

DEFENCE

Military gets tough over email sex scandal

- Dan Box
- The Australian
- 12:00AM August 7, 2014

MORE than 160 Australian Army officers and soldiers have been punished for their role in the “Jedi Council” email network, in which women were filmed having sex and the images shared between the men.

Ten others, ranging in rank from lance corporal to major, have also been thrown out of the army, including several combat veterans and a number who have been diagnosed as suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder after serving overseas.

The figures reveal the sweeping extent with which the military has acted to pursue those it holds responsible for the recent scandal.

The Australian Defence Force declined to comment on the medical circumstances of those involved, but confirmed that those of the 10 suffering PTSD would now rely on the government or “the civilian sector”, rather than the military, for their ongoing care.

“PTSD is a condition that requires medical treatment and while it may be a mitigating factor, is not a defence to transgressing Defence policy and army values,” the ADF said in a statement.

The Jedi Council network, one of a series of sex scandals to dog the military in recent years, involved the use of the military email system to exchange pornographic material, including explicit images of women taken without their consent.

Only one former soldier, Hastings Fredrickson, is expected to face criminal conviction over the exchange, after he pleaded guilty earlier this week to using a carriage service to cause offence in relation to three emails sent during July 2010.

Those others forced to leave the army, which include a sniper and a soldier who saw a close colleague killed by a roadside bomb, were dealt with under the internal military justice system. Details of the allegations against them have not been made public but several now believe they were given little chance to defend themselves at the time.

Each of the 10 received a formal notice last year from the Chief of Army, Lieutenant General David Morrison, effectively giving them a month to make the case as to why they should remain in the military.

General Morrison, who ultimately made the decision to end their careers, had previously spoken publicly about the scandal, including describing the women involved as “victims” who “have been targeted by these men”. Despite this, the ADF has said General Morrison had not “prejudged those individuals who are the subject of the allegations”.

Some of the 10 have since spent long periods unemployed, or under psychiatric care, while one, a major, was quietly stripped of a Commendation for Distinguished Service awarded for action during military operations.

The other 162 officers and non-commissioned officers who have received administrative sanction over the emails are understood to have been at the periphery of the Jedi Council, often only replying to messages sent to them.

“These individuals received administrative sanctions, such as censures, formal warnings or performance counselling, and/or punishment under the Defence Force Discipline Act,” the ADF statement said.

o

Copyright The Australian. All times AEST (GMT +10:00)

Source: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/defence/military-gets-tough-over-email-sex-scandal/news-story/bc6d4041c9c4efd5d6032a1c526e8860>