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Page 1 of 8

**fax**

**Recipient Information**

**To: Governor Nikki Haley**  
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**Sent on: Monday, July 21 2014 at 4:46 AM EDT**

Request for Assistance - Toxic Leadership Issue - South Carolina National Guard

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July 20, 2014

The Honorable Nikki R. Haley  
Office of the Governor  
1205 Pendleton Street  
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Governor Haley,

Good day. My name is Tobey Whitney and my family and I reside in Blythewood, South Carolina. I am writing to you today to formally complain about the unreasonable and unnecessary treatment my son, Jordan Whitney, is receiving from his South Carolina National Guard leadership and to request an inquiry in the operations of this unit. The leadership has continuously conducted themselves in a bullish manner and the unit gives the impression of a toxic and unfettered environment where the standards of good discipline and military order are non-existent. Because of this conduct, I submitted a request for a Congressional Inquiry to Representative Joe Wilson's Office on May 28, 2014, to look into the behavior of the Recruit Sustainment Program (RSP) NCOIC and Commander of my son's unit following his request for administrative, entry-level separation. The actions of his leadership, through constant negative dialog, culminated in a Summary Court Martial which ordered 30 days Confinement; causing a patriotic young man who cannot imagine a life without serving his country to question everything he has come to believe in and cherish through my service in the Army, and most recently mention thoughts of suicide as a method to resolve this unbelievable situation.

My son, Jordan Whitney, recently graduated from Blythewood High School in Blythewood, South Carolina. On March 19, 2014, Jordan went to the Military Entrance Processing Station with his recruiter, SFC Williams, and enlisted into the Army National Guard under the split training option. Having been accepted to attend college in the fall, Jordan expected that he could attend Basic Training this summer and then complete his skill training during the following summer. Jordan was scheduled to report to Basic Training on June 16, 2014 with a probable return to South Carolina the last week of August. Jordan was assigned to the Hartsville Area RSP under the direction of SSG Patrick Peterkin.

As Jordan began the process of accepting his admission to college and received his time schedule of orientation, moving and starting of classes, he began having second thoughts regarding his ability to handle all of his responsibilities to attend school if he is gone for the entire summer at Basic Training. After entry into the RSP and talking to Soldiers who had completed Basic Training and were awaiting skill training, Jordan's second thoughts about his ability to handle both responsibilities began to grow exponentially. Finally, after attempting to work through his concerns himself, and talking to his fellow RSP Soldiers, he asked me for help.

At no time has anyone in his chain of command asked Jordan if his desire to serve in the Army National Guard has changed, and we are not aware of any attempts to place him into the Inactive

National Guard (ING); although listed as a national program, SSG Peterkin continues to assert South Carolina ARNG does not participate in this option. While not ideal, it is my understanding that according to NGR 614-1 (Assignment, Details and Transfers; Inactive Army National Guard), Jordan can be placed in the ING to allow him to reschedule training within the 24 months authorized by this regulation. According to NGR 614-1, the ING is designed as an administrative category for Soldiers who cannot ship to Initial Entry Training (IET) for a period exceeding 120 days; soldiers who are in the training pipeline but pending discharge for failure to ship (Soldiers have a maximum of 24 months upon entering active status to complete IET).

I have serious questions regarding the leadership of the ARNG RSP, as during this process it was necessary to inform SSG Peterkin of regulatory guidance, found that he had no knowledge of the ING or the Administrative Discharge process, and claimed to be unaware of an additional available date for Jordan's Basic Training. During our meeting, CSM Elvis claimed that is not possible because it is SSG Peterkin that must complete the request for a change of date, yet he also corrected CW2 Blanchard when she apologized for a confusion in communication, stating there was no confusion on the ARNG side. Additionally, CSM Elvis obviously sets a negative example with his leadership by defending the conduct of his recruiters without considering the merit of our complaints and then making unprofessional and unbecoming comments to a subordinate who was sitting in the hallway at the conclusion of our meeting and after my wife and I had left the building. While my son was still present, CSM Elvis expressed very loudly to a SFC sitting in the hallway that "next time someone talks shit about one of my recruiters I would crush their damn skull." This cowardly and unprofessional expression, directed primarily toward my wife's comments, to a subordinate, in the presence of my son is quite obviously unbecoming of the Senior Noncommissioned Officer of a Battalion and I believe is indicative of the toxic environment that exists within it.

