

MILITARY

3 cases focus on sexual assault

Court-martials to open at WPAFB as military faces national scrutiny.

By Barrie Barber
Staff Writer

WRIGHT-PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE — Three airmen who face allegations of sexual assault in separate alleged incidents have been scheduled for general court-martial proceedings at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, according to records.

The proceedings, which begin today for an Air Force recruiter who initially faced allegations in civilian court in Cincinnati, and the others in the weeks that follow, arrive as the military is under scrutiny for how it handles sexual assault cases.

More than half the court-martial proceedings handled at Wright-Patterson since 2010, or 13 of the 20 cases,

Cases continued on A5



Air Force SSgt. Corey J. Campbell is accused of abusive sexual contact/sexual assault and adultery.

Cases

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were put on trial for sexual assault-related offenses, according to the 88th Air Base Wing Staff Judge Advocate.

Of the 13 airmen who went through court-martial proceedings on sexual assault allegations, five were convicted, two received full acquittals, two left the military under an administrative discharge, one was dismissed under an Article 32 hearing, and three were pending trial, base figures show.

A court-martial is the military equivalent to a trial with both convictions and acquittals, said Wright-Patterson spokesman Daryl Mayer. Service members are presumed innocent until a final verdict is reached.

Wright-Patterson was one of four bases scrutinized in a report U.S. Sen. Kristin Gillibrand, D-N.Y., released this month that, among other findings, said the military had under reported the number of sexual assault cases and that nearly half of the accusers declined to move forward with prosecution after filing a complaint.

Reports rise

In a report released this month, the Department of Defense reported 6,131 sexual assault incidents in fiscal year 2014, up 11 percent from the prior year. The Air Force reported 1,350 sexual assault incidents in fiscal year 2014 compared to 1,149 in the prior year.

The Air Force has had "significant progress" in both prevention and response to sexual assault in the ranks, Col. Kirstin J. Reimann, an Air Force spokeswoman at the Pentagon, said in an email to the newspaper.

In the past three years, Reimann said the service branch has had fewer sexual assaults and more victims reporting the crime.

In fiscal year 2014, one in every three airmen who experienced unwanted sexual contact reported it compared to one in six in fiscal year 2012, Reimann said.

The Air Force has set up a special victims counsel unit to advise victims of their legal rights and improved training for both investigators and sexual assault response coordinators, she said. Commanders are evaluated annually in an assessment on the climate in their units, and, she said, "the Air Force is committed to reducing victims' perceptions of social and professional retaliation" in several ways, such as more awareness, education and training.

"The (Air Force) has improved every aspect of our response system to ensure we provide exceptional care to our victims and to ensure that we appropriately prosecute those who commit this crime," she said.

Merle Wilberding, a Dayton attorney and former military lawyer who testified to Congress to push for changes in how the military deals with sexual assault, said the Air Force has made progress establishing a special victims counsel to advise victims, but many may not report an incident because of fears of reprisal and isolation.

HOW WE GOT THIS STORY

This newspaper requested Air Force documents on the number of court martial proceedings over a five-year period, and upcoming court martial cases scheduled for trial at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. The request showed 13 of 20 court martial cases tried at the base since 2010 were for sexual assault-related offenses.

"That culture has to be changed," he said.

Court-martial proceedings

In the first proceeding court-martial proceeding, scheduled to begin today, Staff Sgt. Corey J. Campbell, 28, an Air Force recruiter with the 338th Recruiting Squadron at Wright-Patterson, was accused of abusive sexual contact/sexual assault and adultery, according to the Air Force.

Mayer said Campbell originally faced charges in civilian court in Hamilton County, but the Air Force asked for and received jurisdiction to bring the case to a court-martial trial at Wright-Patterson.

Cincinnati television station WCPO reported the defendant was accused of sexually assaulting a 17-year-old girl at a Halloween party last October in a Springdale home. The Air Force would not comment on the details in the broadcast report.

In the two other pending cases:

■ Airman 1st Class Jayson K. Walton, a cyber systems technician at the National Air and Space Intelligence Center at Wright-Patterson, was accused of abusive sexual contact, underage drinking, and modifying a military ID card in an alleged incident last June, according to the Air Force. The alleged victim was an adult woman, the Air Force said. Proceedings were set to begin in June.

■ Airman 1st Class Colin M. Lee of the 179th Civil Engineer Squadron of the Mansfield Air National Guard Base, faced allegations of rape in a July incident, indecent viewing for photographing or videotaping a private area of an alleged underage female victim and production/distribution of child pornography, Air Force records said. Proceedings were set to begin in July.

The Air Force did not release the ages of the alleged victims, the defendants or the locations of the reported incidents. Wright-Patterson conducts judicial proceedings in cases involving reservists and Air National Guardsmen from other bases.

Capt. Jane Elzeftawy, a military lawyer representing Walton, said the defendant had not yet entered a plea. Airmen do not enter a plea until court-martial proceedings begin, authorities said. The Air Force did not release the names or contact information for the attorneys representing the other defendants.

"Obviously, we follow cases like this closely, however we do not comment on criminal investigations," U.S. Rep. Mike Turner, R-Dayton, co-chairman of the Military Sexual Assault Prevention Caucus, said in a written statement. "As co-chair of the Military Sexual Assault Prevention Caucus, these allegations must be investigated."

Sexual assault complaints

Wright-Patterson's Staff Judge Advocate office reported 45 sexual assault complaints involving adult victims between January 2010 and April 23, 2015.

Along with the 13 airmen who faced court martial proceedings, 10 other airmen were punished through non-judicial punishment for "less serious sexual contact or sexually based offenses," according to Wright-Patterson. In seven other cases, prosecutors decided not to pursue charges because of a lack of evidence; and in seven more cases civilian authorities withheld jurisdiction or the Air Force did not have jurisdiction when the offense was committed, officials said.

Six cases remained under investigation and two victims did not know the identity of the perpetrators, the base reported.

Miranda Petersen is the programs and policy director of Protect Our Defenders, an advocacy group calling for reform of how sexual assault is handled in the military. In an interview, Petersen cited figures in a recent RAND survey that reported about 20,000 service members last year experienced one or more sexual assaults.

The survey said about 4.9 percent of service-women and 1 percent of servicemen among the 1.3 million active-duty service members reported sexual assaults by other service members, civilians, spouses or others in 2014.

Sixty-two percent of victims said they experienced retaliation after the incident, Petersen said.

Additionally, one in four women reported experiencing sexual harassment and 60 percent said the person who harassed them was a superior in their chain of command, she said.

"From our perspective, the picture is still pretty dismal," she said. "... Our bottom line is retaliation and harassment are pervasive in the military and that has not changed."

The RAND survey also reported fewer Air Force men and women experienced sexually related incidents compared to the other service branches.

Turner and U.S. Rep. Niki Tsongas, D-Mass., have introduced extensive legislation in recent years to combat sexual assault in the military.

In a written statement, Turner said the Support Uniformed Patriots; Prevent Offenses and Restore Trust Act, or SUPPORT Act, "would take critical steps to prevent retaliation and better examine sexual assault instances, while improving support for victims."

The legislation passed Friday in the House version of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2016.

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