



April 22, 2016

VIA OVERNIGHT DELIVERY SERVICE

The Honorable Ashton B. Carter
Secretary of Defense

SUBJECT: Call to Correct Injustice to SFC Charles Martland, United States Army

Dear Mr. Secretary:

The purpose of this correspondence is to follow up on our correspondence to your office, dated October 19, 2015, and January 26, 2016, and to forward to you a letter of support for Sergeant First Class (SFC) Charles Martland along with the signatures of **65,102** concerned Americans. We have also enclosed an additional **1,743** individualized letters from Americans who wish to express their support for SFC Martland.

The letters are submitted by members of the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ) and other concerned Americans who believe SFC Martland should be commended, not punished, for defending a child from ongoing sexual abuse at the hands of an allied Afghan commander. These Americans believe SFC Martland's actions were not only justified, but also heroic, under the circumstances.

In addition, over **342,000** Americans have signed our Petition calling for SFC Martland's prompt reinstatement as a Green Beret.

UNDERLYING FACTS

In September 2011, SFC Martland and his superior officer, CPT Daniel Quinn, took decisive and forceful action to stop unconscionable sexual assaults perpetrated against a young Afghan boy. The perpetrator of those crimes was a local Afghan police commander who worked alongside U.S. troops every day.

SFC Martland and CPT Quinn had received reports that a local Afghan police commander had kidnapped a 12-year-old boy, tied the boy to his bed, and repeatedly

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raped him over the course of approximately ten days.¹ The soldiers had learned of these despicable acts when the boy and his mother had sought help at the U.S. base.² The boy showed U.S. soldiers scars on his arms from being tied to his bed.³ A U.S. medic, with the aid of an interpreter, examined the boy and verified that abuse had occurred. CPT Quinn also verified the truth of the story with other local Afghan leaders.⁴ For seeking U.S. help, the Afghan commander who had repeatedly raped the boy had the boy's mother beaten.⁵

Because of such ongoing criminal conduct by Afghan forces allied with the U.S., SFC Martland noted, "we were quickly losing the support of the local populace."⁶ SFC Martland reported that "the severity of the rapes and the lack of action by the Afghan Government caused many of the locals to view our [local Afghan police allies] as worse than the Taliban."⁷ *That was the situational context within which SFC Martland and CPT Quinn took action.*

The Afghan leader who had been identified as having kidnapped and raped the young boy was invited to the base and questioned about the boy.⁸ It is undisputed that the man admitted the abuse. When confronted about the rapes, he laughed them off and said, "It is only a boy."⁹ SFC Martland and CPT Quinn took immediate and forceful action—in a way that Afghan culture would understand—to send an unmistakable message: sexual abuse of children would not be tolerated around U.S. forces.

Subsequent actions by SFC Martland's chain of command have proven to be absolutely inexplicable—and disgusting. Rather than supporting and praising CPT Quinn and SFC Martland for halting the ongoing rape of an innocent young Afghan boy, the two soldiers were themselves relieved and reprimanded.

Hence, rather than send Afghan sexual predators a message that sexual abuse of children would not be tolerated around U.S. forces, actions by senior U.S. military leaders in response to what CPT Quinn and SFC Martland did sent the exact opposite message—to our allies, our troops, our enemies, and the world. Rather than punish known, notorious,

¹Michelle Tan, *Congressman, Citing Green Beret's Plight, Adds to Army Secretary Controversy*, ARMY TIMES (Jan. 27, 2016), <http://www.armytimes.com/story/military/capitol-hill/2016/01/27/congressman-citing-green-berets-plight-adds-secarm-controversy/79428122/>.

²*Id.*

³Lucas Tomlison, *Army Kicking Out Decorated Green Beret who Stood up for Afghan Rape Victim*, FOX NEWS (Aug. 21, 2015), <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2015/08/21/army-kicking-out-decorated-green-beret-who-stood-up-for-afghan-rape-victim/?intcmp=hpbt3>.

⁴*Id.*

⁵*Id.*

⁶Kyle Jahner, *'One of the Best': Defenders Show Support for Ousted Green Beret*, ARMY TIMES (Sept. 30, 2015), <http://www.armytimes.com/story/military/2015/09/30/defenders-mount-support-ousted-green-beret-charles-martland/72996486/>.

⁷*Id.*

⁸Jake Tapper & Kim Berryman, *Green Beret Discharged for Beating Alleged Child Rapist Speaks Out*, CNN (Sept. 28, 2015), <http://www.cnn.com/2015/09/28/politics/green-beret-discharged-for-beating-alleged-child-rapist-speaks-out/>.

⁹*Id.*

sexual predators, by its actions, the United States was instead demonstrating its willingness to condone the most heinous of criminal acts against defenseless children.

Consider what SFC Martland's relief and reprimand conveyed to local villagers like the abused boy and his mother when the U.S. soldiers who stood up to defend them against an admitted, serial, child rapist were themselves reprimanded and relieved of duty for doing so. And, perhaps worst of all, consider the message conveyed to the local Afghan commanders who were openly engaging in such abusive conduct.

The Army's action against SFC Martland has, in reality, empowered such rapists to continue committing despicable acts with defenseless children. *The Army's response constituted a devastating blow in the battle to win the hearts and minds of everyday Afghans.* The widespread abuse of women and children at the hands of local Afghan police forces allied with the United States will sadly continue, but now with apparent U.S.-sanctioned impunity.

