

Army harassment panelist resigns over sex charges

Top enlisted man denies misconduct; accuser claims cover up.

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Army's top enlisted man has stepped down from a panel investigating sexual harassment after a retired female sergeant major accused him of sexual assault and harassment.

Sgt. Maj. Brenda L. Hoster said she went public with her allegations after months of inaction by the Pentagon and only after Gene C. McKinney, the man she accuses of misconduct, was appointed to the panel. The New York Times reported Tuesday.

The Army confirmed that McKinney, the sergeant major of the Army, is the target of the charge but said it became aware of Hoster's complaint when asked for comment about it by the Times.

Army spokesman Col. John Smith

said in a statement that McKinney "denies he ever engaged in any form of sexual misconduct or improper treatment with the retired sergeant major who has made the allegations."

The Army will thoroughly investigate the charges, the statement said. McKinney and ignored her pleas for Hoster, 39, a 22-year Army veteran, told the Times that McKinney, 46, kissed, grabbed her and asked her for sex in her hotel room during an April business trip to Hawaii. She said McKinney's wife was in another room a few doors away at the time.

Hoster, an Army journalist and public affairs specialist, has filed a formal complaint with the Army and was interviewed on Friday by the Times at her lawyer's office in Denver. The Army said that pending resolution of the matter, McKinney had asked to be excused from his duties on the high-level panel named by Army Secretary Togo West to review the Army's sexual harassment problems.

The Times reported that Hoster "overcame her fears about complaining about McKinney and told her superiors at the Pentagon about it seven weeks after the alleged incident. She said officials took no action against McKinney and ignored her pleas for a job transfer, leaving her with no other choice but to retire early, the newspaper reported.

She said she decided she no longer could remain silent after McKinney was named to the panel investigating sexual harassment. In her formal complaint, Hoster suggested at least one high-ranking Army public affairs officer covered up the allegations, the Times said. The newspaper said Col. Robert Gaylord, deputy chief of Army public affairs, heard Hoster's complaint in June. The Army said neither McKinney nor Gaylord would have any comment pending an investigation. McKinney has been the Army's top adviser on matters of concern to enlisted personnel since June 1995.

Simpson liable, must pay \$8.5M

It's not over: Jury must still decide punitive damages.

SANTA MONICA, Calif. (AP) — A unanimous civil jury found O.J. Simpson liable Tuesday for the slashing deaths of his ex-wife and her friend.

The jury ordered him to pay \$8.5 million in compensatory damages and will return Thursday to decide whether to award millions more in punitive damages.

As the verdict was read, Simpson remained stoic, staring straight ahead.

Across the courtroom, a whoop of joy went up from the relatives of Nicole Brown Simpson and Ronald Goldman.

"Yes!" screamed sister Kim Goldman, in contrast to the way she sobbed openly when Simpson was acquitted of murder 16 months ago.

She and her mother and father clasped hands in jubilation. But the judge quickly silenced them.

The mostly white panel, forced to start deliberations anew last Friday after a juror was removed for misconduct, snatched away some of the vindication Simpson claimed when he was acquitted of murder by a mostly black jury in 1995.

That televised murder trial divided the nation over issues of police racism, domestic violence and the quality of justice.

This civil jury, using the lesser standard of "preponderance of evidence" rather than "beyond a reasonable doubt," was unanimous on all counts in blaming Simpson for the June 12, 1994, deaths of Nicole Brown Simpson and Ronald Goldman.

The dramatic reading of the verdict was delayed more than three hours to allow the lawyers and families to get to the courthouse. Simpson's trip — in a black Suburban instead of a white Bronco — was televised live nationally on a split screen just as President Clinton began his State of the Union address.

The \$8.5 million represented the value of Goldman's funeral and the loss of Goldman's companionship to his parents. Nicole Brown Simpson's family did not seek compensatory damages.

The jury reached the verdict after 17 hours of deliberations over three days — more than five times as long as the criminal jury deliberated.

