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.Gorczynski@mail.house.gov if you need to contact us or have any questions.

Sincerely,

Sylvia R. Garcia  
Member of Congress
Joaquin Castro  
Member of Congress

Jesús G. “Chuy” García  
Member of Congress

Vicente Gonzalez  
Member of Congress

Henry Cuellar  
Member of Congress

Mary Gay Scanlon  
Member of Congress

Andy Levin  
Member of Congress

Nanette Barragán  
Member of Congress

Raúl Grijalva  
Member of Congress

Nydia M. Velázquez  
Member of Congress

Jimmy Gomez  
Member of Congress

Gwen Moore  
Member of Congress

Tony Cárdenas  
Member of Congress

Debbie Mucarsel-Powell  
Member of Congress

Derek Kilmer  
Member of Congress

Veronica Escobar  
Member of Congress

Grace F. Napolitano  
Member of Congress

Stephen F. Lynch  
Member of Congress

Bennie Thompson  
Member of Congress

Lloyd Doggett  
Member of Congress

Lisa Blunt Rochester  
Member of Congress

Carolyn B. Maloney  
Member of Congress

Jim Cooper  
Member of Congress

Grace Meng  
Member of Congress

J. Luis Correa  
Member of Congress

Mikie Sherrill  
Member of Congress

Ro Khanna  
Member of Congress

Deb Haaland  
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Cheri Bustos  
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Filemon Vela  
Member of Congress

Brenda L. Lawrence  
Member of Congress

Andy Kim  
Member of Congress

Ted Deutch  
Member of Congress
Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress

Ann McLane Kuster
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James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

Mike Levin
Member of Congress

Mark Takano
Member of Congress

Max Rose
Member of Congress

Tulsi Gabbard
Member of Congress

David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress

Seth Moulton
Member of Congress

Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress

Sean Casten
Member of Congress

Darren Soto
Member of Congress

Marc Veasey
Member of Congress

Julia Brownley
Member of Congress

Norma J. Torres
Member of Congress

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.
Member of Congress

Sanford D. Bishop Jr.
Member of Congress

Katherine Clark
Member of Congress

Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress

Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

Cedric L. Richmond
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Marcia L. Fudge
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Xochitl Torres Small
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Linda T. Sánchez
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Lizzie Fletcher
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Lauren Underwood
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Rick Larsen
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Suzanne Bonamici
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Albio Sires  
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Juan Vargas  
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Salud O. Carbajal  
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Jerry McNerney  
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Anthony G. Brown  
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Steve Cohen  
Member of Congress

Jahana Hayes  
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Joseph P. Kennedy, III  
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Lori Trahan  
Member of Congress

Gregory W. Meeks  
Member of Congress

Peter DeFazio  
Member of Congress

Lucille Roybal-Allard  
Member of Congress

Susie Lee  
Member of Congress

Zoe Lofgren  
Member of Congress

Raul Ruiz  
Member of Congress

Will Hurd  
Member of Congress

Terri A. Sewell  
Member of Congress