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other sexual assaults. In fact, mili- abuse and harassment at Ft. Hood raped once before they joined the tary women are much more likely in Texas, was himself committing to be sexually assaulted by a fel- a battery of sexual offenses low soldier than killed by an en- and even running a prostitution U.S. military women experience

military. Wow.

The reality is that one in four sexual trauma in the ranks sooner

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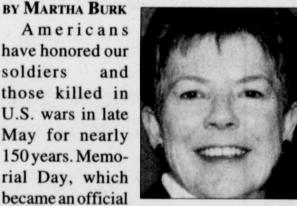
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foxes guarding henhouses

problem with



holiday in 1868, was originally called Decoration Day and got started when civilian women decided to decorate military graves from both sides of the Civil War. There were already female war-

riors in our military back then, mostly disguised and fighting as men. In today's armed forces, women no longer need to hide their gender. But lately it seems like our women in uniform might be better off if they did.

overwhelming majority of our troops and officers, the number of women has risen substantially in the last decade. Unfortunately, so has the numbers of rapes and

emy.

This month, the Pentagon released the latest grim statistics on this front: There were 3,374 re-

ported cases of sexual assault in the ranks over the course of the 2012 fiscal year, and officials believe an additional 26,000 sexual assaults went unreported.

Despite all the attention this problem has garnered for years, sexual

assault is growing more common. The official rate is up by 13 percent and the unreported estimated rate has climbed 35 percent in the past two years.

Those shameful numbers don't have to speak for themselves. The Pentagon's report came just two days after Lt. Col. Jeffrey Krusinski, the Air Force officer in charge of sexual assault training, was arrested for - you guessed it - getting drunk and sexually as-While men still comprise the saulting a complete stranger in an Arlington, Va. parking lot.

> A week later, the military said it was investigating whether Sgt. 1st Class Gregory McQueen, a man whose job it was to prevent sexual

ring.

was relieved of his duties running the sexual assault response program at Ft. Campbell in Kentucky after he was arrested for sending pressing for a thorough overhaul his ex-wife threatening texts and stalking her in violation of a court order.

It sure looks like the military has a systemic problem with foxes guarding henhouses.

Most of the victims were afraid of being punished by superiors if they reported what happened. And for good reason. In virtually every case, senior officers - not civilian law enforcement - get to decide guilt or innocence. They can even overturn jury decisions in the very few cases that actually go to trial.

that this must change. He took to the airwaves to denounce a system that's clearly not working. Meanwhile, Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Mark A. Welsh III was busy blaming the victims in testimony before the Senate Armed Services committee. He said the assaults were the result of a "hook up mentality," and besides, many of the women had already been

Soon after, Lt. Col. Darin Haas or later- and about 1 percent of military men are raped or assaulted each year.

> Members of Congress are of the way military assaults are prosecuted. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel is still defending the good-ol'-boys-decide system now in place, although he has given some hints that he might be more open to letting non-military prosecutors take over that role.

Let's hope when the next Memorial Day rolls around, the good news will be that changes have been made. Our military women and men deserve to be safe from assault by their own ranks. Those who assault their peers and their President Barack Obama gets own country in the bargain deserve to be punished, not protected. It's a matter of simple military justice.

> Martha Burk is the director of the corporate accountability project for the National Council of Women's Organizations and the author of the book Your Voice, Your Vote: The Savvy Woman's Guide to Power, Politics, and the Change We Need.