The behavior and toxic environment of SSG Peterkin, CPT Jones, CSM Elvis and LTC Fryman have pushed my son, raised to do the right thing and attempting to do so through appropriate command channels, to question everything he has come to know and love about the military and to actually consider taking his own life. My son expressed to my wife on June 20, 2014 and again to CW2 Blanchard July 20, 2014, that he sees taking his own life as the only way to avoid confinement and possibly altering the rest of his life by having to report that he had served time in jail on every future application for employment and financial aid. Jordan's major at USC Upstate is nursing, and he intends to eventually continue with graduate school to become a physician's assistant; both of these positions could be drastically effected by the prescribed thirty days confinement. In addition, Jordan was informed during his court marshal trial that his thirty days confinement would be served at the local jail rather than a military detention center, which is an inappropriate and unsafe location for an eighteen-year-old male who has not committed a crime nor associated with persons who had committed a crime. Jordan will begin seeing a counselor immediately, but I can only assume being placed in a local jail would only increase rather than improve his suicidal ideations.

Typical of military units, "Barracks Lawyers" at drill and online advised taking drastic measures such as doing drugs, committing a crime or somehow becoming medically disqualified. The unfortunate thing is, all of these things can appear much more appealing to a desperate young man who is being treated like a deserter and threatened with a court martial and a dishonorable discharge. Fortunately, my son has addressed these things with me rather than take such drastic

measures. It makes me very angry to see such a good young man being pushed into such desperate considerations when there is simple, authorized regulatory guidance that would allow him to be processed either into the ING or given a Entry Level Performance and Conduct Discharge as clearly prescribed in Chapter 8 of AR 135-178.

As a Senior Non Commissioned Officer, I am very concerned with the manner in which my son's leadership is handling this situation. My son is an overly eager patriot who made a mistake and enlisted in the National Guard prematurely. He is a military dependant who grew up watching me deploy three times to combat and once on a humanitarian mission. Jordan has served in the Junior ROTC Program at his high school and has been reenacting Civil War Battles around the country ever since he was old enough to join. He loves everything being a Soldier represents especially the values, the honor and tradition of our military, and the privilege of serving his country. Jordan is an eager kid who underestimated the commitments he made and put himself in the middle of a big mess. Jordan makes himself sick thinking about disappointing me, himself and all of the fellow Soldiers we call family, but this is the course of action he believes is best for him. While I am disappointed with the choices my son has made in regards to his enlistment, I am his father and will support him and assist him in minimizing the consequences of his actions. That being said, in my attempt to assist him, I have become very, very concerned with the type of bullying and excessive tactics being directed at my son, and I am concerned for both past and future soldiers entering into the ARNG under this leadership.

My son never stated that he did not want to serve in the Army National Guard; he simply stated that he made a mistake and the timing of his training is not conducive to his future in college. There are several avenues of approach for a situation like this and from the first indication that he was feeling anxious about his commitment, the immediate response from this command team was to attempt to scare my son into fulfilling his obligation rather than attempt to assist him with resolving it. My experience as a professional Soldier, Non-Commissioned Officer and Career Counselor is the only thing preventing my family from being in more turmoil than it already is. I have seen countless Soldiers at every rank commit serious acts of misconduct and none of them received the treatment or punishment being outlined to my son.

While I completely agree Jordan should not walk away from this situation without truly understanding the magnitude of his decisions, the outcomes being described repeatedly to my son are rarely prescribed for Soldiers who are involved in significant bad conduct or commit serious acts of misconduct. I cannot imagine a Court Martial, confinement and a Dishonorable Discharge are an appropriate response or discipline for a high school kid who wants to attend basic training when it is more conducive to his college future. What concerns me even more is that as an Army Leader, I know how to read regulations and understand policy including those outlined in AR 135-178. A larger concern for me is that a command team willing to scare and intimidate the child of a Senior Non Commissioned Officer presumably would not care what they say or do when intimidating those who know little or nothing about the military. How many other young men and women have been bullied into missing college or taking a semester off (as was suggested to Jordan repeatedly) rather than being given other, feasible and nationally authorized, options?

I am hopeful that this behavior by SSG Peterkin and CPT Jones is isolated but I am skeptical that it is. I worry that left unchecked and unfettered, this type of needless intimidation of our young Americans, which to me is quite unacceptable, will result in unnecessary fear and additional

distrust of our Armed Forces. Many overly eager young men and women who have a strong desire to serve our country and their community make the hasty, impulsive decision to join without considering the tertiary consequences. The Army and the Army National Guard have provisions and policies within their regulations specifically designed to help these kids without negatively affecting their future. This chain of command apparently is not worried about my son's future and this type of intimidation is unacceptable, how can they be worried about the other men and women in their care? The attempt at portraying the SCARNG as a "family" who takes care of their own is obviously a falsehood being portrayed by leadership who have zero regard for their soldiers and operate an environment that no young adult should ever experience. Regardless of how my son's discharge is handled, I want to ensure that these leaders are not allowed to continue to use unreasonable threats and intimidation tactics to coerce young Americans to make decisions that jeopardize their future.

