



**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY**  
SPECIAL WARFARE EDUCATION GROUP (AIRBORNE)  
UNITED STATES ARMY JOHN F. KENNEDY SPECIAL WARFARE CENTER AND SCHOOL  
FORT BRAGG NC 28310-9610

AOJK-EDG

MEMORANDUM FOR [REDACTED] Commander Special Warfare Education Group,  
Fort Bragg, North Carolina 28310

SUBJECT: Findings and Recommendations, 15-6, Equal Opportunity Complaint, Strong Bonds

1. Facts. On 7 February 2018, [REDACTED] appointed me as an investigating officer (IO) pursuant to Army Regulation 15-6 to investigate the EO complaint filed by [REDACTED] on 6 February 2018, regarding her treatment by CH Squires and [REDACTED], her permission to attend the Strong Bonds Marriage Retreat that was being hosted by 1st SWTG and her treatment by CH Squires when he informed her on 1 February 2018 that she was not able to attend the strong bonds retreat due to her sexual orientation.

2. Discussion. The timeframe of this investigation spans from when [REDACTED] sent an email to [REDACTED] regarding the availability of slots for her and her spouse in the upcoming Strong Bonds Retreat on 25 January until she filed her complaint on 6 February. On 25 January, [REDACTED] emailed [REDACTED] regarding the availability of slots for her and her wife to attend the Strong Bonds Retreat from 9 to 11 February. [REDACTED] replied to [REDACTED] that CH Squires needed to see her but did not answer her question. (At the time of [REDACTED] email only 2-3 couples had signed up out of an available 10 slots, so yes, there was room for [REDACTED] and her wife to attend at the time of her email). On 1 February 2018, CH Squires met with [REDACTED] face to face at which time he informed her that his religious denomination did not recognize same sex unions and since he was the person facilitating this Strong Bonds Retreat, she and her wife could not participate. CH Squires explained that he could not provide her any counseling or include her in any Strong Bonds event where he was the facilitator due to his certification by the North American Mission Board (NAMB). CH Squires informed her that some Chaplains in SWCS do recognize same sex unions and she would be notified of the next time someone does a Strong Bonds Retreat but CH Squires did not offer any specifics. As a Southern Baptist endorsed by the NAMB, CH Squires is unable to provide any kind of relationship training or retreat that would give the appearance of accepting the homosexual lifestyle or sexual wrongdoing (North American Mission Board Memo, August 29 2013). The Army EO policy states that no service will be denied to any member of the Armed Service regardless of race, color, national origin, gender, religious affiliation, or sexual orientation (AR 600-20, 2015).

After the meeting with CH Squires, [REDACTED] had a discussion with her supervisor, [REDACTED] who encouraged her to speak to [REDACTED], her Company Commander. The actions of [REDACTED] chain of command focused on supporting [REDACTED] and finding out why she was excluded from the Strong Bonds event. However, due to the Strong Bonds event already being filled, the command wrongly believed that [REDACTED] had failed to sign up in time, not taking

into account that her email to [REDACTED] was sent long before the event was filled. Additionally, after meeting with [REDACTED], CH Squires had a discussion with [REDACTED] to discuss courses of action if [REDACTED] did register for the event. After meeting with [REDACTED] to better understand for EO policy, [REDACTED] and CH Squires developed multiple COAs and decided to reschedule the Strong Bonds Event and have a Chaplain that could support the event, [REDACTED]. By 07 February [REDACTED] had confirmed that [REDACTED] was unable to conduct the Strong Bonds event from 9-11 February, so the date was shifted to 23-25 February.

Sworn statements were collected from CH Squires, [REDACTED] and her spouse, [REDACTED], [REDACTED] first line supervisor [REDACTED], her commander [REDACTED], [REDACTED], and [REDACTED]. Only one point in all the DA 2823 from any of the eight service members interviewed contains divergent statements. CH Squires states that he did not inform [REDACTED] that she could not attend the Strong Bonds event, he instead told her that it was full and that he would ensure that she was informed of the timing of the next strong bonds event and ensure that the facilitator could perform services for [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] states that CH Squires told her that her sexual orientation was one of the factors that meant she was unable to attend the 9-11 Strong Bonds Event. For the purpose of this investigation, I find that it is likely that [REDACTED] drew this conclusion from CH Squires statements that he was unable to perform any counseling services for her and her spouse. Although CH Squires did tell [REDACTED] that he would be unable to support her he did not explicitly state that she could not attend this particular Strong Bonds Event due to her sexual orientation; rather he explained that the slots were mostly full for this event and he would work to ensure she was included in the next event. By explicitly encouraging [REDACTED] to sign up for the next Strong Bonds event, while admitting that slots were not actually all full (there were 2-3 couples that intended to sign up in the next day or two) CH Squires purposefully sought to ensure [REDACTED] did not sign up for the 9-11 Strong Bonds Event.

