



Coalition for Justice, Dignity, and Accountability

June 10, 2024

We can no longer afford the growing cost of the Coast Guard’s **inaction** and **evasion of accountability**. Between June 2023 and May 2024, CNN and dozens of other media outlets have reported extensively on three major scandals involving top-brass level U.S. Coast Guard cover-ups of sexual assault, rape, bullying, harassment, and retaliation at the Coast Guard Academy and across the entire 78,000 personnel workforce. **Righting the Ship**¹, **Operation Fouled Anchor**², and **Culture of Respect**³ cover-ups reveal that whether the cases go back decades or just months ago, there is very clear **pattern of little to no accountability** when perpetrators violate numerous federal policies and laws. These three cover-ups alone span the consecutive leadership of the current Commandant (Admiral Linda Fagan) and past two Commandants (Admiral Paul Zukunft and Admiral Karl Schultz).

Additionally, **hundreds of survivor stories**⁴ make clear the Coast Guard’s woeful disregard for justice, accountability, safety⁵, and dignity. The U.S. Coast Guard, *a law enforcement agency and humanitarian agency with missions around the globe*, has repeatedly demonstrated that it prioritizes the careers of perpetrators by protecting unlawful individuals and punishing victims who had the courage to report the illegal abuses. These disturbing and blatant **patterns of institutionalized abuse of power** transcend all forms of allegations reported within the ranks from sexual assault, rape, bullying, hazing, discrimination, intimidation, silencing, to retaliation. This abhorrent cultural crisis is capsizing the Coast Guard’s ability to carry out missions effectively and safeguard its personnel.

Because of the FERES Doctrine, the Coast Guard’s deeply troubling reporting and accountability processes are often the only recourse for most victims. Consequently, thousands of dedicated cadets, service members, reservists, civilians, auxiliarists, *and* their families who were unlawfully harmed have never seen justice. We are calling on the U.S. Congress and the Department of Homeland Security to **“Right The Ship”** by taking bold and urgent action to eradicate the decades-long culture of **cruelty** and **cover-up** within the U.S. Coast Guard. These actions must include:

- 1) Holding all individuals fully accountable, to include current and former Commandants, who engaged in the cover-up of misconduct identified in the 2019 Righting The Ship Investigation, 2018 Operation Fouled Anchor Report, and 2015 Culture of Respect Report.
- 2) Holding all individuals fully accountable, to include current and former Commandants, who covered-up and/or engaged in misconduct already substantiated by the investigations led by the Coast Guard, Dept. of Homeland Security, or Congress.
- 3) Removing bullying, hazing, discrimination, harassment, and retaliation investigations from the Coast Guard chain of command.
- 4) Reopen and reinvestigate any allegations in which the Department of Homeland Security Inspector General referred the victim’s case back to the Coast Guard for final investigation.
- 5) Codifying that non-disclosure agreements (NDA) are prohibited for any type of abuse, and individuals violating this prohibited practice will be held fully accountable.

Sincerely,

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¹ [Righting the Ship: The Coast Guard Must Improve its Processes for Addressing Harassment, Bullying, and Retaliation | The Committee on Oversight and Accountability Democrats \(house.gov\)](#)

² [Former Coast Guard head covered up secret investigation into sexual assaults at the Coast Guard Academy | CNN Politics](#)

³ [US Coast Guard leaders long concealed a critical report about racism, hazing and sexual misconduct | CNN Politics](#)

⁴ Facebook Blogs/Podcasts: [The Pettiest Officer of the U.S. Coast Guard](#), Whistler Mcgee, The Exit Interview

⁵ [APA poll reveals toxic workplaces, other significant workplace mental health challenges](#)