what transpired, he cooperated fully and provided statements, under oath, to defend against the allegations that went to an officer grade determination board."

Youngner said Lichte, who is regretful of his decisions, "continually asserted that he is deeply sorry for the pain he has caused his family, especially his strong and loving wife."

Then-Secretary of the Air Force Deborah James issued Lichte a letter of reprimand before her departure, the Air Force said in a release.

USA Today [obtained a copy](#) of the reprimand and quoted part of it: "You are hereby reprimanded!" James wrote, exclamation point hers, in the letter of Dec. 6, 2016. "Your conduct is disgraceful and, but for the statute of limitations bar to prosecution, would be more appropriately addressed through the Uniform Code of Military Justice."

James also initiated an Officer Grade Determination Board process to help assess the highest grade that the general "had satisfactorily served in prior to retirement," the release said.

Defense Secretary James Mattis reviewed the action and took the next procedural steps to withdraw Lichte's certification of satisfactory service as an O-10, Stefanek said.

She said Acting Air Force Secretary Lisa Disbrow then determined the rank at which Lichte last served "satisfactorily."

"The Air Force takes all allegations of inappropriate conduct very seriously," Disbrow said in a statement. "We expect our leaders to uphold the highest standards of behavior. These standards and rules underpin good order and discipline. Airmen at every level are held accountable."

After Disbrow's determination, the investigation formally concluded Jan. 31, Stefanek said.

Lichte will not face a court-martial.

Officials told Military.com in September that Lichte could have faced trial proceedings even years after retiring from service. The UCMJ retains jurisdiction over retired members, adding the service looks at about "10 cases a year" recalling a retiree, or members of the Reserve or [National Guard](#), for the purpose of considering a "court-martial for misconduct committed while on active duty," a military lawyer said at the time.

The current offenses would not translate in a civilian court, an official said, should the victim want to pursue alternative avenues.

But Lichte could face other problems, including possibly being unseated as a board member at Airbus, a position he's held since 2010.

In September, Airbus spokesman Jamie Darcy told Military.com the company was "aware of the allegations, and we are closely following the Air Force investigation."

"As an organization, Airbus has a culture of zero tolerance for sexual misconduct," Darcy said at the time. When asked if Airbus would terminate its business arrangement with Lichte if the Air Force investigation turned up evidence of misconduct, Darcy replied, "As a policy, we don't publicly speculate on hypothetical situations." Darcy could not be reached for further comment Wednesday.

Lichte was also appointed as the ninth member of the Air Transport Services Group Inc. board of directors in 2013.

Officials with the aviation company, based in Wilmington, Ohio, told Military.com in September that they too were "aware of reports of an Air Force inquiry pertaining to his military service, and we will have no comment on the matter until after the investigation is completed."

This story has been updated to include statements from Lichte's attorney.