



PERSONNEL AND
READINESS

OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

AUG 24 2018

The Honorable Keith Ellison
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Ellison:

Thank you for your letter of May 4, 2018, to the Secretary of Defense, referencing recent *ProPublica* and *Frontline PBS* articles reporting that some Service members are connected to hate groups. Department of Defense (DoD) policy regarding supremacist and extremist groups falls under my purview, and I have been asked to reply on behalf of the Secretary.

Department of Defense Instruction (DoDI) 1325.06, *Handling Dissident and Protest Activities Among Members of the Armed Forces*, November 27, 2009, amended on February 22, 2012, provides policy and guidance for handling dissident and protest activities among members of the Armed Forces, and expressly prohibits actively advocating supremacist and extremist doctrine, ideology, or causes. Department policy is clear in this regard: Service members must reject active participation in such groups, and commanders have the authority to employ the full range of administrative and disciplinary actions, including administrative separation or appropriate criminal action, against military personnel who engage in such activity. Department policy further provides that a Service member's right of expression should be preserved to the maximum extent possible in accordance with the U.S. Constitution and applicable laws, and consistent with good order and discipline and the national security. The responsibility for balancing these interests falls to military commanders, who are cautioned in the DoDI that "[n]o commander should be indifferent to conduct that, if allowed to proceed unchecked, would destroy the effectiveness of his or her unit." Commanders are directed to remain alert for signs of future prohibited activities, with a goal of early intervention to minimize the risk of future prohibited activities.

In your letter you asked that we address several items. First, you requested investigations into the actions of Service members identified by *ProPublica* and *Frontline PBS*. Second, you requested information on the number of reports of extremist activities by Service members in the past five years, the number of "full investigations" that have been conducted, and the number of Service members who have been disciplined for extremist actions. Lastly, you requested information on the "steps currently being taken to screen recruits for extremist ties."

First, investigations have been conducted regarding the Service members identified by *ProPublica* and *Frontline PBS*.

Second, there have been 27 reports of extremist activity (domestic) by Service members over the past five years. All but two of these reports were formally investigated over the same period. Identifying the number of Service members disciplined for extremist actions is problematic, as such activity can be charged under various articles of the Uniform Code of Military Justice, and the offense for which a Service member is convicted or receives punishment may not, in and of itself, be descriptive of extremist actions or activity. However, 18 Service members who were the focus of investigations involving extremist activity noted above were ultimately disciplined and/or separated from their respective Military Service through administrative separation or military justice proceedings.

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May 4, 2018

The Honorable James N. Mattis
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Mattis:

I am writing to bring to your attention to a recent *ProPublica* and *Frontline PBS* investigation completed as part of their "Documenting Hate" project, which found evidence that active duty military members are connected to at least one hate group. More specifically, *ProPublica* and *Frontline* identified three Atomawaffen members or associates who are currently employed by the Army or Navy.

The involvement of service members in white supremacist organizations or other hate groups is cause for significant concern, particularly given their combat and weapons training. Although the *ProPublica* and *Frontline* investigation focused particular attention on the actions of a single Marine allegedly involved in the violent and tragic events in Charlottesville, Virginia last summer, I am concerned these actions may be indicative of a broader problem within the military.

Although Department of Defense guidance clearly prohibits discrimination and extremist behavior, it appears that some service members are still able to join and actively participate in extremist organizations. Disturbingly, the investigation also highlighted that at least some volunteers with seemingly credible ties to the white supremacist movement are being allowed to enter the military. While the *ProPublica* and *Frontline* investigation appeared limited to Atomawaffen, some evidence suggests that the problem may be more widespread. Nearly 25 percent of respondents to a September 2017 *Military Times* survey of over 1,100 active duty troops reported that they had seen examples of white nationalism among their fellow service members. Over 40 percent of non-white service members surveyed said that they had personally experienced white nationalism in the military.



OSD008007-18/CMD007585-18

I ask that you conduct investigations into the actions of the service members identified by *ProPublica* and *Frontline*. I also request information on the number of reports of extremist activity by service members over the past five years, the number of full investigations conducted, and the number of troops that were disciplined for extremist actions or ties. In addition, I seek information on the steps currently being taken to screen recruits for extremist ties. I request that you send your responses by May 21, 2018.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I look forward to working with you to address this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Keith Ellison". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Keith Ellison
Member of Congress

Cc: The Honorable Mac Thornberry, Chairman
The Honorable Adam Smith, Ranking Member

NOTE

Barry, Michael P CIV WHS ESD (US)

From: OSD Pentagon OASD LA Mailbox Constituent Inquiries
Sent: Friday, May 4, 2018 11:39 AM
To: WHS Pentagon ESD Mailbox CMD Congressionals
Cc: Hubbard, Noelle S CTR OSD OASD LA (US)
Subject: FW: Letter for Secretary Mattis (UNCLASSIFIED)
Attachments: 2018.05.04 Letter to Mattis.pdf
Signed By: (b)(6)

Classification: UNCLASSIFIED

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Good Morning,

Please see letter addressed to SecDef.

Respectfully,

Nick Smagula
Special Assistant for Constituent Inquiries
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-----Original Message-----

From: Marticorena, Brieana [mailto:Brieana.Marticorena@mail.house.gov]
Sent: Friday, May 4, 2018 11:30 AM
To: Alger, Margaret Allison (Allison) CTR OSD OASD LA (US) (b)(6)
Cc: OSD Pentagon OASD LA Mailbox Constituent Inquiries (b)(2)
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Letter for Secretary Mattis

Good morning,

Please find attached a letter to Secretary Mattis from Rep. Ellison, concerning a recent investigation by ProPublica and Frontline PBS into white supremacist ties in the military.



Please let me know if you have any questions.

Best,

Brieana

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