

Bad Dragon 3 Special Operations Squadron

The Roll Call in the Air Force is a time honored tradition dating back as far as WWI. It started when pilots would return to the squadron bar and rejoice with those that made it back from their dangerous mission, and honor those that didn't. They would cope with their stories and share a drink or two with their fellow wingmen. Today that time honored tradition is carried on in aircrew squadrons. We no longer call it a bar, it's a heritage room. It's a place in the squadron where aircrew members can get together, share their stories, and have a beer. The Roll Call today would look much like a frat party to most outsiders. We allow certain professional lines to be crossed but should you break any Roll Call rules, you will pay in the form of taking a drink from the grog, usually a toilet bowl or trashcan filled with any and every bottom-shelf liquor the squadron could find. But forget to toast the squadron before drinking from that grog, and you'll pay with another drink from it. The toast is usually particular in its rules as well. Each squadron has their own rules and traditions. At the 3rd Special Operations Squadron, the particular toast was easy. One would stand up, hold their glass high and shout, "To the 3rd!" The rest of the squadron responds by shouting, "BAD DRAGON!" Lt Col Allison Hardwick, the previous 3rd SOS commander, partook in this time honored tradition and was seen and heard shouting like the rest of her airmen, "BAD DRAGON!" Bad Dragon would seem odd, if not for our squadron mascot, being a dragon. The dragon is everywhere. It's on our patches. There is a dragon statue in our foyer. There is a huge wooden dragon emblem with the squadron crest in our auditorium. Those are all official 3rd SOS dragons. Bad Dragon, however is something much different.

What the heck was this Bad Dragon anyways? I was told by a friend to search it on google, but not on a government computer. That is code for, this is certainly not appropriate for work. Expecting something like Puff the Magic Dragon to pop up when I searched Bad Dragon, I was shocked when I found out it was a sex toy company that specializes in seemingly animalistic dildos, lubes, and other sex toy paraphernalia. I thought that evening was the end of it until I went back to work and noticed many members in the squadron, officers, senior non-commissioned officers were wearing lanyards and morale patches on their uniform with the Bad Dragon logo proudly displayed. These items were not within the standards of Air Force regulation and were completely unprofessional. They are a complete disgrace to the military uniform and they had a remarkable resemblance to the sex toy company. You can buy these lanyards at the squadron. You can also buy these lanyards, I found out, at the actual Bad Dragon website. Many members in our squadron, to include ranks as high as our former director of operations, who is now the 65th Squadron Commander, wore or wear the Bad Dragon Lanyard while at work, in uniform, and they bought it at the sex toy company website.

The sex toy company's name runs its claws deep into the culture of this squadron. Many in the squadron are so acclimated to this sexual harassment culture that it doesn't even shock them when Emails and texts sent out to all members in the squadron, even those that include squadron commander, address the squadron and its members as "Bad Dragons." This may have been something that started off as a few jokesters, but it caught on like wild fire. Imagine being a young airman at this squadron who heaven forbid, may have experienced sexual harassment or sexual assault. Would they feel comfortable coming forward and reporting such a thing in a

squadron where its leadership, officers, senior non-commissioned officer, non-commissioned officers, and fellow airmen all permit the wearing of sex toy memorabilia while in uniform?

On 7 September, Col Terrance Taylor, the 27th Special Operations Wing commander, the highest ranking official on Cannon Air Force Base, who is responsible for the well-being of all airmen on the base, was informed in writing of this clear and apparent violation of Air Force Policy. His Staff Judge Advocate, Lt Col Aaron Wilson, was also informed in writing to the specifics of the 3rd SOS inappropriate culture. Here we are in November, and many members still disgrace the uniform as they proudly wear this sex toy memorabilia. If you cannot go to the Wing commander, the highest ranking officer on the base, for help on his base, who else can help you? Who else can you turn to? Perhaps you could go to Equal Opportunity? But that is his program on his base that works for him.

Back in late October there was a glimmer of hope when the 3rd SOS squadron commander called all members into the squadron auditorium to discuss the Defense Organizational Climate Survey. It is an anonymous survey taken by members within the squadron so they feel safe and free to vent and air out problems within the squadron. It gives the commander an opportunity to properly diagnose problems in the workplace and correct them. There was no surprise that the squadron that openly wears sex toy memorabilia while in uniform, would fall into the red category when the topic of sexual harassment came up. Lt Col Clayton Aune, the current 3rd SOS commander stood before his squadron and professionally explained how sexual harassment was unacceptable in or out of uniform. He was right. Everyone sat and nodded in agreement. The irony and hypocrisy was, he said it to a room full of members, that were still wearing the Bad Dragon patch and lanyard. Words are cheap this was simply lip service.

The wearing of Bad Dragon sex toy memorabilia while in uniform may be unique to the 3rd Special Operations Squadron but the underlying issue is not. This kind of culture is permitted to varying degrees within the special operations community across the globe, and in other aircrew communities. The same generals that swear by lip service to congress that they will stop at nothing to fix the sexual harassment cultures in their services are the same generals who would not dare tell you what their callsigns are and if they do, they certainly won't explain the real story behind them. Call signs are earned. They are almost never something cool like Maverick. And many pilots blush to tell you the real story behind them. A lot carry with them sexual innuendos. They certainly will not show you their personal shadow box at their house, full of morale patches from deployment's past with sexual innuendos, inside jokes, and double entendres. So when some general comes to the 3rd SOS rescue and makes his public statement that he is fixing the issue, ask to see his morale patches. Ask for the real story behind his callsign. Watch him blush and know that the military has a long way to go before truly fixing this kind of culture. Leadership 101, we embrace the standards permit, whether right or wrong.