



Forum: Human Rights Commission

Issue: Addressing the issue of sexual abuse and discrimination in the military

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Overview of the Issue

Historically the military has been influenced by both religious and social factors. It was expected to abide by religion and social pressure and stereotypes including it being only comprised of strong, courageous males. Due to the influences behind the army homosexuality was banned. Between 1796 and 1825 20 soldiers in the British army were accused of homosexuality and 3 were hanged as a result of the accusations. In the first world war, 153 men were discharged due to “indecent” (National Army Museum). The military ensured that they micromanaged the lives of the officers in order to create the perfect soldier.

In spite of the numerous contributions that women have made to the military one of the main issues that plagues modern militaries includes discrimination. This includes racial and gender discrimination. However, what has not been mentioned was that women were allowed to dress as men and fight in battles. From 1639 to 51 women dressed as men in order to fight a declaration that was made by King Charles I that was intent on banning them from dressing like men and fighting in the military. Fortunately, King Charles, I was not successful and women proceeded to fight in the Nine Years War and the War of Spanish Succession that took place between 1688 and 1730. Women indeed continued fighting and participated in more wars that include the War of Austrian Succession (1740-48), the Battle of Waterloo (1815) and fought in the second world war when manpower was required. Women did not just stop at fighting on the battlefield but also served in the background as nurses. One of the most famous doctors in English history Dr James Barry actually turned out to be a woman on his death bed. This goes to show that women have always been involved and frankly interested in war affairs but have been limited due to cultural norms and prejudices.

Racial discrimination in the military is just as deep-rooted as gender discrimination is. One example would be racial discrimination in the US military.



The black race was allowed to participate in America's independence struggle in 1776 after George Washington lifted a ban on black soldiers due to a shortage in manpower. The participation of 5000 black people in the liberation struggle and their show of loyalty still did not give them a chance to be treated equally. History does repeat itself and during the American civil war over 200,000 African Americans participated and it was not until the second world war that they were allowed to become soldiers. After Japan's attack on Pearl Harbour, African Americans were drafted into the US army but in segregated factions in which they were only allowed to be cooks, quartermasters or grave diggers. At the time over 2.5 million African Americans registered to part of the military and only 1 million were drafted into the army. The American military has become more inclusive over the decades and aims to treat all soldiers with equal opportunity but unfortunately, has failed to do due to a corrupt system.

Key Terms

Sexual Abuse: "is unwanted sexual activity, with perpetrators using force, making threats or taking advantage of victims not able to give consent."
(American Psychological Association)

Discrimination: the treatment of a certain group of people unjustly due to race, gender or age.

- **Direct discrimination:** treating a person variously from others because of the aforementioned characteristics
- **Indirect discrimination:** policies, practices or procedures that consequently discriminate due to the aforementioned practices intentionally or unintentionally
- **Harassment:** uncomfortable behaviour that violates a person's dignity or offends them
- **Victimisation:** changing the way someone is treated after they issue a concern

Military: "The armed forces of a country." (oxforddictionaries.com)

Installation: "A base, camp, post, station, yard, centre, or other activity under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of a Military Department or, in the case of an activity in a foreign country, under the operational control of the Secretary of a Military Department or the Secretary of Defense." (The Free Dictionary.com)

Military Sexual Trauma (MST): any form of sexual violation or harassment while a person served in the military. These may include:

- Being lured into sexual activities with promises of promotions and or better assignments and or threats



- Any kind of sexual contact that a person has not consented to including when they are asleep or intoxicated
- Touching that makes one feel uncomfortable
- Continuous commenting about an officers body or sexual innuendos
- Being forced to have sex using physical means

Conflict-related Sexual Violence (CRSV): sexual violence incidents or sequences against women, men, boys or girls that include rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilisation and or sexual violence in any other form.