That was on top of the 14 hours over three days that were interrupted Friday when the judge replaced the only black member for failing to disclose that her daughter was a secretary in the district attorney's office that prosecuted Simpson at his murder trial.

The final six-man, six-woman jury consisted of nine whites, one Hispanic, one Asian and one member of Asian and black heritage.

Milosevic accepts opposition wins

BELGRADE, Yugoslavia (AP) — Yielding to foreign pressure and unrelenting protests at home, Serbia's president acknowledged Tuesday that his opponents had won several local elections.

Opposition leaders, who have led hundreds of thousands of people into the streets in 77 days of protests, had trouble believing Slobodan Milosevic truly was conceding Nov. 17 elections — and said he was too late to save his own job.

"Resign! Resign!" the crowd of 50,000 people who poured into Republic Square for their daily rally cried when opposition leader Vuk Draskovic told them Milosevic had finally recognized his election defeats.

"It is great to see him weak and backing down. It took us weeks, but it is finally happening," Zorica Divecevic said. "But what I really want is to see him resign."

Milosevic did not say directly that the opposition had won the races they claimed in 14 cities, including Belgrade, as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe confirmed in December.

However, in a statement published by the state-run Tanjug news agency, he directed Premier Mirko Marjanovic to present parliament with a special law that will accept the opposition victories.

"The election conflicts ... have inflicted severe damage to our country both in the international and foreign areas and it is high time to resolve the problem," Milosevic said in a letter to Marjanovic published by Tanjug.

"I think that the state interest of improving relations of our country

Election results upheld

Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic Tuesday conceded the opposition won municipal elections last fall in Belgrade and 13 other Serb cities.



AP/Wm. J. Castello

with the international community by the legislation could be presented to parliament as soon as Wednesday, BK TV quoted Marjanovic's aides as saying. The parliament is expected to follow Milosevic's wishes.

70 killed in air crash

SHAAR YESHUV, Israel (AP) — Two military transport helicopters collided in heavy fog and rain in northern Israel, and Israel's northern army commander said at least 70 soldiers died.

Officials described the crash as the worst air disaster in Israel's military history.

A bright white explosion lit the night sky as the Sikorsky helicopters — which normally carry about 30 troops each, including the crew — crashed to the ground. One of the helicopters hit an empty guesthouse, which burst into flames. No one on the ground apparently was hurt.

The helicopters — loaded with explosives — had been heading toward southern Lebanon, the army said.

One witness, Gabi Edri, told Israel's Army radio that the two helicopters collided in flight.

Yoav Frenkel told the radio he saw the crash from his car window. Smoke poured from one helicopter as it went down and the second was lit by flames.

Israel's Channel Two television showed bodies being carried away from the crash site at the Shaar Yeshuv moshav, a communal settlement in eastern Galilee, five miles east of Kiryat Shemona.



AP/Carl Fox

Israeli radios played somber music as they traditionally do when soldiers have been killed.

In 1977, another military helicopter crash claimed 54 lives.

Fugitive cow eludes capture

COLUMBUS (AP) — An escaped cow headed straight for the heart of the city Tuesday, leading police and veterinarian officials on a chase that lasted more than an hour.

She was being loaded into a trailer at an auction house after being sold for slaughter when she broke free.

The animal rambled and roamed 25 blocks. She was spotted near a hospital, a YMCA, a middle school and in several yards.

Three police officers, one Platte County Sheriff's deputy, one Nebraska State Patrol Trooper, a veterinarian

and several sales barn employees blocked traffic and helped catch the animal.

The veterinarian shot the cow with two tranquilizer darts, striking the animal in the shoulder and the rear end. The cow finally ran out of steam in the driveway of a home, was lassoed and tied to a tree.

Bob Loshbaugh, a part owner of the pavilion, said cows have escaped before. "They're like people. They go nuts once in awhile," Loshbaugh said. "She was probably looking for her calf or something."

Questions? Comments? Ask for the appropriate section editor at 472-2588 or e-mail dn@unlinfo.unl.edu.

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FAX NUMBER: 472-1761

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