Another very serious concern is that at no time did anyone from Jordan's chain of command express the slightest bit of concern in regards to his expression of suicidal ideology. At no time did his leadership intervene to protect him from himself and if I had not called to check on my son, and then rush to be with him, he would have been sent on his way without regard for his state of mind or suicidal intentions. Suicides are a very significant issue among our uniform services and this command obviously does not regard my son's life as important enough to protect. Instead, CSM Elvis berated my son for nearly an hour and informed him that he believes his punishment should be more severe. It sickens me to know that our young volunteer Soldiers are being subjected to a leader like CSM Elvis whose leadership goes against everything we embrace as a Profession of Arms.

Being a service member on active duty, I attempted to help him work through his issues and concerns with a goal of him fulfilling his responsibilities to the National Guard. Ultimately, I was faced with the fact that I did not believe before he enlisted that he would be able to fulfill both responsibilities. I told Jordan to contact SFC Williams, advise him of his concerns, and ask for his input. SFC Williams advised Jordan on the phone that he would look into the situation and get back with him. On May 8, 2014, SFC Williams met with Jordan at Blythewood High School and he told Jordan that if he failed to comply with his basic training he would be facing 30 days of jail and a dishonorable discharge. SFC Williams stated that he would talk to the commander and advise him of their conversation. Nothing further was heard from SFC Williams.

On May 12, 2014, I emailed SSG Peterkin asking for information regarding Jordan's situation and expressed that I was not happy with SFC Williams attempt to influence my son as a Pre-IET Soldier with threats of jail and a life altering Dishonorable Discharge. SSG Peterkin appeared unaware of Jordan's situation and informed me that he would discuss it with his chain of command. On May 13, 2014, SSG Peterkin contacted me and asked for the letter Jordan completed requesting administrative separation. He advised me that he would present it to his Master Sergeant and would get us a response. Later that day, SSG Peterkin called Jordan and advised him the Commander wanted sit down with him at the RSP Drill scheduled for May 16 – 18, 2014.

On May 17, 2014, Jordan advised me that he met with the Commander, Captain Jones, and he explained the full situation to him. Jordan relayed that CPT Jones would review everything and inquire about the process for requesting Jordan's discharge as he was unsure of the process for a

situation like this. On May 19, 2014, I emailed a copy the RSP Leader Guide, which identifies the basics of the process, and the Checklist for processing administrative separations in accordance with AR 135-178 (Army National Guard and Army Reserve Enlisted Administrative Separations).

On May 20, 2014, Jordan received a call from SSG Peterkin asking him what his intentions were for attending college. Jordan currently intends on attending the University of South Carolina-Upstate but he also has two generous scholarship offers from the University of Oklahoma and Campbell University in North Carolina. Jordan is still considering attending these schools because of the scholarships as way to help him pay for his college. Jordan informed SSG Peterkin that his current intention is to attend USC-Upstate.

I did not receive a response from SSG Peterkin regarding my email on May 19 so I re-sent the information to him on May 21, 2014. SSG Peterkin asked me for National Guard Forms, which I do not have access to, and I responded that while I am attempting to assist them in regards to my son, it is their responsibility to process the forms. This is the last communication I had with SSG Peterkin.

On May 21, 2014, Jordan received a phone call from SSG Peterkin who informed him that the Commander was denying his request for administrative separation and asked Jordan if he intended to attend basic training as scheduled. Jordan advised him that he could not attend basic training this summer due to his college and that he was not planning to depart for Basic Training in June. My son was not informed that the return date listed on his original paperwork from MEPS had the incorrect dates on it until later in June. SSG Peterkin informed him that he would be required to see the Commander.

SSG Peterkin had contacted my son at least 10 times over a two week period advising him on almost every occasion that a Court Martial, 30 Days Confinement and a Dishonorable Discharge would be the probable result of his decision to not attend basic training when scheduled; no attempt to assist Jordan with a different Basic Training date or to counsel with Jordan to discuss concerns was made during these phone calls. SSG Peterkin was very quick to tell Jordan that he is not threatening him, but that he was simply informing him that he could go to jail and be dishonorably discharged for his conduct. The manner in which these phone calls were made, and the intentional failure to meet with Jordan to find a solution to this other than the Court Martial left Jordan feeling bullied by his leadership team, and he shared this with his mother and me.

