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ARMED SERVICES
COMMITTEE
COMMITTEE ON THE
JUDICIARY

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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May 23rd, 2023

The Honorable Lloyd J. Austin III
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

General Mark A. Milley
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs
9999 Joint Staff Pentagon
Washington, DC 20318

Dear Secretary Austin and General Milley,

On March 29, 2023, during the House Armed Services Committee hearing on the “FY24 Defense Budget Request,” I questioned you about diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs within the Department of Defense (DoD). I find it completely unacceptable that DoD is using taxpayer dollars to fund DEI programs that are divisive in nature. DoD resources should be used for mission-essential operations, not diverted toward initiatives that create cultural fissures within our service ranks.

When I highlighted specific cases of drag queen story hours and drag shows occurring on U.S. military bases, shockingly, you indicated you were unaware that such events are taking place. However, I am pleased to know you do not support these drag events and agree with me that they should not be happening.¹ To aid you in executing the agreed-upon elimination of DoD-funded drag events, I have enclosed supplementary documents that further highlight the DoD’s pervasive and persistent use of taxpayer dollars for drag events. I have also included questions throughout this correspondence, which I require answers to so that the House Armed Services Committee can conduct further oversight of this matter.

1) **May 27, 2022: Ramstein Air Force Base, Germany.** Local drag queen Stacey Teed planned to hold a 30-minute story time for kids at an on-base library. This was briefed to the Chairman on May 28, 2022, in Defense Morning Clips.² “A librarian from the Ramstein libraries posted her dismay at the cancellation, writing: ‘We’re being forced to cancel all drag events on Ramstein due to a minority of people that have nothing to do with our base community.’”³ This commentary from a DoD-paid librarian is very troubling, as U.S. forward-deployed base communities involve us all. I request answers to the following questions:

- a. As you know, this event was canceled, but how much DoD funding was intended for it? If the funding was not going to come out of the DoD’s budget, what was the source of it?
- b. Did Ramstein conduct background checks on the proposed performers

¹ [GOP rep stumps top military leaders with question on base drag shows: 'First I'm hearing about that' | Fox News](#)

² [Ramstein rethinks Pride Month events after critics bash ‘Drag Queen Story Time’ for kids \(Air Force times\)](#)

³ [US Air Force Base holds Drag Queen Story Hour for kids | Post Millennial](#)

prior to scheduling this event?

- c. Prior to its cancelation, how many service members were diverted from their normal duties to help plan, organize, and facilitate the drag queen story hour?
- d. Has the base hosted any similar events since the cancelation of this one?

2) **July 30, 2022: Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Virginia.** Colonel Gregory Beualieu, Commander, 633d Air Base Wing approved the “Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Summer Festival,” “providing funding for logistical requirements, such as a tent, stage, tables and chairs, etc.,” in which serial DoD drag performer “Harpy Daniels,” aka “The Navy Drag Queen,” performed at the family-friendly event.⁴ I request answers to the following questions:

- a. Secretary Austin, do you intend to issue a formal retraction of your testimony to the House Armed Services Committee regarding your stated belief that the DoD does not fund, or support drag events?
 - i. Secretary Austin, you repeatedly stated that “drag shows is not something the DoD funds or supports.” Based on statements from Colonel Gregory Beualieu, who served as the Commander, 633d Air Base Wing at Joint Base Langley-Eustis, who stated: “we [Joint Base Langley-Eustis] provided funding for logistics, tents, tables, and chairs.” His statement indicates that DoD did expend taxpayer dollars to fund a drag event.
 - ii. Secretary Austin, you should retract your statement or issue a formal apology for providing false testimony before the House Armed Services Committee.
- b. Will the DoD issue guidance to prohibit base commanders from funding drag shows and events in the future?
- c. Will there be any disciplinary action taken for the misuse of military funding for drag events hosted on military bases?
- d. Under what authority did Joint Base Langley-Eustis pay for tents, stages, chairs, and logistical support for this drag event?

