

Congressional Testimony of Susan Moseley
H.R. 1603, Military Sexual Assault Victims Empowerment Act
House Committee of Veterans' Affairs
November 17, 2015

My name is Susan Moseley and I am a veteran of the U.S. Army. I was the typical young adult trying to find my way in the world and had wasted a year of my parent's money on college with no goal or direction in my life. I decided to enter the military and chose the Army. Most of my family thought I would never make it through basic training much less thrive in military setting.

I arrived to my permanent duty station in Ft. Bliss, Texas and my joy was short lived when I arrived to the Battalion S-4 and I was told, "Oh, I'm sorry but you will in Foxtrot Battery." I was perplexed and I'm sure it read on my face when she said and I paraphrase Top 1SGT is into girls like you and I should find a boyfriend of rank quickly or I would be his. Fear did not kick in until I was introduced to him. Little did I know, he would own me - mind and body and he tried to take my soul.

My unit deployed to Saudi Arabia twice as a Patriot Missile system was in place from the first Gulf War. This was a time that grooming and manipulation began when he was with me by myself during Scud Alerts training. That was the first time he touched me and kissed me. I still trained at a high level and did well in my position; I always wanted to be the best. When we returned he made a drastic change placing me as his assistant in Head Quarters. I became a pro at dodging or planning people to be in the CQ so I was with someone or on the phone until I heard other voices to lower my stress levels.

He informed me that we would inspect the barracks and when we arrived in the laundry room he locked the door. That pit in your stomach that just makes you uneasy dropped. I had learned if I took control and performed oral sex it was not as bad as the other things he did to me. He had more than just me he did this to but I was his as he always told me.

My parents had come to see me on their way to a national park, I almost told my Mom but fear over took me. I had 18 months left on my time in service and I had that feeling that I was owned by him. To say no was to say I want to be placed on extra duty or jobs that everyone would pass down the line and he could punish me for not giving him what he wanted. I had no control and it was always in my mind evasion tactics were used against my chain of command not on an enemy.

As time passed, I found that the one thing I could control was what went in my mouth or did not for me it depended on the day. After a PT test you are weighed in and they noticed how the number had lowered and my physical appearance changed. My best friend knew without saying

it out loud what was happening to me. He kept me full of as much hope as he could with we were close to ETS and then I could go home.

The last time he raped me with my face on my desk I was beyond broken I wanted to die. Later that night I tried.

My section chief called my phone after I did not show up to PT and I thought, "oh no, it did not work, what will happen to me now?" I told him I tried to die and failed and he took me to the army hospital and I was admitted. My doctor was trying to find me a facility for long term treatment for bulimia when my commander and my 1SGT aka my assailant came to the floor as we waited for the doctor to tell them what was happening he whispered in my ear "we are good right?" By this time, I had little tone in my voice and I nodded.

I was sent to my unit and I knew that I had little time left to report him. After I left the Psych floor, I walked into Captain Duer's office and broke down but he began the process. I was returned to the hospital and was sedated.

I was sent to an inpatient facility and began to heal. When I returned I was given a lie detector test and spoke to the CID and a Master Sergeant and was doing all I could to get home. I was told I was to mentally unstable to be given a trial. After a week of fellow battery soldiers telling me and calling me horrid names because he had been moved when I returned.

Finally, the last day had come, and I WAS GOING HOME!

When I walked out of my units doors a major in the S-3 called me a whore and many other names but I was free. I was told about the VA but never put too much thought into it. When I left the army, I was seen by a doctor and even a dentist but no psych staff. I never knew what had happened to me had a name.

I did not assimilate back into my home life and lost my soul. I worried I would see him everywhere I looked. I had flashbacks and nightmares. I separated myself from my family and friends, and was quite reckless in my life. I was bounced from doctor to doctor and never got the care I needed for several years.

I was welcomed into the LGBT community by a friend and I began to work for a group that raised money for HIV groups and found a community I felt safe. I was part of a group and that was what I needed.