On May 28, 2014, I submitted a request for a Congressional Inquiry to Representative Joe Wilson's Office. I made this uncomfortable decision only after discussing my concerns with several ARNG Leaders throughout the country who expressed shock and concern for the handling of this situation. I was informed by a few of them to request a Congressional Inquiry.

On June 16, 2014, I received a call from Mr. Butch Wallace at Representative Wilson's Office that he had been attempting to inquire into the situation but had difficulty in contacting any of Jordan's leadership and that most of his calls continued to be unanswered. He advised me that he would continue to work on the inquiry.

On June 20, 2014 at approximately 1200 hours, I again spoke with Mr. Wallace who informed me that Jordan's unit had proposed a new training start of June 23, 2014. My wife and I

immediately left Fort Bragg, NC driving toward Columbia, SC to speak to our son who was working as a lifeguard and was not able to be contacted by phone. This was the first time we had heard of the new training start date and immediately contacted SSG Peterkin who informed us that he was not aware of a new training date. SSG Peterkin told us he would call us back, and at approximately 1400 hours he called us and informed us that the SCARNG had in fact acquired a new date for Jordan to attend Basic Training. If he accepted the new date, he would be required to report on Sunday June 22, 2014 and leave for training on June 23, 2014, but Jordan had to accept the new date by 1600 on the twentieth.

Additionally, in the evening of Friday June 20, 2014 Jordan was counseled by SSG Peterkin upon arrival at his weekend RSP Drill, that he was ordered to report on Sunday June 22, 2014 to the ARNG Camden Armory to ship to Basic Combat Training. Jordan did not accept the new training date and did not report to the Camden Armory as ordered.

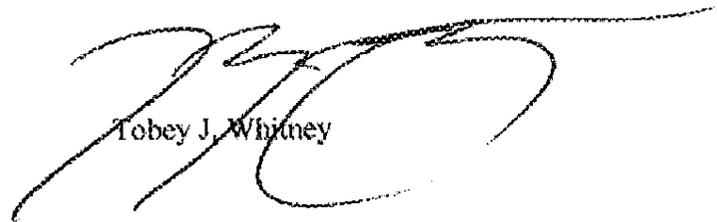
On Monday July 14, 2014, Jordan was contacted in person at our residence by a representative from the SCARNG who served him with a summons to appear on Sunday July 20, 2014 at a Summary Court Martial during his RSP Drill to answer to the charges that he failed to obey a lawful order from SSG Peterkin to report for Basic Training. Jordan asked the NCO who served him with the summons if he should expect to receive confinement after the hearing and he advised that he should not. Jordan was advised that previous Soldiers who did not ship to basic training had simply been discharged following the Court Martial.

Today, July 20, 2014, my son was tried at a Summary Court Martial at the Harstville Armory and was ordered by LTC Fryman to 30 days confinement for failing to attend basic training. My son immediately contacted me and was very upset and speaking of suicidal ideology. My wife and I immediately left Columbia and arrived at the Armory at approximately 1130. Upon arrival at the Armory we were informed that Jordan was ordered to confinement and that he would have a short period to appeal this decision to the Court Martial Convening Authority.

My wife and I met with LTC Fryman as my son, CSM Elvis and CW2 Blanchard were sitting in the room. My wife and I expressed our outrage and confusion over the excessive punishment and the inconsistency that exists in punishment not only in the SCARNG but between ARNG units around the country. I informed LTC Fryman that during my countless inquiries among ARNG leaders at various levels around the country, they shared my surprise in the treatment of my son and not a single leader I spoke would even consider the type of punishment being administered to my son for not attending basic training. My wife expressed her concern over the behavior of SSG Peterkin and the RSP leadership toward our son and their attempts to bully and intimidate our son during this process. LTC Fryman appeared unaware of a bullying nature within the unit and stated he would not allow that to occur, additionally he stated this type of punishment was required in his position, otherwise all of his RSP soldiers awaiting Basic Training would decide to ignore their commands. After many years of service, my wife and I are well aware that this harsh punishment is not typically ordered even for Soldiers who test positive for drug use or commit significant acts of misconduct. Thirty days confinement is quite excessive for a young man who desires to be discharged from his ARNG Contract; in fact, soldiers within this unit who test positive for drug use have previously received only a discharge as recently as last month.

It is our hope that we can reduce the extreme punishment for my son as well as alter the behavior of leaders throughout the South Carolina National Guard. I am hopeful that my efforts in this matter will help to prevent this unbelievable situation from happening to another South Carolina son or daughter who face the same life changing dilemma. I have copies of the forms, extracts from the regulations and documents mentioned or provided to my son if they are requested or needed to accurately review this case. I truly appreciate your time and consideration on this matter.

Respectfully,



Tobey J. Whitney