Countries and Organizations Involved

Norway: The Norwegian military is seen as an exemplary military around the world due to its full inclusion of women in all areas of the military. One of the unique aspects that has put the Norwegian military in the in the world spotlight is the introduction of unisex living facilities in the military in a bid to reduce the sexual abuse cases. The key aspect that has managed to make the experiment successful is the fact that the cohabiting of both men and women erases the traditional expectations and roles of both genders as they interact frequently which takes away the illusions surrounding the different genders. It does not just stop at changing gender expectations but also changes the views of the officers on equality and marriage challenging stereotypes as to better achieve equality. Overall it was determined that in order to achieve equality risk and opportunity factors that are provided to the different genders must be the same. The desired long term effects include a much fairer and more civil society which seems plausible with the positive outcomes of the experiment.

United Kingdom: The British military is dominated by white males of which those with top bands are from the middle class, privileged and privately educated. The British military is another military around the world that has made efforts to modernise itself and become more inclusive of the LGBTQ community. It lifted its ban on LGBTQ individuals serving as soldiers in the year 2000. Not only did they stop at including the LGBTQ community but also increased the inclusion of women by allowing them to participate in any arena of the military. This process started in 2016 and the laws were finally removed in 2018. Prior to the removal of the laws, the British military placed blame on the lack of cohesion between men and women as well as women not being able to meet the physical demands of combat roles. Currently, the British army is made up of 9.2% women and they hope that the percentage will increase to 15% by 2020. However, it has failed to monitor sexual abuse cases both current but



especially historical. The government is focusing on means to solve pending cases and reduce the current number of cases. For witness accounts [here](#) and [here](#).

The United States of America: The United States is another army that has made tremendous steps towards the inclusion of women by ensuring that women can join all areas of the army as of 2015. Just like the UK, it has also taken strides in bettering its response to sexual assault cases. The Department of Defence Sexual Assault Prevention and Response office found that in some military installations there were over 500 sexual assaults on both men and women. It also found that the risk for military personnel to experience sexual assault depends on their duty assignment, unit, command and installation. 2% of the women in the US military say that they've been sexually harassed or assaulted when they served in the military and 68% of women have experienced gender discrimination according to a Smithsonian magazine poll that worked in conjunction with the US military found out that 6% of men had been sexually harassed or assaulted (sample of 1000 personnel). Sexual assault in the US military increased by 10% in 2017 and more especially in the army, navy and marine from 5,277 in 2017 compared to 4,794 in 2016. An installation that had high numbers of single, young and junior-ranking members was more likely to have sexual assault incidents occur.

Israel: It is a world-renowned fact that the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) has made it mandatory that both men and women must serve in the military. Men are expected to serve for three years and women for two years. While this is attributed to the Gaza strip conflict it has managed to make groundbreaking changes in their military. 38% of the IDF is made up of women of which 85% of all combat positions are available to women. Women and men undergo the same training which some women have found empowering but others find tiresome and impossible. It gives women a chance for women empowerment as it let women do that they can achieve anything a man can. However, there has recently been the issues that religion might be hindering and in fact undoing the progress that has been made. "Religious demands" can exempt women from taking on certain roles and/ or women can be disallowed a position due to the nature of the role.

North Korea: North Korea's military recruits both men and women and has made it mandatory that women serve seven years in the military and men ten years once they are eighteen. 15% of the country's budget is allocated towards military expenditure with over 40% of the money being spent on tanks. 40% of the military is comprised of women of which the number is expected to increase in the coming years. In spite of the fact that North Korea has a large standing army over 70% of women escape from the due to the uncouth conditions that they are subjected to. Women who are in the North Korean army sleep on



mattresses made of rice husks and live inadequate sanitary and hygiene conditions. In addition to the training that they do, women are also expected to complete daily chores such as cooking and cleaning. Women are raped under the jurisdiction of commanders and this is attributed to the “patriarchal attitudes” within the North Korean society which ultimately prevent women from reporting sexual abuse cases.