I have had relationship problems for a long time and had one with a great man whom was as broken as I was. In looking back, we coexisted and I had turned away from my family not even showing up for my birthday one year because I could not deal with my family trying to help but not understanding what the reminders of MST did to me on a daily basis.

The day I found out I was pregnant was when my mind allowed me to want to live. My child saved my life. I know I would be dead today if I had not been blessed with her.

I became a part of a MST survivors' group 9 years ago after seeing a therapist named Karen Tufts. I worked on the skills I lacked and made goals. I could only see her every 3 weeks but she gave up her lunch every Friday for a group of girls (she also saw men) that helped each other through the trials and tribulations of daily life.

I was a people finder obsessed on my 1ST SGT or top to see if he was still where it said he was many times a day. I would panic if I even thought that I had seen him. I can't count how many times I have left a buggy at the grocery or left a University of Kentucky basketball game only 2 times, but hypervigilant was my version of calm. At my home, participating in activities, or when being with my daughter are the only times I don't have that feeling of slight fear.

This has been hard on my family but with my therapist teaching my Mother that this never goes away it's managed. My daughter is with me when I have to leave my home and I don't feel anxiety. She has been with me and understands that mommy can't always be ok and she knows I love her and will always learn more ways to try.

Karen passed after the bill was introduced of lung cancer she was a huge supporter to us all and hopes that VA uses money for more female clinics and female doctors. Last month, a member of our group killed herself by shooting herself in the stomach so she could die slowly because she thought she deserved it and bled out over an hour. I was told at VA I was lucky a female was on duty after a 7 hour wait. I am still called "Mr. Moseley" and I can ask to be separated from males but many don't have the voice I do and wait in the women clinic with men.

I am triggered by VA every time I open the elevators by a sea of men in various camouflages. I must walk by the walls with my sunglasses on so I don't become overwhelmed by triggers of men that resemble my assailant. I sit with my back to a wall and must see a door or know my way out.

I was in the emergency room and waited and told the nurse I wanted only female staff and after I was in the room a male nurse came in to start an IV, I am sure he only had a healing hand but not even 20 minutes was my request upheld.

I have been in the psych ward and signed myself out many times as other men walked around or into your room that cannot be locked and have no program to go to PTSD and Substance Abuse programs don't fill my needs. Only two VA facilities have a MST program in California and Bay Pines, Florida. This was never a time I would be able to be so far from my child and be able to be active in the program.

After Karen left the VA, we few that knew she saw patients at her home had much luck with bonding and feeling like they could do core work on MST and trauma based therapy. How could

we when once a month you couldn't even see a therapist. The VA gives travel pay and seeing Karen at her home you had to pay for gas, this was a hardship for many.

The heart of VA is to help veterans get quality care but many survivors avoid going for care other than Karen's Group. One of the major reasons is that many specialists at the VA in my city are males. Being touched by a male can be a huge trigger for us.

One of our group members died from heart disease which she would not treat because she would have to take her blouse off. Many postpone treatment until it becomes a major problem and don't attend preventive care to avoid triggers the VA leaves with them.

I am asking you all to pass the Military Save Act for the men and women who have suffered through the predators within our military. This legislation would help to give hope to begin to be healthy, productive, members of society. Directing my own care with great female healthcare providers in my hometown and not fear going to the doctor is necessary. Unfortunately, there are veterans across this country who suffers from MST and if they don't get help they need, they could become a burden at the state level when we have already fought for our country and help these victims have a chance to be productive members of society.

I have finally received the approval I need for services outside the VA to be seen only by female doctors. However, I still have problems with prescriptions and follow-up testing in fear of having a bill if it has not been approved.

I love the military and even with the circumstances of my time in the Army, I would do it over and over again. I urge you to do everything in your power to help ensure the passage or implementation of the Military SAVE Act.

Thank you for your time and for allowing me to speak before you today.

Respectfully,

Susan K. Moseley