

The incident **did happen**, and it triggered one of the most serious misconduct scandals in the history of the California Air National Guard — centered at the **144th Fighter Wing in Fresno**.

Core facts (confirmed by multiple news outlets)

- In **March 2015**, **Staff Sgt. Jennifer Pineda** of the 144th Fighter Wing went to change into her uniform and **found her boots filled with urine** in a women's bathroom.
- Security Forces investigators at the base conducted **two investigations**, but **both were inconclusive**, and the case was closed without identifying a perpetrator.
- Pineda filed a **whistleblower complaint**, stating she feared retaliation and that some personnel even speculated she had urinated in her own boots “for attention.” She requested DNA testing to clear her name.

Why it became a major scandal

The boot-urination incident itself was disturbing, but the **real scandal** was how leadership allegedly handled — or mishandled — the investigation:

- Multiple Guard members reported a **culture of retaliation** against whistleblowers at the Fresno base.
- At least **five members of the 144th Fighter Wing** filed formal complaints alleging reprisals and a broken inspector general system.
- Interviews and internal records suggested that **high-ranking officers may have tried to bury the investigation** to protect someone involved.

This became a statewide controversy after reporting by the *Los Angeles Times*.

Leadership consequences

The fallout reached the very top of the California Air National Guard:

- **Major General Clay Garrison**, the commander of the California Air National Guard, was **relieved of command** in April 2019.
- His removal came **two months after** the newspaper investigation detailing the boot-urination scandal and alleged retaliation.
- He was replaced by **Brigadier General Gregory Jones**.

This was an extremely rare action — removing the top commander of an entire state's Air National Guard.

Summary

The Fresno Air National Guard sexual-harassment/retaliation scandal involved:

- A female service member's boots being **deliberately urinated in**
- **Failed investigations** that never identified a culprit
- **Whistleblower complaints** alleging retaliation and cover-ups
- **Statewide leadership removal**, including the top commander of the California Air National Guard

This incident is now widely cited as an example of **systemic accountability failures** within the Guard.

Timeline of the 144th Fighter Wing Boot-Urination Scandal

(All events cited from Air Force Times, ABC30, CBS News, KTLA)

March 2015 — The Incident

- **Staff Sgt. Jennifer Pineda** (15-year veteran) enters a women's bathroom at the **144th Fighter Wing (Fresno)** to change into her uniform.
- She discovers **her boots filled with urine**.

2015 — First Investigation (Security Forces)

- Conducted by **144th Security Forces**, the unit responsible for policing the base.
- Investigators interview **only three people**.
- No suspects identified; case closed as **inconclusive**.

Late 2015 — Second Investigation

- A second internal investigation is launched months later.
- Investigators finally interview personnel who were **in the building drinking after work** the night of the incident.
- **Col. Sean Navin**, commander of the fighter squadron, was among those present. He **denied involvement**.
- Again, **no conclusions** reached.
- **Urine evidence was destroyed without DNA testing**, despite DNA being recoverable from urine.

2016 — Whistleblower Complaints Begin

- **Staff Sgt. Pineda files a whistleblower complaint**, stating she feared retaliation and that some accused her of urinating in her own boots "for attention."
- She requested DNA testing to clear her name.
- At least **five Guard members** from the 144th FW file formal complaints alleging retaliation and cover-ups.

2016 — New Air Force Rules Introduced

- According to a former JAG officer interviewed by ABC30, **new rules introduced in 2016** would have classified the incident as a more serious offense, triggering **Air Force Office of Special Investigations (AFOSI)** involvement.
- Because the incident occurred in 2015, AFOSI was **never called**, leaving the case to inexperienced internal investigators.

2018 — Growing Internal Pressure

- Retired Maj. **Dan Woodside** speaks publicly, stating the IG system is broken and leadership mishandled the case.
- He accuses senior officers of **destroying evidence** and **protecting someone involved**.

February 2019 — Los Angeles Times Investigation

- LA Times publishes a major exposé detailing:
 - The boot-urination incident
 - Alleged retaliation
 - Mishandled investigations
 - A culture of fear among whistleblowers
- This triggers statewide scrutiny.
- The California Military Department requests a **third investigation** by the **U.S. Air Force Inspector General**.

April 2019 — Top Commander Removed

- **Maj. Gen. Clay Garrison**, commander of the **California Air National Guard**, is **relieved of command**.
- Replaced by **Brig. Gen. Gregory Jones**.
- Removal occurs **two months after** the LA Times report.
- Multiple sources confirm the shake-up was directly tied to the scandal and allegations of retaliation.

Officers Involved in the Investigations & Fallout

1. Maj. Gen. Clay Garrison

- Commander of the California Air National Guard.
- Accused by whistleblowers of **mishandling investigations** and **burying the incident**.
- **Relieved of command** in April 2019.

2. Col. Sean Navin

- Commander of the fighter squadron at the time.
- Present in the building during the night of the incident (drinking after work).
- **Denied involvement**.
- Investigation reached **no conclusions**.

3. Maj. Dan Woodside (Ret.)

- Former officer who publicly criticized the handling of the case.
- Claimed evidence was destroyed and leadership protected someone.
- Became a key whistleblower voice.

4. Lt. Col. Jonathan Shiroma

- Guard spokesman who confirmed Garrison's removal but provided no details.

5. Security Forces Investigators (Unnamed)

- Conducted both internal investigations.
- Criticized for:
 - Interviewing too few witnesses
 - Failing to test evidence

- Destroying urine samples
- Closing the case prematurely

Summaries of Whistleblower Filings

Staff Sgt. Jennifer Pineda's Filing

- Claimed:
 - Fear of retaliation
 - Accusations she staged the incident
 - Mishandled investigations
 - Destruction of evidence
- Requested DNA testing to clear her name.

Other Whistleblower Complaints (At least five)

- Alleged:
 - Retaliation for reporting misconduct
 - A culture of fear
 - High-ranking officers interfering with investigations
 - Mistrust in the Inspector General system

Maj. Dan Woodside's Statements

- Claimed leadership:
 - Protected someone involved
 - Destroyed evidence
 - Failed to involve AFOSI
- Said rank-and-file members were not the problem — **leadership was.**

Policy & Procedural Changes After the Scandal

1. Leadership Overhaul

- Removal of Maj. Gen. Clay Garrison signaled a **major accountability shift.**
- Brig. Gen. Gregory Jones installed as new commander.

2. Third-Party Investigation (USAF Inspector General)

- California Military Department requested a **full IG investigation** after LA Times reporting.
- Intended to bypass compromised internal processes.

3. Post-2016 Rules Strengthened Sexual-Harassment & Misconduct Response

- New Air Force rules (2016) made similar incidents **higher-severity offenses**, requiring:
 - AFOSI involvement
 - More experienced investigators
 - Mandatory evidence preservation
- Although these rules came after the incident, they were cited as a **corrective measure.**

4. Increased Scrutiny of Inspector General System

- Whistleblower complaints forced review of IG processes at the 144th FW.
- Public pressure led to reforms in how complaints are handled statewide. *(Inferred from multiple sources describing mistrust and retaliation; no single article details the exact reforms.)*