

U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Demands answers, accountability from Coast Guard following disclosure of decades-Long, hidden reports of sexual assault

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, U.S. Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Chair of the Subcommittee on Oceans, Fisheries, Climate Change and Manufacturing, which oversees the Coast Guard, and Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA), Chair of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, [sent a letter](#) to the Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard Admiral Linda Fagan, seeking answers and accountability for the mishandling of a previously undisclosed, years-long investigation into sexual assault allegations in connection to the Coast Guard Academy. Within the last week, Senator Baldwin’s office learned of these reports that had previously been withheld from Congress and the public through the Commerce Committee’s routine oversight role during a briefing from the Coast Guard.

“We write to express our grave concern regarding the reports of rape, sexual assault, and sexual harassment at the United States Coast Guard Academy between 1988 and 2006 and the Coast Guard’s lack of action to properly and timely investigate, prosecute, and report these criminal acts,” **wrote the senators in their letter.** “We are also concerned about the Coast Guard’s failure to disclose its investigation that began in 2014 and ended in 2020, the withholding of which some have described as intentional.”

According to Coast Guard officials, in 2014, the Coast Guard established “Operation

Fouled Anchor” to investigate certain reports of sexual assault and sexual violence during the years of 1988 to 2006. The Coast Guard indicated that the “operation” identified 62 substantiated incidents of rape, sexual assault and sexual harassment that occurred at the Academy, or by Academy cadets. The letter recounts that the Coast Guard further identified 42 individuals against whom there may have been substantiated claims of rape, sexual assault and sexual harassment through “Operation Fouled Anchor,” yet it does not appear that the Coast Guard appropriately investigated at the time the incidents were reported. Further, according to information provided by the Coast Guard, a number of those individuals continued to serve for decades without any subsequent investigations into their conduct throughout their careers, raising a number of questions about their conduct, their access to sensitive information and their treatment of members in their commands. The “operation” concluded in 2020 but was not disclosed to Congress or the public.

“It is unclear how many other officers had substantiated claims against them, were not disciplined, and remained in positions of leadership or management,” **the senators continued.**

According to the Coast Guard, the “operation” also uncovered Coast Guard personnel, including Coast Guard Academy leaders, who failed to respond to reports of rape, sexual assault and harassment. Despite the serious nature of those findings, the Coast Guard chose not to further investigate or discipline those leaders for their lack of action and dereliction of duty.

“We understand from the Coast Guard that the ‘operation’ revealed Coast Guard leaders had knowledge of, and in some cases received formal or informal complaints or other disclosures of rape, sexual assault and sexual harassment yet did nothing” **the senators wrote.** “More disturbingly, some of these leaders discouraged survivors from filing formal complaints or otherwise disclosing their assaults.”

In their letter, the senators request answers and documentation related to the reports of crimes, subsequent investigations and Coast Guard leadership decisions related to what was, and what was not, investigated by the Coast Guard when the incidents occurred and during the “operation.”

“We must resolve the past to build a better future for the Coast Guard, and in this

case, that means pursuing full accountability for perpetrators and investing in meaningful support for survivors,” **the letter concluded.**

Read the full letter [here](#).

An online version of this release is available [here](#).