

JACKIE SPEIER
14TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

211 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-0514
(202) 225-3531
FAX: (202) 226-4183

155 BOVET ROAD, SUITE 780
SAN MATEO, CA 94402
(650) 342-0300
FAX: (650) 375-8270
WWW.SPEIER.HOUSE.GOV

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0514

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TASK FORCE
Vice Chair

October 31, 2014

Lieutenant General Robert L. Caslen, Jr.
Superintendent
US Military Academy
West Point, NY 10996-5000

Dear Lieutenant General Caslen:

I was appalled to learn that, earlier this year, the football team at the U.S. Military Academy attempted to recruit new players through illegal and unethical behavior. I urge you to suspend all football coaching staff implicated in this incident pending an independent investigation by the Inspector General, and I would like to meet with you personally to learn more about these allegations and what steps the Academy has taken to create a culture of integrity and respect moving forward.

According to recent news reports and your own statement, on January 25, 2014, the Army Football office organized a trip to a nearby bowling alley for cadets on the West Point football team, as well as a number of recruits. During this trip, cadets purchased alcohol with Academy funds and then engaged in underage binge drinking with recruits. Furthermore, although there seems to be some disagreement on these allegations, it appears that cadets or officers may have even used women in order to entice recruits to matriculate to the U.S. Military Academy. Such behavior is unacceptable.

Unfortunately, this incident does not appear to be an isolated event. Just last year, the West Point rugby team was thrust into the national spotlight due to a climate of misogyny, sexual harassment, and reports of even more serious allegations. Although team members were disciplined, every player was able to graduate on time. I am deeply concerned that these events point to a deeper cultural issue at West Point, one where sports teams are allowed to see themselves as above the disciplinary code and even above the law. Among future leaders of our Armed Forces, such attitudes are profoundly disturbing.

I commend you for taking responsibility for this latest incident, and for taking immediate steps to address the situation, including self-reporting the incident to the NCAA, conducting an internal investigation, and engaging an outside consultant to assess West Point's culture and policies. However, as publicly described, these steps are simply inadequate. Although cadets, officers, and coaches were found to be culpable for this incident, disciplinary measures appear to have amounted to nothing more than a slap on the wrist, and not a single team member or Army employee involved in this incident has been removed from the football team.

As soon as possible, I would like to meet with you personally to discuss this situation and what proactive steps West Point is taking to ensure that its culture reflects Army values. In addition, I would like full access to the AR 15-6 investigation report, further information about cadets, officers, and other staff members involved in this incident and what disciplinary measures were taken, and information on any previous inappropriate incidents among West Point athletic teams.

In addition, the Inspector General at West Point should immediately open an investigation into this incident and West Point's athletics department in order to determine what led to this incident, whether it was appropriately handled, and what cultural issues or policies contributed to this situation. I would in fact urge all the military academies to conduct thorough, independent reviews of their own athletics programs in order to assess their own climates and policies, to determine the extent of any hazing activities, and to then implement any necessary changes.

As our nation's oldest military academy, West Point has a responsibility to its students and to this country to promote the highest standards of ethical behavior. I urge you to hold yourself and those under your command accountable, and to ensure that all members the West Point Academy know that this type of misconduct will not be tolerated.

I look forward to receiving your response.

All the best,



Jackie Speier
Member of Congress