

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515-4309

July 6, 2020

Sean O'Donnell
Acting Inspector General
Department of Defense Office of Inspector General
4800 Mark Center Drive
Alexandria, VA 22350-1500

Dear Acting Inspector General O'Donnell:

We are deeply disturbed by recent developments in the case of Specialist (SPC) Vanessa Guillen's disappearance and murder. We strongly support Rep. Jackie Speier and Senator Kirsten Gillibrand's call for the Department of Defense (DoD) Inspector General's Office to conduct a full and independent investigation into SPC Guillen's disappearance and murder.

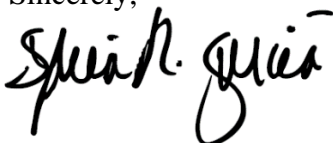
Before her disappearance and murder, SPC Guillen confided in her family that she felt unsafe in Fort Hood due to experiences with sexual harassment, which she did not report out of fear for her personal safety. The U.S. military has a responsibility to ensure the safety and well-being of the young women and men that take an oath to defend our country. In SPC Guillen's case, she was tragically failed by the Army.

In response to this case, current and former Latina servicemembers have demonstrated incredible bravery in sharing their experiences with sexual harassment and assault in the military. Their stories reinforce a troubling reality revealed in the Defense Department's fiscal year 2019 report on sexual assault in the military, which reported a 3% increase in the number of sexual assault cases compared to 2018. This epidemic of sexual violence disproportionately impacts women of color, who are also less likely to report their sexual harassment or assault out of fear of retaliation. This is deeply concerning given that the ranks of the United States military have become more diverse over time. Latinos are the fastest growing population in the military, accounting for up to 16% of all active-duty military.

Yet, we are hopeful that a full and independent investigation by the DoD Inspector General's Office will begin to provide the Guillen family with the answers and justice they seek.

We look forward to your prompt response to this letter. Please email John.Gorczyński@mail.house.gov if you need to contact us or have any questions.

Sincerely,



Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress

/s/

Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress

Vicente Gonzalez
Member of Congress

Mary Gay Scanlon
Member of Congress

Nanette Barragán
Member of Congress

Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress

Gwen Moore
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Carolyn B. Maloney
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Mikie Sherrill
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Filemon Vela
Member of Congress

Andy Kim
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