



Feminist Wire Newsbriefs

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Coast Guard Cadet Sentenced for Extortion, Sodomy, and Indecent Assault

Coast Guard cadet Webster Smith, 23, was sentenced yesterday to six months in prison for extortion, sodomy, indecent assault, and other charges. He was also expelled from the Coast Guard Academy. Smith is the first Coast Guard cadet to be court-martialed in the history of the academy.

Smith was accused by four female cadets of sexual misconduct, including rape, in addition to the charges of extortion, sodomy, and indecent assault, but was acquitted of the sexual misconduct charges. The extortion, sodomy, and indecent assault charges were based on the testimony of one of the female cadets, who claimed that Smith knew a secret about her that would threaten her military career. The female cadet was afraid that Smith would reveal her secret if she said no to his requests, according to the *Associated Press*.

Though Smith is the first to be court-martialed from the Coast Guard, sexual assault and harassment at military academies is a well-documented problem. The Department of Defense Task Force on Sexual Harassment and Violence at the Military Service Academies studied the issue at the US Naval Academy and the Military Academy at West Point and released its findings in a report issued in August of 2005. The report found that "harassment is [a] prevalent and corrosive problem, creating an environment in which sexual assault is likely to occur." The report concluded that procedures for sexual assault in the military academies were ineffective and called on Congress to bring military sexual assault codes more in-line with current civilian laws.

Media Resources: Associated Press 6/29/06, 6/27/06, 6/25/06, 6/20/06, 6/19/06; Feminist Daily News Wire

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