

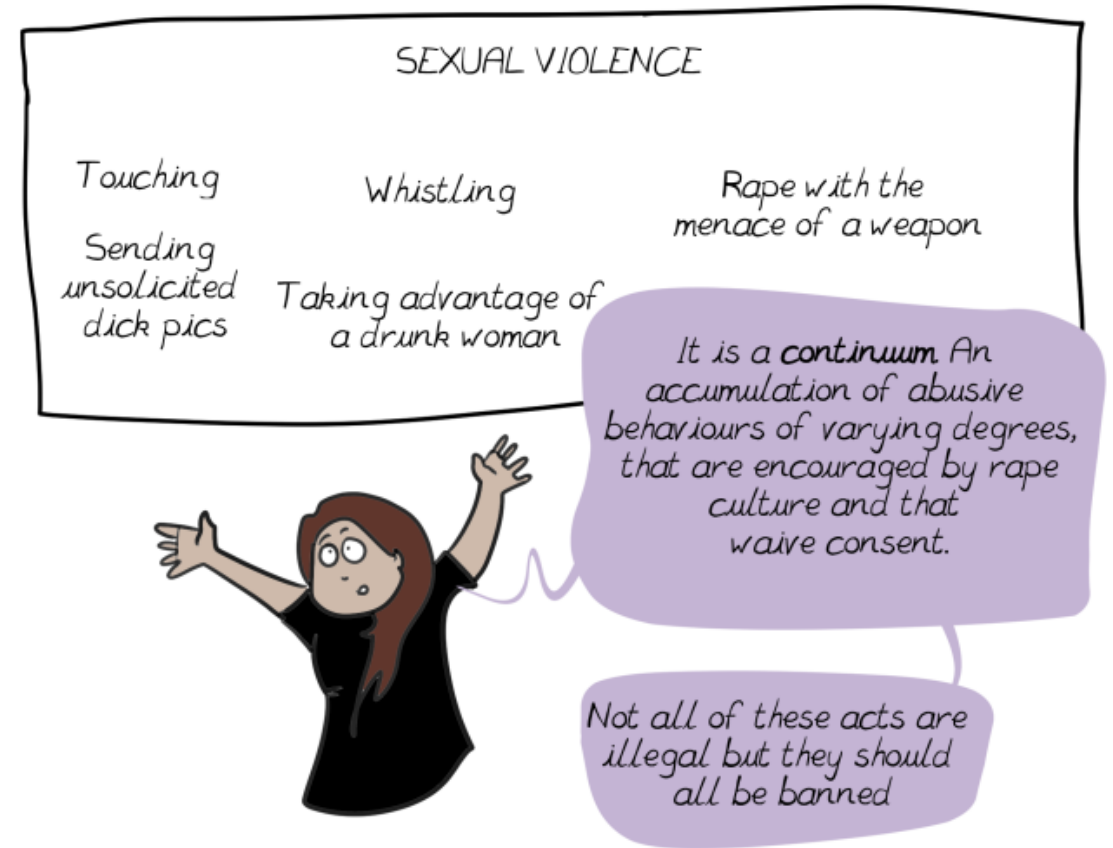
Putting military sexual violence in context

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The 'continuum of violence' (Liz [Kelly](#))

“gender links violence at different points on a scale reaching from the personal to the international, from the home and urban backstreet to the manoeuvres of the tank column and the sortie of the stealth bomber: battering and marital rape, confinement, “dowry” burnings, honour killings, and genital mutilation in peacetime; military rape, sequestration, prostitution, and sexualized torture in war. No wonder women often say, “War? Don’t speak to me of war. My daily life is battlefield enough.” ([Cockburn](#), 2004: 43).



Cartoon by Emma, available [here](#)

What is the relevant context?

- In the [year ending March 2022](#), in the UK, approx. 3.3% of women and 1.2% of men over 16 experienced some form of sexual assault.
- Sexual violence in warzones – sometimes a weapon of war, sometimes opportunistic, a form of unit bonding or initiation for fighters, torture, within communities and so on.
 - e.g. ‘Comfort System’ in Asia-Pacific War, Bosnia and Rwanda in the 1990s, the DRC, Darfur, Yazidi women, Ukraine, Israel/Palestine.
 - Also examples involving British personnel, e.g. against detainees at Camp Breadbasket in Iraq.

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- High levels of sexual exploitation and abuse around military bases: e.g. the US in Okinawa, UN Peacekeepers in Central African Republic.
 - Ongoing investigation against into British Army behaviour in Kenya, centred around the British Army Training Unit Kenya in Nanyuki. + ●
 - This includes ongoing investigation into the killing of Agnes Wanjiru in 2012, including allegations of a cover up. ○
 - High levels of domestic violence in militaries, including the British military.
 - Significant potential barriers making it difficult to seek help for DV in the military context.

Gender culture

Interview participants quoted in Gray, Lester and Norton (2023) Servicewomen's Experiences of the Aftermath of Sexual Assault in the British Military, *The RUSI Journal*, 168:5, 68-80.

- “culture of gender discrimination”
- “very misogynistic environment”
- “massive rape culture”
- “the undertone of the military is just sexual harassment”

Whistleblower reports reveal continuing sexual abuse of women in UK military

British armed forces exhibit 'culture of institutional misogyny' despite promises of reform, says parliamentary committee chair

Women in UK military who report assaults being ostracised, study says

Exclusive: women say they were punished for breaking rules rather than supported when they reported incidents



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'What happens in the mess stays in the mess': the toxic spread of sexual harassment in the military

Women have been reporting details of bullying and abuse, but the proper process of dealing with it isn't always followed

Danielle Sheridan, DEFENCE EDITOR
9 October 2023 • 2:52pm

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I was hung out to dry, says RAF ex-corporal who was assaulted in her sleep

14 April



Two-thirds of women in UK military report bullying and sexual abuse

Landmark parliamentary report features evidence of gang rape, sex for career advancement and trophies to 'bag the woman'



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Dead soldier suffered relentless sexual harassment - Army report

4 October



News > UK > Home News

Female soldier, 19, died after 'intense sexual harassment from her boss'

Jaysley Beck was found dead at Larkhill Camp in Wiltshire in December 2021

Jordan Reynolds • Wednesday 04 October 2023 12:28 BST



UK Parliament

Committees

UK Parliament > Business > Committees > Defence Committee > News Article

Damning whistle-blower evidence reveals ongoing sexual abuse within the Armed Services

18 May 2023

“Sexual offences and unacceptable sexual behaviour have no place in the armed forces and we are committed to stamping them out. All allegations are taken extremely seriously and crimes are investigated by the service police.

“We have set up an independent defence serious crime unit, created a victim witness care unit and strengthened our ability to discharge from service anyone who has committed an offence or engages in unacceptable sexual behaviour.”

(Quoted in the [Guardian](#))

“Institutional gaslighting?” ([MacKenzie](#) 2023)