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The Honorable Lloyd Austin
Secretary of Defense
U.S. Department of Defense
1400 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Austin:

I write to voice my concern and dissatisfaction with the Department of Defense's decision to relieve a U.S. Space Force officer, Lt. Col. Matthew Lohmeier, from command for his comments on a podcast regarding Marxism and critical race theory (CRT). According to a Space Force spokesman, the Commander, Space Operations Command, Lt. Gen. Stephen Whiting, "initiated a command directed investigation on whether these comments constitute prohibited partisan political activity." Lt. Col. Lohmeier, a 2006 U.S. Air Force Academy graduate and 15-year veteran of the U.S. Air Force and U.S. Space Force, was fired and reassigned for comments that have not yet been investigated nor determined to have been in violation of any Department of Defense directive. This is unjust and a failure of due process. The Department of Defense owes Lt. Col. Lohmeier and the public an explanation of why his comments are prohibited by military code.

The Department of Defense rule relevant to the case of Lt. Col. Lohmeier is DOD Directive 1344.10, Political Activities by Members of the Armed Forces. This rule states that a member of the Armed Forces on active duty shall not "participate in any radio, television, or other program or group discussion as an advocate for or against a partisan political party, candidate, or cause." It is clear that Lt. Col. Lohmeier appeared on a podcast, which in itself is not prohibited by DOD Directive 1344.10. Moreover, he did not say anything partisan while on the podcast. In fact, Lt. Col. Lohmeier explained in an emailed statement, "My intent never has been to engage in partisan politics. I have written a book about a particular political ideology (Marxism) in the hope that our Defense Department might return to being politically non-partisan in the future as it has honorably done throughout history."

If the Department of Defense finds that Lt. Col. Lohmeier's statements on CRT qualify as a "partisan cause," it would then follow that the Department recognizes CRT itself as reflecting one side in a partisan debate. Yet if CRT is partisan, it must be asked why this ideology is increasingly being pushed on U.S. service members. It has become increasingly clear that the Department is actively pushing CRT through "diversity and inclusion" trainings,¹ recommended reading materials,² and cadet instruction.³ The Department therefore cannot call Lt. Col. Lohmeier's statements on CRT "partisan" without being implicated in the same partisan advocacy.

Americans are increasingly realizing the ugly nature of critical race theory, which is sweeping through much of U.S. higher education, government, the media, and business. This relatively new ideology is worlds apart from the prophetic and deeply American claims of the Civil Rights Movement. CRT is a branch of critical theory developed in the 1970s and 80s with deep and explicit roots in Marxism. Marxism as espoused by Karl Marx identified the "oppressed" as an exclusively economic class, but leading Marxists in the 20th century adapted this concept to include a wide range of "intersectional" oppressed identities in areas such as gender, sexual orientation, and race. Although this new form of Marxism may look different from Soviet-era communism, its binary view of the world remains the same. It still defines people fundamentally as either *oppressed* or *oppressors*, thus rejecting the founding premise of this country that all men are created equal.

Today, CRT proponents are pushing their message in mainstream quarters, teaching that non-whites are defined by their oppression and that whiteness is fundamentally bound up with being an oppressor. These contemporary Marxists treat white "privilege" as the true original sin that requires perpetual penance in the form of "self-divestment." This results in an imbalanced system that rewards layered identities of "oppression" while disfavoring those unfortunate enough to have been born an "oppressor." Such a dark and fatalistic worldview offers no hope for reconciliation, harmony, equality, or even justice—things all Americans of good will wish to achieve. Instead, CRT makes room only for power and group struggle and would relegate our nation to perpetual grievance and internal strife. For this reason, CRT is a domestic threat that our adversaries would like to see spread within our country.

CRT is now bearing bitter fruit in our society and sowing seeds of resentment when we ought to be strengthening the civic bonds that bind us together. It is spreading through American HR departments, classrooms, federal agencies, and regrettably, the United States military. The "diversity and inclusion" trainings that Lt. Col. Lohmeier has spoken about are ground zero for the proliferation of CRT in our Armed Forces.

¹ Stephen Losey, "The Military Is Resuming the Diversity Training That Trump Banned," *Military.com*, March 8, 2021, <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2021/03/08/military-resuming-diversity-training-trump-banned.html>.

² Audrey Conklin, "House Republicans protest more books on Navy reading list," *Fox News*, March 12, 2021, <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/house-republicans-books-navy-reading-list>.

³ Jerry Dunleavy, "GOP Army vet congressman seeks answers about 'critical race theory' at West Point," *Washington Examiner*, April 10, 2021, <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/politics/gop-army-vet-congressman-seeks-answers-critical-race-theory-west-point>.

As a member of the Armed Services Committee, I am committed to stopping this cancerous ideology from corrupting the world's greatest fighting force. I urge you to recognize the harm and division being sown in our Armed Forces and to commit to uprooting un-American CRT activism from our United States military.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,



Roger F. Wicker