

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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<https://oversight.house.gov>

December 8, 2023

The Honorable Linda Fagan
Commandant
U.S. Coast Guard
2703 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave SE
Washington, D.C. 20593

Dear Commandant Fagan:

The Committee on Oversight and Accountability is investigating the U.S. Coast Guard's (USCG) mishandling of serious misconduct, including racism, hazing, discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual assault, and rape, and the withholding of internal investigations into the misconduct from Congress and the public. Recently, it was reported to Congress that Operation Fouled Anchor, a USCG investigation into sexual abuse allegations at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, found that many senior leaders ignored or purposefully concealed these allegations.¹ The investigation suggested systemic failures on the part of senior USCG leadership to accurately report and prosecute these crimes. The investigation also concluded that perpetrators often evaded prosecution, were promoted, retired under satisfactory circumstances, or were honorably discharged. We request additional documents and communications related to the handling of misconduct allegations within USCG.

In addition to Operation Fouled Anchor, on November 28, 2023, the Committee received an April 2015 Coast Guard report titled "Culture of Respect (COR) Integrated Process Team (IPT) Phase I Report" (April 2015 Report).² Among the highly concerning findings of the report, USCG investigators found systemic issues including a lack of training on sexual assault and harassment; methods used by the USCG to track sexual assault and harassment were ineffective and inefficient; USCG training did not include a focus on sexual assault or harassment; senior leaders misunderstood basic USCG leadership competencies; and USCG duty health services personnel were not trained on how to recognize and care for victims of sexual assault and rape.³

Additionally, the April 2015 Report found that recruiters not only failed to provide recruits with a clear picture of life in the USCG, but promotion review boards knowingly

¹ Blake Ellis, Melanie Hicken, Audrey Ash, *Criminal investigation into Coast Guard Academy revealed years of sexual assault cover-ups, but findings were kept secret*, CNN (June 30, 2023).

² United States Coast Guard Force Readiness Command, Culture of Respect (COR) Integrated Process Team (IPT) Phase I Report, April 2015.

³ *Id.*

overlooked Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) violations in cases where the servicemember was a high performer, and “in essence, brush[ed] the problems ‘under the rug.’”⁴ Finally, investigators found that there was widespread, and ongoing, instances of gender discrimination, sexual assault, and rape, throughout the agency.

USCG only notified Congress about Operation Fouled Anchor and its April 2015 Report when existence of these reports was going to be in the press. In fact, Congress only learned about the April 2015 Report last week. The Committee has serious concerns that congressional committees would not have been notified of these reports, and the serious allegations contained within them, if it had not been for the threat of public reporting.⁵

The Committee will investigate the extent to which USCG leaders purposefully withheld and concealed reports of misconduct from Congress. By withholding and concealing these reports, the USCG may have obstructed the ability of Congress to carry out constitutionally mandated oversight authority and legislation to address these issues. USCG may also have prevented actionable change within the agency to combat the appalling findings within these reports. Furthermore, by withholding this information from Congress and the public, the USCG likely put more people at risk.

To assist the Committee in investigating these reports, the withholding of information from Congress, and the inaction of senior leadership to combat misconduct, please provide the following documents and information no later than December 22, 2023:

1. All documents and communications relating to Operation Fouled Anchor, including but not limited to, its findings, any actions taken in response, and any decision to withhold the investigation from Congress or take action to notify Congress;
2. A list of former and current senior USCG officials involved in the handling of misconduct cases starting with those identified during Operation Fouled Anchor to present;
3. All documents relating to the implementation of policies in response to the findings of Operation Fouled Anchor;
4. All communications relating to senior USCG officials’ decision to withhold the April 2015 Culture of Respect (COR) report to Congress and subsequent decision to release the report to Congress, including any part media attention played in the decision;
5. Data, excluding personally identifiable information (PII), of the number of reported allegations of misconduct—including but not limited to allegations of racism, hazing, discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual assault, or rape—between January 1990 and the present; and

⁴ *Id.*

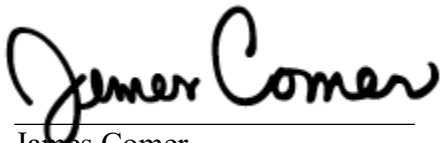
⁵ Blake Ellis, Melanie Hicken, *US Coast Guard leaders long concealed a critical report about racism, hazing and sexual misconduct*, CNN (November 30, 2023).

6. Any other report, internal or congressionally mandated, in the possession of the USCG, relating to serious misconduct within the agency including but not limited to allegations of racism, hazing, discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual assault, or rape.

To arrange for delivery of responsive documents or to ask any related follow-up questions, please contact the Committee on Oversight and Accountability Majority Staff at (202) 225-5074. The Committee on Oversight and Accountability is the principal oversight committee in the U.S. House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate “any matter” at “any time” under House Rule X.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation with this inquiry.

Sincerely,



James Comer
Chairman
Committee on Oversight and Accountability



Glenn Grothman
Chairman
Subcommittee on National Security,
the Border, and Foreign Affairs

cc: The Honorable Jamie Raskin, Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Accountability

The Honorable Robert Garcia, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on National Security, the Border, and Foreign Affairs