

## Warrant officer separated after claiming unearned rank, badges

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An Army helicopter pilot booted from service this year for claiming a rank and decorations he did not earn prompted challenges from readers after he flouted a uniform regulation in a recent issue of Army Times.

On March 31, the Army officer personnel management directorate approved the separation and other than honorable discharge for Chief Warrant Officer 2 Jim Calhoun, according to documentation anonymously provided to Army Times and confirmed by a defense official.

An administrative elimination board investigated and substantiated allegations of moral and professional dereliction against Calhoun, the documents show. His separation was effective April 14.

However, Calhoun told Army Times last month that he was a Reserve chief warrant 3 working with Special Operations Command. Calhoun, 52, of Saint Petersburg, Florida, said he was a reservist on detached duty with Spec Ops with plans to exit service in October.

His comments were part of a June 30 story with the headline "This CW3 is still rolling."

Calhoun had initially answered a call from Army Times when the publication asked readers for feedback about whether soldiers should be allowed to roll sleeves in their Army Combat Uniform. Calhoun claimed to be rolling the sleeves of his uniform, despite the rule against it.

Calhoun's alleged rule-breaking angered some soldiers and moved officials to set the record straight.

The administrative elimination board found Calhoun wrongly wore the rank of Chief Warrant Officer 3, and unspecified "unauthorized" badges and ribbons, according to the documentation, which included Calhoun's discharge papers, a personnel memorandum authorizing his separation and the findings and recommendations of the board.

The board also found he submitted a falsified DD 214 in 2008 before returning to service and went AWOL nine months later; he had falsified a mobilization order as well.

The board also found Calhoun failed a qualification course for the UH-60 Black Hawk, according to Army records. He was a UH-1 pilot.

It cleared him of allegations of conduct unbecoming an officer and failure to maintain a valid security clearance.

Days after the article was published, Army Human Resources Command spokesman Bill Costello said Calhoun never achieved the rank of chief warrant 3, never served in the SOF community and was not serving in any component. He confirmed Calhoun's CW2 rank and April separation date and declined to comment further on Calhoun's record.

As Calhoun's story began to unravel, Army Times contacted Calhoun in a phone call on June 27. He maintained that he is CW3, and had not left the service. However, he said he was on vacation in Romania and lacked ready access to verifying documentation.

"Now you say they've separated me, well, they've done it all without signatures, without a hearing, without my say-so, without talking to counsel," he said. "That tells you right there the whole machine is broke."

Calhoun said he had been overseas contracting since 2010, when he entered the inactive Reserve, and had not flown an Army aircraft since then. He said he planned to retire in October, and that he had recently been injured while working overseas as an MH-6 Little Bird instructor.

He also told Army Times he had supported "Operation Thunder Lightning," flying 10th Special Forces troops in Uganda. The name of the operation corresponds with a 2008 military operation conducted by Ugandan, South Sudanese and Congolese forces "with intelligence backup from U.S. Africa Command, according to the book "Nationalism, Globalization, and Africa."

"I didn't go there wearing a normal Army uniform," he said. "This was off the books."

When Army Times called and emailed Calhoun again, this time after receiving his personnel documents, he said in an email he was ill in a hospital in Romania, and he asked that the matter be dropped.

Calhoun's active-duty service began on Sept. 7, 1988, at Fort Rucker, Alabama. He was separated on May 26, 1992, having last served with U.S. Army Europe.

For this period, he held the Army Commendation Medal, Good Conduct Medal, NCO Professional Development Ribbon, Army Service Ribbon, an Overseas Service Ribbon for two trips abroad.

He also held the Air Assault Badge, Aircraft Crewman Badge and Armed Forces Parachutist Badge, a German badge, and he completed the Air Assault Course in 1988.

Though the records provided to Army Times do not include Calhoun's later service, the findings of the administrative separation board suggested he returned to service in 2008.

In Calhoun's voicemail, he still refers to himself as a CW3.

"Hi. You've reached Chief Warrant Officer 3 Jim Calhoun," his message stated as of July 11. "I'm out flying, or in a meeting or out making the world a safer place. Your call is very important to me, so please leave your name and number and I will get back to you as soon as I can. Have a great day."

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