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# Military leaders ignored more than decade of sex misconduct allegations involving 'Officer X': report

*The report is centred on an individual who is only described in the document as “Officer X,” but who has faced multiple allegations of harassment and police investigations since 2006.*

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National Defence Corporal David Cribb

Royal Canadian Navy leaders and military police ignored concerns about an officer’s continuing alleged harassment of military staff as well as alleged sexual misconduct, according to an internal National Defence report.

The report is centred on an individual who is only described in the document as “Officer X,” but who has faced multiple allegations of harassment and police investigations since 2006. In addition, a female member of the Canadian Forces filed an allegation of sexual misconduct against Officer X in 2018.

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But the team of civilian investigators brought in to look at the matter in 2022 heard that no action had been taken against Officer X even though sailors repeatedly informed the navy about the allegations.

“All of the individuals brought forth allegations that ranged from the ‘lower end of the spectrum’ to the ‘high end’ of the sexual misconduct ‘spectrum,’” the report from the National Defence investigators pointed out. “This

information was ‘bundled up’ with 14 years of multiple allegations and MP Investigations against Officer X that had resulted in ‘zero action.’ ”

The team interviewed one navy commander who informed them that “there were several MP (military police) investigations, dating as far back as to 2006, in which Officer X was named.”

The incidents are centred around the naval reserves.

In a letter dated Aug. 29, 2019, a senior officer informed one of the alleged victims of the sexual misconduct that “administrative actions” were taken and there was no need for charges against the officer. The administrative action consisted of entering Officer X’s name in a military database of sexual misconduct incidents. The alleged victim was also assured that the navy’s senior leaders were aware of the sexual misconduct incident.

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Vice Admiral Angus Topshee, head of the Royal Canadian Navy, was also approached on a number of occasions, including in the fall of 2023, by an individual concerned about Officer X, according to another record. Topshee did not take any action, according to that individual.

This newspaper is not publishing the name of the individual since it could identify one of the alleged victims.

This newspaper asked for comment on March 5 from Topshee, but National Defence responded that he was travelling and couldn’t be reached.

But National Defence spokesperson Frédérica Dupuis noted in a statement that “we are aware of a series of incidents and allegations that have occurred over the past several years.”

She noted that administrative actions had been taken, but couldn’t provide details because of privacy law.

“If any new allegations are made, the Chain of Command (or Military or civilian police if so required) will investigate and follow up appropriately, considering further administrative or disciplinary measures,” Dupuis added.

But the National Defence internal investigation noted that sailors had little faith in their Royal Canadian Navy leaders.

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“Information provided by witnesses also suggested that individuals did not feel supported by (leadership) in regards to the issues they had brought forward about their own personal experiences with Officer X,” the report noted.

Because of the multiple police investigations dating back to 2006, “it therefore seemed improbable that members of Officer X’s unit (Chain of Command) were not privy to said information.”

The National Defence team noted military police officers who looked into one of the sexual misconduct complaints against Officer X were confident the specific incident had occurred. But, instead of taking action, police referred the file back to the naval reserves “to deal with it in other ways.”

The naval reserves didn’t take action, other than to close the file, the National Defence report said.

One senior navy officer interviewed by the investigators noted “the ‘aggregate’ of information that was gathered by (Naval Reserve Headquarters) had provided beyond the threshold of ‘balance of probabilities’ that Officer X had behaved inappropriately with multiple individuals.”

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The Canadian Forces has been mired in allegations of sexual assault and harassment over the last decade.

The resulting scandals prompted reports and inquiries by former Supreme Court Justice Marie Deschamps and former Supreme Court Justice Louise Arbour, along with pledges by the military leadership to bring about change. In addition, a number of senior officers have faced charges or court proceedings for alleged sexual misconduct or assault.

But defence insiders say there is a sense in some areas of the Canadian Forces that the sexual misconduct scandals are now largely in the past as news media reporting has decreased and a number of high-profile legal cases have either collapsed or ended in senior officers being found not guilty.

In three cases in the past year, the proceedings against serving or retired Canadian Forces personnel were stayed in court, in part because of lengthy delays in having material and evidence held by military police turned over to defence lawyers.

Chief of the Defence Staff Gen. Wayne Eyre has said the military culture needs to change to deal with concerns over sexual misconduct. He has also acknowledged that the various allegations and incidents have harmed recruiting efforts. Eyre and the Canadian Forces have introduced a number of initiatives to try to deal with sexual assault and misconduct.

But new figures released in December 2023 showed that, during Eyre’s tenure, the number of reported sexual assaults doubled in a one-year period.

*David Pugliese is an award-winning journalist covering Canadian Forces and military issues in Canada. To support his work, including exclusive content for subscribers only, sign up here: [ottawacitizen.com/subscribe](https://ottawacitizen.com/subscribe)*

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