It has been reported that SFC Martland's punishment is connected to his departure from an apparent misguided rigid Department of Defense (DOD) policy of deference to local customs.¹⁰ As we have said before, the ACLJ and our members do not dispute that U.S. forces must be sensitive to and respectful of the cultures and traditions of the people in countries where U.S. forces are stationed. Of course, our military should respect, where possible, traditions and cultural norms pertaining to religion, dress, language, and the like. Yet, the open and notorious sexual abuse of children is not an acceptable custom in any culture and is unworthy of any semblance of respect by the United States and its Armed Forces. *A policy of deference to local customs and traditions is one thing. A policy of tolerating and facilitating the sexual slavery and abuse of defenseless children is quite another!*

SEXUAL ABUSE OF CHILDREN IS UNIVERSALLY RECOGNIZED AS A CRIME

No policy can lawfully require that American soldiers look the other way from sexual crimes committed on U.S. installations or in their presence. It appears from the reports on SFC Martland's case that there was a policy promulgated somewhere within DOD that required American service members to refrain from taking action that any honorable person possessing knowledge of open child enslavement and sexual abuse would take. *Since an express prohibition on defending minor children from child predators would doubtless constitute an unlawful order, no soldier would be required to obey it. In fact, soldiers are obligated to disobey unlawful orders.*

¹⁰ Joseph Goldstein, *U.S. Soldiers Told to Ignore Sexual Abuse of Boys by Afghan Allies*, N.Y. TIMES (Sept. 20, 2015), http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/21/world/asia/us-soldiers-told-to-ignore-afghan-allies-abuse-of-boys.html?_r=3.

The UCMJ specifically criminalizes sexual assault and rape of a child.¹¹ No member of the U.S. Armed Forces can be ordered to sit idly by and allow a defenseless child to be sexually assaulted. Such attacks are not only morally wrong; they are also a clear violation of the UCMJ. Any order forbidding such aid to defenseless children would be unlawful—it would also be shameful!

The argument that sexual abuse of young boys is simply cultural is also specious. The Afghan Penal Code outlaws all sexual intercourse outside of marriage.¹² Surely, forced sexual intercourse with a minor male child easily falls within that prohibition. Any U.S. commander or policy-maker who failed to understand that basic truth should be disqualified from holding any position of responsibility in DOD or elsewhere.

International law also speaks to this situation. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) requires that “[e]very child shall have . . . the right to such measures of protection as are required by his status as a minor, on the part of his family, society and the State.”¹³ Further, both Afghanistan and the United States share a commitment under international law to end slavery in all its forms¹⁴ as well as cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.¹⁵ According to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, “[n]o violence against children is justifiable. . . .”¹⁶ Rape is surely a form of prohibited violence.

Mr. Secretary, what happened to SFC Martland in 2011 was a travesty. That travesty is being compounded by the Army QMP Board’s decision to separate a decorated and devoted United States warrior from the Army’s ranks because he was wrongly reprimanded for taking decisive and forceful action to stop the repeated rape of a young Afghan boy at the hands of a corrupt Afghan leader.

SFC Martland’s brave actions halted ongoing felonies recognized in the UCMJ. His actions halted ongoing criminal actions recognized under Afghan law. His actions halted ongoing felonies condemned by international law. Yet, it was he who turned out to be the one who was punished; he was both relieved and reprimanded. That is unconscionable.

It is not SFC Martland who acted amiss in what he did. It is the person or persons who promulgated and enforced a policy that violated U.S. law, Afghan law, and international law who acted amiss. *Rather than separate SFC Martland for his honorable service, we*

¹¹See, e.g., 10 U.S.C. § 920 (criminalizing rape); 10 U.S.C. § 920b (criminalizing sexual assault and rape of a child); 10 U.S.C. § 925 (criminalizing forcible sodomy); 10 U.S.C. § 928 (criminalizing assault).

¹²Article 427 of the Afghan Penal Code criminalizes sexual intercourse outside marriage. According to a United Nations report, “[t]hose who sexually abuse children are currently jailed and sentenced according to this article, which can bring a jail sentence of six to ten years. . . .” United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Aug. 28, 2009, CRC/C/AFG/1 at 72.

¹³International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights art. 24(1), Mar. 23, 1976, 999 U.N.T.S. 171. The United States has ratified and Afghanistan has acceded to this Convention.

¹⁴G.A. Res. 217 (III) A, Universal Declaration of Human Rights art. iv (Dec. 10, 1948).

¹⁵*Id.* at art. v.

¹⁶United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Apr. 18, 2011, CRC/C/GC/13.

urge you instead to do all that you can to keep a quality soldier in uniform. SFC Martland acted honorably throughout. That is more than can be said of those morally obtuse persons in his chain of command who promulgated and enforced a policy that will subject untold numbers of innocent Afghan children to sexual slavery and abuse in violation of U.S., Afghan, and international law.

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On behalf of our members and the individuals submitting the enclosed letters, we respectfully urge you to return this committed warrior to the battlefield without delay.

Specifically, we strongly and respectfully urge you to disapprove the recommendation of the Army QMP Board to separate SFC Martland and to order instead his immediate reinstatement to duty; to issue a formal, written apology to him on behalf of DOD for the inappropriate action taken against him at the time he acted to halt the repeated rape of the young Afghan boy; and to order that SFC Martland's military records be purged of all negative documents and/or other entries or enclosures of whatever kind related to his actions surrounding the incident in Afghanistan.

Respectfully yours,



Jay Alan Sekulow
Chief Counsel



Robert W. Ash
Senior Counsel