

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515

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The Honorable Raymond Mabus
Secretary of the Navy
Department of the Navy
1000 Navy Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20350

Dear Secretary Mabus,

I am writing to request information regarding Petty Officer Third Class Joseph Rocha. It has recently been brought to my attention that Petty Officer Rocha was reportedly assaulted by his shipmates on numerous occasions while on duty in Bahrain between 2004 - 2006. The assault and battery occurred after questions arose regarding Mr. Rocha's sexual orientation.

According to reports forwarded to me, numerous incidents of abuse were documented under the supervision of the Chief Petty Officer responsible for oversight of Mr. Rocha's unit. Abuse included throwing "hard rubber" objects at Petty Officer Rocha and pushing him into a dog's kennel. However, the Chief Petty Officer has reportedly been promoted to the rank of Senior Chief.

Since 2006, Joseph Rocha has developed symptoms of PTSD and was discharged from the Navy under 10 U.S.C. Section. 654, commonly referred to as "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." Prior his time in Bahrain, Petty Officer Rocha had graduated at the top of his military class and served his country honorably as a military police officer. He received favorable performance evaluations throughout his career.

During my 31 years in the military, I served alongside and in command of men and women of all backgrounds, beliefs, and identities who fought valiantly and selflessly. When a man or woman puts on a military uniform, he or she immediately assumes a commonality of purpose with all fellow service members. Failing to treat everyone with the same level of dignity and allowing acts of assault or battery to go unaddressed, would be counter to not only our national values, but to the concept of brotherhood and sisterhood that I learned is so essential to-- and such a key part of-- the spirit of our armed forces. My inquiry is to determine whether there is any basis for actions contrary to that spirit.

Again, I am requesting that you please provide me with any information relevant to the assault and battery of Petty Officer Third Class Joseph Rocha and the promotion of Chief Petty Officer Michael Toussaint to the rank of Senior Chief.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Warmly,



Joe Sestak
Member of Congress