

259 Van

Vanessa Guillen, a 20-year-old U.S. Army Specialist, was bludgeoned to death and then savagely dismembered by another enlisted soldier in April 2020. Although she had previously suffered sexual harassment by a least one superior officer and told her family, fear of retaliation prevented her from lodging an official report. Her tragic killing initiated an independent review of her case.

The results of the investigation led to the disciplining of 14 Fort Hood officials, including high-ranking leaders, and uncovered a “permissive environment for sexual assault and sexual harassment” and “multiple leadership failures.”

An estimated 20,000 sexual assaults take place in the military every year. Of those, only a tiny fraction are reported or result in legal action or redress. This *must* change. Recently, the U.S. Senate reintroduced legislation to revamp military investigations into sexual assault and harassment. In late 2021 President Biden signed the National Defense Authorization Act, enacting provisions of the “I Am Vanessa Guillen Act” of 2020. It took effect January 1, 2022.