

To: Senate Armed Services Committee Members:

From: Tina Clemans, mom of former airman, Myah Smith.

Written on Memorial Day, 2013

Memorial Day, a day of "observance", a day of reflection on all that our U.S. Armed Forces have done to make this country strong. A day in honor of U.S. countrymen and women who sacrifice their life in defense and service of the United States of America.

Today is a fitting day for a mother to ask for observance, for change in our armed forces and legislation to save lives. Observance of an uncivil war within our own--an epidemic in corruption of power and unnecessary loss of life and service to an alarming number of men and women.

Our daughter enlisted in the Air Force in December of 2011. Like her father, uncle, grandfathers, and great grandfather before her, she did so to serve her country. Like fellow service men and women, she worked hard to earn this right: she completed extensive documentation; mental, physical, and placement exams; investigations; basic military training, top secret clearance, and assignment for technical training 4/11/12.

Records show on 4/6/12, our daughter went to the base medical clinic and treated for insomnia due to stress about problems with her roommate. Records note she was worried someone was "out to get her" but not suicidal, no claims of suicidal thoughts--Records state she is "Low Risk".

Our daughter's career and life nearly ended on base 4/7/12, days before her tech training was to begin. The day another service member(s) gave her cigarettes laced with embalming fluid. She had no idea the cigarettes contained a date-rape drug that causes complete black outs, severe hallucinations, memory loss, and consciousness--and ultimately her basic rights and career.

Terrified and alone, she called family who advised her to go directly to Command to report the assault and drugging. She did so. Instead of being admitted in a hospital where she could have received a rape kit, an official investigation/report, counseling, and appropriate care, she was taken to a mental health facility. She was not aware, or in any condition, to voluntarily admit herself to a facility where she was locked up in a suicide ward, prescribed medications for a personality disorder she does not have. She was denied repeated requests for expedited transfer per DoD directive. At the same time, she was given an Article 15 and Letter of Reprimand. She endured months of anguish, hospitalizations, humiliation, punishment and torture--having to clean and work in the area where she was assaulted a second time--raped, sodomized, threatened with death for reporting further and forced to live in close proximity to her perpetrators. Days later she is punished for missing PT formations while heavily medicated and ill suffering PTSD, after her mother's request for the base IG to investigate her situation. A general had this data, too.

Documentation, records and exhibits we have prove these statements and more. Worse, due to Chain of Command having ultimate authority in MST investigations, the system and programs currently in place failed to protect our daughter. She was denied expedited and humanitarian transfers to safety and left for dead on base, brutally assaulted, beaten unconscious, and raped

that second time in July, days after her release from hospitalization. Skin grey, lips blue, naked, broken and bleeding, she was taken by ambulance 7/29/12 to Shannon Medical Center.

When she came to in the ambulance and hospital, she complained of severe head pain, bleeding and blurred vision to several people, including medical staff. We have no records of an x-ray

Due to lack of action and failure of programs in place. I had to move from Washington state to Texas to keep my daughter alive; to fight for her rights when she was unable to do so, when and where DoD directive and programs for victims were ignored and denied by Chain of Command.

Three generals and their administration knew about our daughter's situation and facts. Nearly a half dozen congressional leaders inquired and wrote letters on her behalf, to no avail. Only after an outside advocate, and I enlisted the help of Senator Tsongas, co-author of the Defense Strong Act, did our daughter receive a humanitarian transfer agonizing months late. Long after those in command denied her basic rights, lied about reports/info being filed to her and her family, ridiculed her before her unit and peers. If not for legal representation having been donated by the advocacy of Protect Our Defenders and support of family, she would have been left to live with a dishonorable discharge and no benefits to help with healing, recovery and the shame of it all.

Our daughter and countless silent others, deserve better, they deserve action, here, now.

Decades of casualties, of broken promises to reform programs and legislation have taken a staggering toll. Allowing Chain of Command to oversee proceedings, cases and victims costs lives, careers and billions in denied care/benefits to service men and women. Action and Reform are long overdue; accountability, care, legislation and programs for victims are only as good as those who enforce them.

We had to fight hard to save our daughter and win her appeal. Her honorable discharge with a disability rating was recently granted. Over a year after the first assault--we are waiting for VA diagnosis for extent of damage to her brain from severe trauma to her head (still untreated), mind, body and soul. She will never be the same. PTSD, terrifying nightmares and flashbacks may abate, but her life and career could have been drastically different had Chain of Command not been in control of her MST investigations, obtaining appropriate care and counseling outside the proximity of abusers, or had the power to deny/ignore DoD directive and legislation.

Please, act now to help those who serve to protect--remove Chain of Command from MST investigations to prevent abuse of power that has spanned decades unchecked. Protect our defenders; If not for their sacrifice and service, we would not be the United States of America.

Our daughter is Airman Myah Bilton-Smith, a young woman who worked hard and was so very excited to serve her country. Please take action, demand action not broken promises to reform.

Thank you for your time and observance of this grave matter.

Respectfully, Tina Clemans