3) **June 17, 2022; Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada.** 99th Air Base Wing hosted a drag show at the Nellis Club on post featuring multiple drag performers.⁵ Colonel Josh DeMotts was the commander during this time.⁶ I request answers to the following questions:

- a. Under what authority does a commander approve, host, and fund burlesque drag shows on a military base utilizing taxpayer funding?
- b. What line item in the DoD budget is allocated for drag events or events of that nature?
- c. Will you both commit to reclaiming the exact dollar amounts commanders

⁴ [Air Force hosts drag show at kid-friendly ‘diversity, inclusion’ festival on base | American Military News](#)

⁵ [Biden's Woke Military: Nellis Air Force Base Hosts First-Ever Drag Queen Show | Western Journal](#)

⁶ [99th Air Base Wing welcomes new commander | Nellis AFB](#)

utilized for drag shows, drag queen story hours, and similar events?

4) **June 1, 2023; Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada.** Nellis Air Force Base has announced a so-called “family-friendly” drag organized by the Nellis LGBTQ+ Pride Council for June 1, 2023. In this latest outright attack on children, this event is being advertised as having no minimum age requirement. I request answers to the following questions:

- a. You both testified before the House Armed Service Committee stating: “drag shows and drag events are not something the DoD supports or fund” and “I’d like to take a look at that material ... I don’t agree with that, these things shouldn’t be happening.” Given those statements, has this drag event scheduled for June 1, 2023, on Nellis Air Force Base been reviewed and approved by either of you?
- b. Will the base provide funding for logistical support of this event?
- c. Does the DoD feel it’s appropriate for children to attend a sexualized drag performance?
- d. Why are base commanders defying your intent and direction by facilitating drag events?

5) **June 30, 2022: Malmstrom Air Force Base, Montana.** Drag performers, the “Mister Sisters,” hosted Drag Storytime and Drag Trivia at the Malmstrom AFB library and The Grizzly Bend, respectively.⁷ Colonel Anita Feugate-Opperman was commander during this period.⁸ I request answers to the following questions:

- a. What public comment period is available for civilian employees and service members to weigh in on their bases hosting of drag events?
- b. Does the DoD advertise these drag events to the general public?
- c. Do units hosting these drag events provide amplification for the participants using DoD social media?
- d. Is the unit social media platform advancing these events through push notifications to children, families, and civilians who follow the base on social media?
- e. Does the DoD think these drag events and push notifications might alienate those who disagree with DoD funding and hosting these drag events?

6) **March 3, 2023: US Navy hires active-duty drag queen to be face of recruitment drive.** It has recently come to light that the U.S. Navy invited Yeoman 2nd Class Joshua Kelley, the active-duty drag queen who identifies as “Harpy Daniels” and performed at Joint Base Langley-Eustis, to be a “Digital Ambassador.” According to reports, this invitation was part of a recent drive “to attract the most talented and diverse workforce” and combat plunging recruitment.⁹ I request answers to the following questions:

⁷ [Biden's Military: Air Force Base in Montana Holds Drag Show, Drag Storytime for Kids | Western Journal](#)

⁸ [Malmstrom changes command | Malmstrom](#)

⁹ [US Navy hires active-duty drag queen to be face of recruitment drive \(nypost.com\)](#)

- a. Did DoD promote any content from Joshua Kelley's personal drag queen social media account on official DoD platforms?
- b. Was this "Digital Ambassador" promoted as a service member or as a drag queen?
- c. Are there any advertisements funded with taxpayer dollars that have no nexus to military service but simply promote drag queens?
- d. How much funding was dedicated to the Digital Ambassador position?
- e. Why did the Navy select a drag queen as a Digital Ambassador, and by what metrics will the DoD assess the effectiveness of promoting a drag queen on recruitment?
- f. It is highlighted in the supplementary documents that Joshua Kelley also performed a drag show on the Naval ship Ronald Reagan in November 2017 during a forward deployment. Does the Navy routinely authorize burlesque shows during work hours and while on deployment or operating in a forward capacity?

Please provide answers to all questions posed in this letter and clarification on whether any punitive action has or will be taken against individuals who facilitated drag events with taxpayer dollars by June 12, 2023. I appreciate your attention and await your reply.

