



Is military protecting known pedophiles?

11:43 AM MST on Friday, November 19, 2004

By Mark Greenblatt / KHOU-TV, 11 News

 [Click to watch video](#)

It sounds incredible that the United States military could be protecting child molesters from justice, but that's just what the KHOU-TV 11 News Defenders have found -- officers putting children at risk by defending dishonor.

For 12-year-old Victor, it was a beautiful Christmas. There were friends, family and morning presents.

But soon this Lake Jackson boy would reveal a painful secret, a parent's worst nightmare.

"He was just a real sweet happy little kid," said Victor's mother. That's how his mother remembers Victor when he was 6 years old.

But that soon changed when the family went to a nearby airfield to see model airplanes.

There, Victor met a 17-year-old family friend, Jason Hurt.

"He started talking all this weird stuff," Victor said.

Older now, Victor remembers. "And he's like, 'Come around back here,' so I went around back to a portable toilet. And that's when all the sexual abuse started happening. He just basically touched me, you know."

But eventually, Victor did cry out.

"That was my baby," said Mary.

But when the local police went looking for Hurt, they got a surprise.

"He was actually in the Navy," said his mother.

So they contacted Naval investigators who got the confession from Jason Truman Hurt, admitting he had fondled and had oral sex with the little boy on multiple occasions.

Victor's family was relieved. "I thought great, we got him," Victor's father said. "I thought it would be cut and dry," the victim's mother added.

But it turned out to be anything but that. "They protect him," Victor's father explained.

The Navy's actions, or lack there of, left the family disillusioned and shaken.

"We still don't have answers," Victor's father admitted. "I don't think any of us want a bunch of child molesters running around in the military. Do we?"

And that is the question, because the Defenders have discovered a disturbing trend. In case after case, the United States military has protected known child molesters, keeping them out of the courts, out of jail, sometimes even helping them avoid arrest, all at the cost of victims and their families.

"I am not at all surprised," said Christine Hansen.

Hansen is executive director of the Miles Foundation, a national support group for military crime victims.

"There is no understanding within the military of sex offender behavior, particularly pedophile," Hansen added.

For example, after a look at the Texas sex offender registry, 11 News found a number of soldiers still in the military who had committed sex crimes against children.

Like Marine Paul Hyska, convicted for indecency and sexual contact with a 13-year-old. And Army Sgt. Benjamin Schroeder, who appears in uniform on the offender registry. Schroeder got caught with a tape of a 10-year-old having sex.

But his current address, according to the Web site, is Fort Hood in Central

Texas.

"They have dishonored us," Hansen proclaimed.

Which brings us back to Jason Hurt. Because of his confession, he was charged with four counts of aggravated sexual assault of a child.

But then, "The years went by," said Victor's mother.

One, two, three years, and Jason Hurt never showed up in court.

"It went on and on," the victim's mother continued.

The case was reset over and over, a total of 10 times.

So what was the problem?

Despite that confession, the Navy not only kept Hurt in service, but shipped him out to sea, away from Texas and justice.

"Victor was just angry at everything," his mother said.

And the delays were having a terrible effect on the victim.

"I started getting in fights a whole lot," Victor admitted. "We went from doctor to doctor," his mother said.

And then came the ultimate shocker. "When somebody told me he reenlisted, I hit the roof," said Jerri Yenne, Brazoria County prosecutor.

That's right, Yenne discovered the Navy actually let Hurt re-up.

"I thought, what's going on here?" Yenne continued.

So finally, Yenni sent a formal protest to the Navy, got Hurt back to Texas, and won a 12-year conviction against him.

"I would like to know that this wouldn't happen to somebody else," Victor's mother said.

But it has, with even worse results.

"He wasn't like the majority of them you meet," said Diana Jackson. And so Jackson started dating Navy recruit Charles Freeman. "He seemed to care about my children," she added.

But then this Georgia mom noticed something. "I see my child changing," Jackson said. "She just started drawing away and, um, eventually she wanted to kill herself."

Why? Because Freeman had been molesting her.

The person that she should have been able to go to wasn't there.

But by now Freeman was long gone, transferred out of state.

And when Georgia prosecutors told the Navy about charges they'd filed against him, the Navy ignored both that and the subsequent arrest warrant for Freeman. And instead, kept him in the service and often at sea.

And yet, they still sit back and do nothing, not serving the warrants.

So what did they eventually do? A year later, the Navy simply discharged Freeman instead of turning him in.

They turned him loose on the public, where he soon molested another young girl, according to court documents.

"I just don't understand," Jackson said.

Finally captured, he was sent back to Georgia and given 40 years in prison for his crimes there.

But for Jackson, it's not enough.

"Those little girls wouldn't have been touched if they had served those warrants," said Jackson.

Thursday afternoon, one branch of the military responded to the 11 News Defenders findings. A Navy spokesman at the Pentagon said it is "genuinely concerned" and is looking into the cases in question.

Online at: <http://www.fox11az.com/news/other/stories/KMSB-20041119-khoubp-military.71a1a21b.html>