3. Findings: [REDACTED] complaint against her treatment is founded. There is one key element: her sexual orientation prevented both [REDACTED] and CH Squires from correctly informing her in a timely manner how many slots were available for the 9-11 February 2018, Strong Bonds Retreat. [REDACTED] discriminating treatment occurred when she failed to inform [REDACTED] of the number of slots when [REDACTED] expressed interest in the event. Instead of providing the information asked [REDACTED] felt the need to ask CH Squires what to do; this act resulted in [REDACTED] being treated differently than the other couples who inquired about the retreat and registered. Additionally, by referring [REDACTED] to CH Squires and saying that they needed to talk, [REDACTED] gave [REDACTED] the impression that she was not eligible to register for the event online. For CH Squires the different treatment occurred during the 01 February meeting. When CH Squires was expressing to [REDACTED] his inability to perform services to [REDACTED] due to his NAMB restrictions he explicitly told [REDACTED] that he would work to ensure she was provided an opportunity to attend the next event. Instead of working to ensure [REDACTED] was included in this event, CH Squires behaved as if his NAMB restrictions superseded [REDACTED] right to attend the event. Additionally, CH Squires wrongly expressed to [REDACTED] that the event was full; when in fact it was not, an act which occurred due to [REDACTED] sexual orientation.

However, there are some mitigating factors regarding the findings against CH Squires. The Chaplain Corp policy is unclear and gives Chaplains little guidance in how they should handle the “perform versus provide” policy. CH Squires denomination cannot perform any services to same sex couples. This is acknowledged by the Chaplain Corps and the policy regarding any same sex couples that ask for services by a Chaplain who is not authorized to give that service is to direct the service member to a Chaplain who can offer those services. However, Chaplains must provide a service member an outlet for those functions he cannot perform. Because of this limitation CH Squires did not believe he was discriminating against ██████████ when he explained his inability to perform services for her. But, as the EO policy is written, a lack of intent to discriminate does not equal a lack of discrimination. Because of this unique Chaplain policy there is a conflict between the Equal Opportunity policy, specifically the one recognizing same sex couples and their full rights in the military signed by Secretary of Defense ██████████ in 2013, and the Chaplain Corps policy of being able to refuse service to service members. These two policies together place the command in a position in which to meet one’s rights you would have to infringe upon another’s rights. CH Squires, by seeking out ██████████ to explain the limitations of his denomination was unintentionally discriminating against her. The Chaplain’s assistant, ██████████, should have ensured that all Soldiers were eligible to attend the Strong Bonds Retreat set up by the Chaplain Corps on behalf of the command. When ██████████ inquired about slots to the Strong Bonds Retreat she should have been informed that only two to three couples had signed up at the time, and there were slots available. Her desire to attend this event should have then triggered ██████████, CH Squires and ██████████ to include her in the event; without having to inform the service member of the particulars to ensure that a Command Sponsored Event was open to all service members that wanted to attend. After the EO Complaint was filed, CH Squires and ██████████ generated a similar COA where the Strong Bonds Retreat facilitator and date was shifted to accommodate ██████████ and her wife with the ██████████ from ██████████ who does not have the same restrictions placed on her by her denomination. However, this COA was developed after ██████████ had expressed to the chain of command concern due to her exclusion of the Strong Bonds Retreat and after ██████████ knew that she was the cause of the Strong Bonds Retreat being cancelled and a new one being scheduled.

4. Recommendations: CH Squires should be reprimanded for his failure to include ██████████ in the initial Strong Bonds Retreat, scheduled for 9-11 February 2018. The efforts he took to reach out to ██████████ to explain his limitations were unnecessary and created a situation where he unintentionally violated Army EO policy. ██████████ should be reprimanded for her failure to provide ██████████ a timely answer after the question was received by email on 25 January 2018, asking about the availability of slots for the Strong Bonds Retreat. By elevating this question to ██████████ supervisor, CH Squires, but never telling ██████████ there was slots available. ██████████ intentionally prevented ██████████ from signing up for the Strong Bonds Retreat. This established the situation where by the time ██████████ had spoken to CH Squires about his limitations there were no slots left for ██████████ to request. Additionally, it is recommended that ██████████ writes a policy to handle this type of situation to ensure both the Chaplain Corps and the EO office understands how to handle future conflicts. The policy should specifically focus on how the Soldier inquiring about any type of support does not need to be informed that a specific Chaplain cannot provide service to

them; but rather provide the immediate contact information of a Chaplain within [REDACTED] that can support. The policy should mirror the course of action developed by [REDACTED] and CH Squires on 8 February 2018, on how to handle the rescheduled Strong Bonds Retreat. Finally, [REDACTED] should be made aware of the failure of CH Squires and [REDACTED] to set the necessary conditions for her inclusion into the Strong Bonds Retreat, instead of taking over a week to seek her out and tell her that the retreat was full. Despite CH Squires' limitation to perform services for same sex couples, [REDACTED] should have been informed at the time of her question that there are slots available and to sign up. All work required to include [REDACTED] and her spouse in the Strong Bonds Retreat should have happened without [REDACTED] knowledge.

5. Point of contact for this action is the undersigned at [REDACTED]



ALEXANDER FORD  
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Investigating Officer