Sincerely,



Matt Gaetz
Member of Congress

Supplementary documents

1) Gay, lesbian troops perform in drag at Kadena Air Base in Okinawa for a fundraiser.⁶

By TRAVIS J. TRITTEN
• March 2, 2014



Staff Sgt. Rudy Del Cid, using the drag queen name Storm, hosts and performs at a fundraiser for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender troops Saturday at Kadena Air Base on Okinawa. (Travis J. Tritten/Stars and Stripes)

BUY PHOTO

2) The Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada recently hosted its first-ever drag queen show at one of its on-base dining and entertainment clubs, according to a base spokesperson.⁷



Facebook/Coco Montrese

by KRISTINA WONG | 21 Jun 2021 | 8,437

⁶ [Gay, lesbian troops perform in drag at Kadena Air Base fundraiser | Stars and Stripes](#)

⁷ [Exclusive: Nellis Air Force Base Hosts 'First-Ever' Drag Queen Show \(breitbart.com\)](#)

Supplementary documents

3) **Sailor by day, performer by night — meet the Navy’s drag queen, ‘Harpy Daniels.’**⁸



—— Yeoman 3rd Class Joshua J. Kelley, from Berwick, Pennsylvania, performs during the Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) Lip Sync Battle on the mess decks of the Navy’s forward-deployed aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76) on Nov. 29, 2017. Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Charles J. Scudella III / U.S. Navy

4) **Air Force hosts drag show at kid-friendly ‘diversity, inclusion’ festival on base.**⁹

Air Force hosts drag show at kid-friendly ‘diversity, inclusion’ festival on base



Breaking Barriers Alliance of Joint Base Langley-Eustis put on the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Summer Festival on July 30, 2022. (Joint Base Langley-Eustis/Released)

⁸ [Navy drag queen 'Harpy Daniels' is serving looks — and the country \(nbcnews.com\)](https://www.nbcnews.com)

⁹ [Joint Base Langley-Eustis hosts drag show at kid-friendly festival \(americanmilitarynews.com\)](https://www.americanmilitarynews.com)

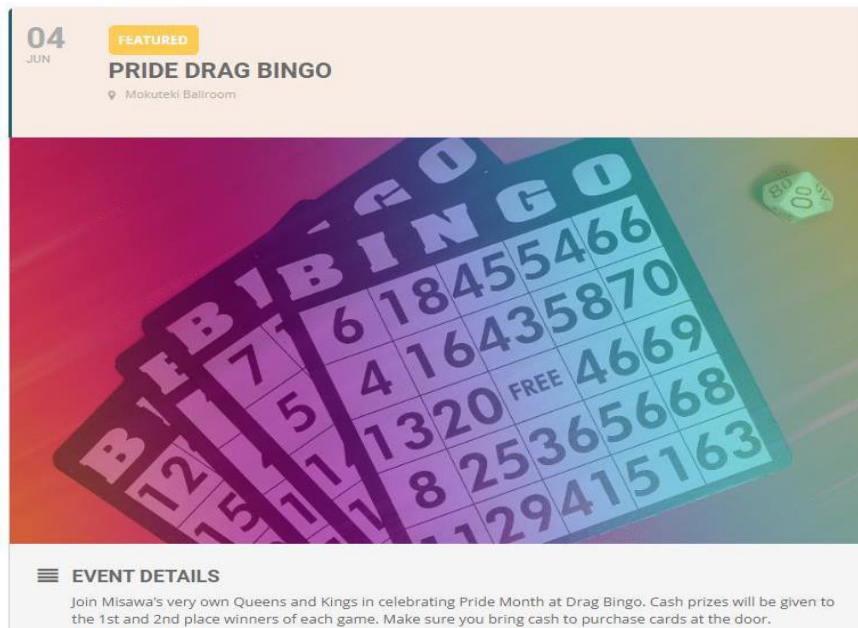
Supplementary documents

5) Airforce base performance 1st time EVER drag was performed on this Air Force base!¹⁰



6) 35th Force Support Squadron Misawa AFB hosts Queens and Kings in celebrating Pride Month at Drag Bingo.¹¹

