

1310 Passage Dr
Odenton, MD 21113

May 29, 2019

To whom it may concern,

This letter is submitted in support of Petty Officer First Class Michael J. Merritt, U.S. Navy (ret). I was Michael's Commanding Officer when he was stationed at U.S. Naval Computer and Telecommunications Station Bahrain in 2016. Bahrain is a small country in the Persian Gulf near Saudi Arabia. While Michael was deployed there, his wife and children remained in the United States (in the San Diego, California metropolitan area).

During my tenure as NCTS Bahrain Commanding Officer, my command received correspondence from Mrs. Claudia Merritt, Michael's now ex-wife, on multiple occasions. Mrs. Merritt sent numerous emails to my Command Master Chief and to my Executive Officer. In her emails, she made serious accusations against him, including child and sexual abuse (both physical and sexual), theft, and financial abandonment of her and their children.

A Family Advocacy case was opened by the Commanding Officer, Naval Base San Diego to investigate Mrs. Merritt's allegations. That investigation, as well as one conducted by the Ramona, California Sheriff's Department, concluded that none of Mrs. Merritt's accusations were valid. As Michael's Commanding Officer, I also conducted an investigation internal to my Command. My investigation determined that Michael was providing adequate financial support for his then-wife and children as required by U.S. Navy regulations and I found no proof of any other crime or misconduct on Michael's part.

After reviewing the accusations brought by Mrs. Merritt and the correspondence between her and members of my Command Leadership Team, it seemed to me that Mrs. Merritt was in need of professional help. I am not a mental health expert but it was apparent to me that Mrs. Merritt was suffering from some degree of disconnect with reality. The only other reasonable explanation was that she was simply an evil person and was out to harm Michael personally, emotionally, and in his career. Either way, as far as I could determine, none of Mrs. Merritt's claims against Michael were supported by evidence. In fact, Mrs. Merritt even went on to recant her previous accusations, telling my Executive Officer via email that she didn't really

mean what she said, that she was just under emotional stress from childhood trauma.

During his time under my command, I had no issues with Michael. He was an upstanding Sailor, always professional, focused on his duty, and willing to support both his Command and his Shipmates. I found him to be kind, gentle, and constantly willing to go the extra mile for anyone and everyone. He demonstrated a heart of service, good-natured disposition, and sense of humor. Even during the roughest times dealing with his then-wife, he held strong to God and his Faith. I was proud to serve with Michael and even prouder to have him under my Command. I would serve again with him any time, anywhere.

Please contact me if you need additional information or amplification. I may be reached at murry.carter2@gmail.com or 757.597.1609.

With respect,

 *William M. Carter* CAPT, USN (ret)

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