Related UN resolutions and Previous Approaches to Solving the Issue

The UN has done tremendous work to aid in the protection of women that are involved in any conflict zone. It has managed to pass resolutions that call upon an increase in the participation of women all levels of decision-making processes. It has called on all signatories of the resolution to abide by the clauses stated and investigate all cases of CRSV and prosecute the perpetrators whether they are civilians or military officers.

- **Security Council resolution 1325(2000):** This resolution was passed on the In order to view the resolution click [here](#).
- **UN Report on Gender Responsive Peacekeeping Operations:** In order to view the report click [here](#).

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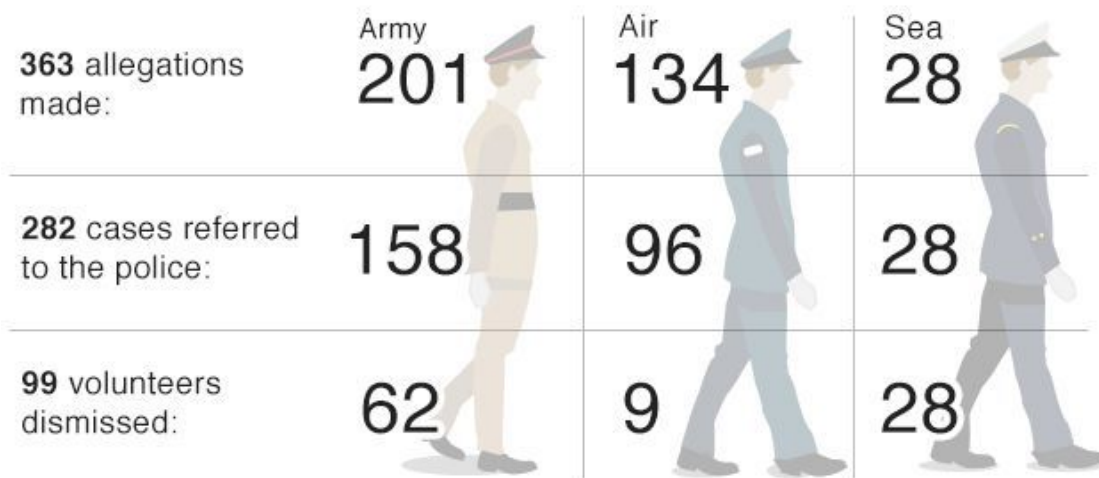


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Appendix

Appendix 1: UK sexual abuse allegations in the military in the last 5 years.

Allegations of sexual abuse 2012-2017



Figures include historical allegations

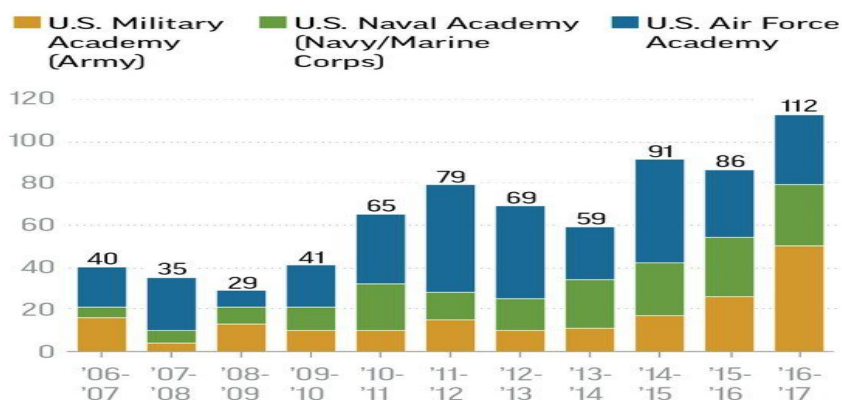
Source: MOD, MSSC.



Appendix 2

Service academy sexual assaults

Sexual assault reports by academic year



SOURCE: Defense Department



Appendix 3