JUNE, 2022

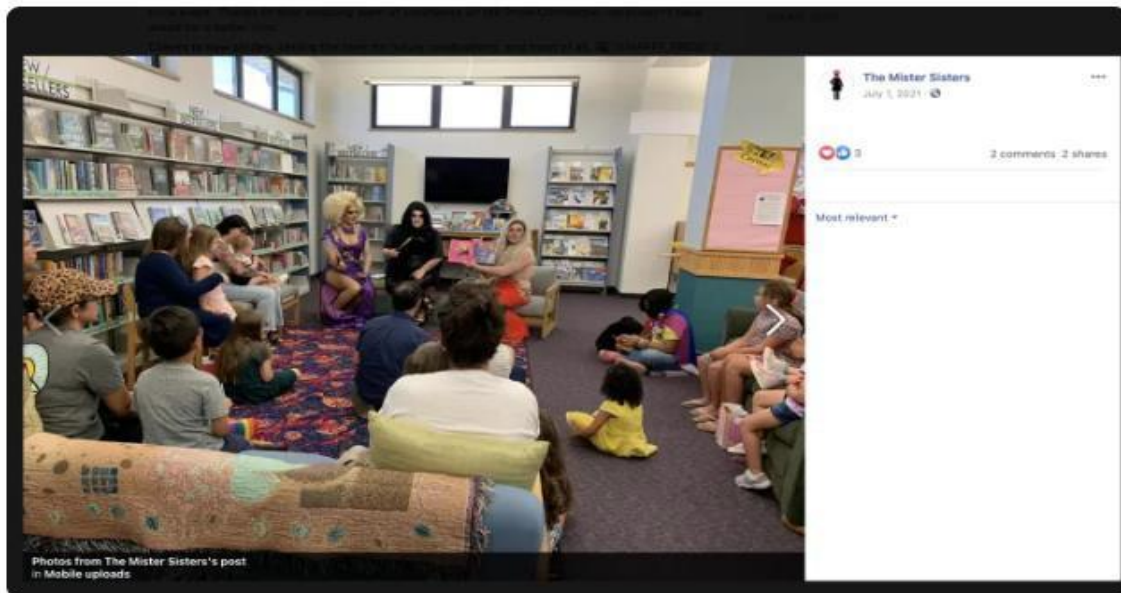


¹⁰ [Airforce base performance 1st time EVER drag was performed on this airforce base! | CoCo Montrese \(@theonlycocomontrese\) on Instagram](#)

¹¹ [Pride Drag Bingo | 35th Force Support Squadron \(35fss.com\)](#)

Supplementary documents

7) Sen. Daines calls Drag Queen Story Hour at Air Force base 'infuriating.'¹²



This image of the Mister Sisters Drag Queen performance trio leading a story hour for children, which allegedly took place at the Malmstrom AFB library on June 30, 2021, was released by Sen. Steve Daines' office on Monday. Daines and two other Montana Congressional representatives have asked the military

8) US Air Force Base holds Drag Queen Story Hour for kids.¹³



¹² [Sen. Daines calls Drag Queen Story Hour at Air Force base 'infuriating' \(yahoo.com\)](https://www.yahoo.com/news/sen-daines-calls-drag-queen-story-hour-air-force-base-infuriating-120000312.html)

¹³ [US Air Force Base holds Drag Queen Story Hour for kids | The Post Millennial | thepostmillennial.com](https://thepostmillennial.com/us-air-force-base-holds-drag-queen-story-hour-for-kids/)

Supplementary documents

- 9) “Malmstrom Air Force base made history yesterday when they formally acknowledged Pride Month and hosted a few events to celebrate the occasion on base.”¹⁴



- 10) Eglin AFB host Pride Month events.¹⁵

Pride Parade - Post'l Point, June 18, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. "LIVE Out Loud" features a boat Pride Parade and a **drag** queen grand marshall.

¹⁴ [Biden's Military: Air Force Base in Montana Holds Drag Show, Drag Storytime for Kids \(westernjournal.com\)](#)

¹⁵ [Pride Month is here > Eglin Air Force Base > Article Display \(af.mil\)](#)

11) **Defense Morning Clips. Joint Staff Public Affairs, Media Analysis.**¹⁶



U.S. Department of Defense

DEFENSE MORNING CLIPS

As of 0430 Hours, May 28

OVERVIEW

In remarks to the U.S. Naval Academy's 2022 graduating class, President Biden warned that global challenges "are more consequential than ever" and he called on the graduates to be "defenders of democracy," according to *CNN*. Separately, the Biden administration is preparing a new Ukrainian aid package, which is expected to include MLRS weapon systems, as Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov condemned the West's "total war" against Russia, the *Washington Post* reported. Also of note, a preliminary U.S. intelligence assessment suggested North Korea may have developed a new missile capable of a "double arc" flight trajectory, *CNN* wrote.

INSTALLATIONS

28. Ramstein rethinks Pride Month events after critics bash 'Drag Queen Story Time' for kids

Military Times Online, May 27 (2043) | Rachel Cohen

Ramstein, the largest American air base in Germany and headquarters of U.S. Air Forces in Europe, was slated to host local drag queen Stacey Teed at a 30-minute story time event for kids at an on-base library, according to a since-deleted Facebook event. But the event created a furor. Chief among its opponents was Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., who confirmed the Air Force had canceled "Drag Queen Story Time" the same week he wrote to Secretary Frank Kendall demanding the service "immediately cancel this politically divisive event, and take appropriate disciplinary action against all involved in allowing this gross abuse of taxpayer funding to place children in a sexualized environment."

From: JS Pentagon OCJCS Mailbox Public Affairs Media Analysis <js.pentagon.ocjcs.mbx.public-affairs-media-analysis@mail.mil>

Sent: Saturday, May 28, 2022 5:34 AM

To: Milley, Mark A GEN USARMY JS OCJCS (USA); |

Cc: Grady, Christopher W ADM USN JS OCJCS (USA); JS Pentagon OCJCS List Joint Staff Public Affairs MNON Distro

Subject: Defense Morning Clips 28 May 2022

Chairman,

Sir – neither you nor the Vice Chairman were mentioned or quoted in today's Defense Morning Clips.

Respectfully,

¹⁶ [Milley may have lied about knowledge of Drag Queen Story Time \(trmlx.com\)](https://trmlx.com)

- 12) Ramstein rethinks Pride Month events after critics bash 'Drag Queen Story Time' for kids.¹⁷
Note: *Defense Morning Clips (Document 11)*, attributes this article to *Military Times Online*.

Your Air Force

Ramstein rethinks Pride Month events after critics bash 'Drag Queen Story Time' for kids

By [Rachel S. Cohen](#)

May 27, 2022



A sign welcomes visitors to Ramstein Air Base, Germany. (Airman Edgar Grimaldo/Air Force)

[Editor's note: this story was update late Friday with the Air Force's response.]

Ramstein Air Base in Germany is reworking its Pride Month festivities after critics, including a Republican senator, complained that a drag queen was picked to read to children.

¹⁷ [Ramstein rethinks Pride Month events after critics bash 'Drag Queen Story Time' for kids \(Air Force times\)](#)

13) Who is Joshua Kelley aka Harpy Daniels? US Navy appoints drag queen as new 'digital ambassador' in bid to boost recruitment.¹⁸



Joshua Kelley aka Harpy Daniels was one of just five active sailors selected to serve as 'digital ambassadors' for the Navy's new program (Harpy Daniels/Instagram)



14) Nellis Air Force Base Putting on Drag Show for Kids!¹⁹

The Nellis LGBTQ+ Pride Council is proud to bring the community the third annual FREE COMMUNITY DRAG SHOWCASE for Pride! Featuring RuPaul Drag Race Season 5 Queen, CoCo Montrese!

Please mark your calendars and bring your friends, neighbors, etc.

1 June at 5:30pm (doors open at 4:30) at the Officers Club on Nellis AFB!

No minimum age requirement, must be 21 & up to purchase alcoholic beverages from the Club.

THURSDAY 1 JUNE

DOORS OPEN: 1630

SHOW STARTS: 1730

NELLIS CLUB BALLROOM

PRIDE

1:28 PM · May 19, 2023 · 296.9K Views

1,767 Retweets 130 Quotes 4,820 Likes 69 Bookmarks

¹⁸ [US Navy hires active-duty drag queen as face of recruitment drive \(nypost.com\)](https://nypost.com)

¹⁹ <https://networkinvegas.com/nellis-air-force-base-putting-on-drag-show-for-kids/>