

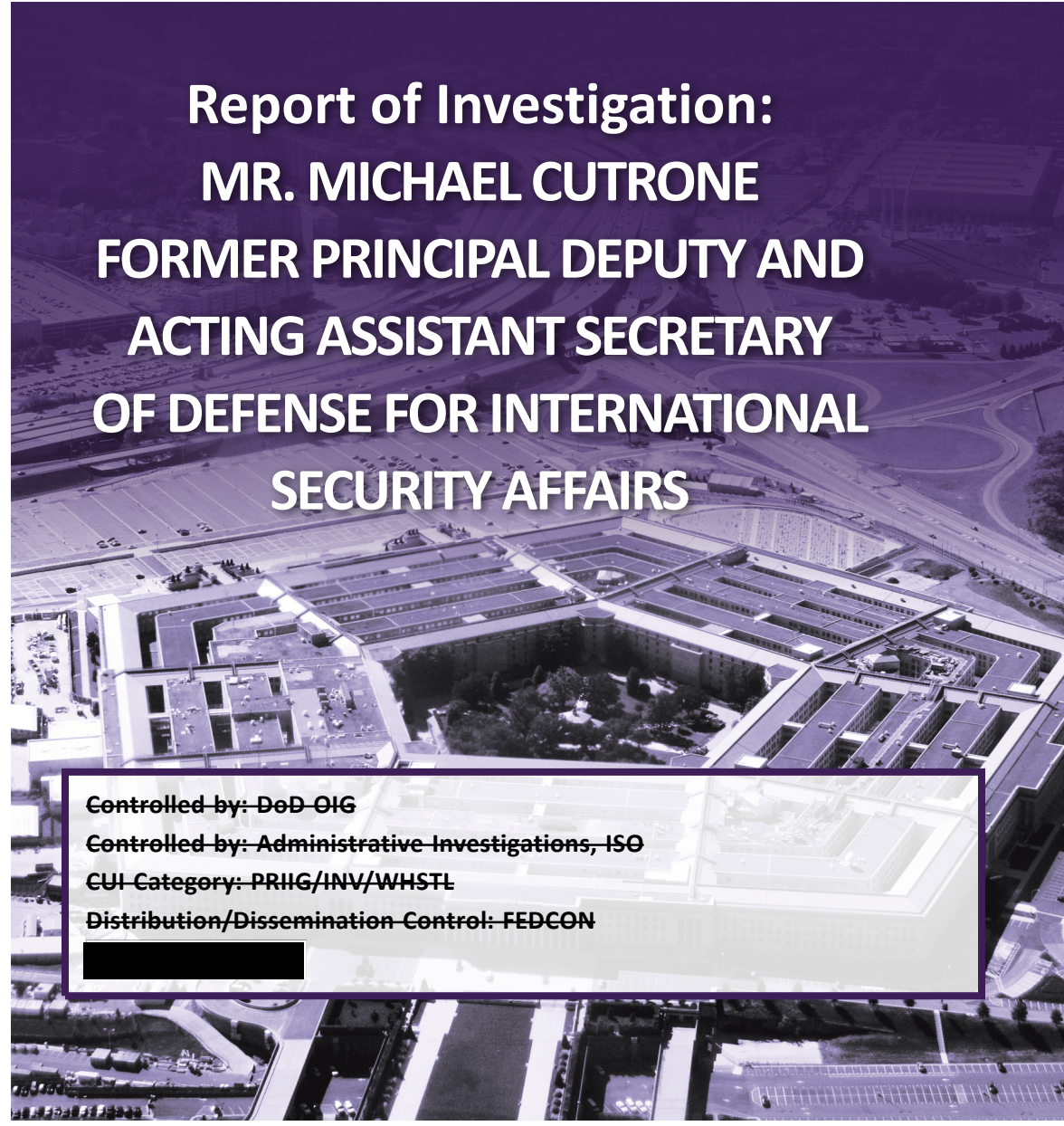
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INSPECTOR GENERAL

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Report of Investigation: MR. MICHAEL CUTRONE FORMER PRINCIPAL DEPUTY AND ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

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REPORT OF INVESTIGATION: MR. MICHAEL CUTRONE FORMER PRINCIPAL DEPUTY AND ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

Introduction and Summary

Complaint Origin and Allegations

The DoD Hotline received a complaint against Mr. Michael Cutrone, former Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (ASD[ISA]) on December 15, 2020. The Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (OUSD[P]) referred two anonymous complaints against Mr. Cutrone to our office on December 17, 2020. In general, the complaints alleged that Mr. Cutrone's bullying and demeaning behavior towards his subordinates created an abusive and toxic work environment.

The DoD Office of Inspector General (DoD OIG) initiated an investigation on February 22, 2021, into the allegation that Mr. Cutrone fostered a negative work environment and failed to treat subordinates with dignity and respect by disparaging and demeaning them. During the course of our investigation, we also examined an allegation that Mr. Cutrone consumed alcohol in the Pentagon without written authorization.

We evaluated the conduct against the standards summarized throughout this report. We present the applicable standards in Appendix A.

Scope and Methodology of the Investigation

During our investigation, we interviewed 32 witnesses who worked in the ASD(ISA) office, had direct interaction with Mr. Cutrone, or had information relevant to the allegations. We also interviewed Mr. Cutrone. In addition, we reviewed applicable standards, official e-mails from Mr. Cutrone and several current and former ASD(ISA) subordinates, and official records, including memorandums, personnel files, and performance evaluations.¹

Although Mr. Cutrone left Government service on January 14, 2021, we completed our investigation consistent with our standard practice.

¹ In our review of Mr. Cutrone's official e-mails, we did not find messages or documents related to Mr. Cutrone's behavior and treatment described in this report.

Conclusions

Failing to Treat Subordinates with Dignity and Respect and Creating an Intimidating, Hostile, or Offensive Work Environment

We concluded that Mr. Cutrone failed to treat subordinates with dignity and respect and that he engaged in harassment that adversely affected the work environment through the creation of a hostile work environment. We considered DoD 5500.7-R, “Joint Ethics Regulation (JER),” which states that ethics are “standards by which one should act based on values” and requires DoD employees to treat others with courtesy, kindness, respect, and dignity.² We also considered DoD Instruction 1020.04, “Harassment Prevention and Responses for DoD Civilian Employees,” June 30, 2020, which states that the DoD will not tolerate or condone harassment that adversely affects the work environment, erodes organizational cohesiveness, or is fundamentally at odds with the obligation to treat others with dignity and respect.³ Additionally, we considered section 3.1 of the Instruction, which prohibits behavior that is offensive to a reasonable person or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.⁴ The Instruction also prohibits, among other harassing behaviors, ridicule or mockery, insults or put-downs, offensive non-verbal gestures, intimidating acts, and derogatory remarks about a person’s accent or disability.⁵

An overwhelming majority of the subordinates we interviewed provided specific examples of Mr. Cutrone’s actions or behaviors that they said negatively affected the work environment in the ASD(ISA) office. Mr. Cutrone did not deny his conduct in many of the incidents, but instead told us that he could not recall the incidents as described by witnesses. We found Mr. Cutrone’s explanations of his own conduct and responses to our questions insufficient to justify the repeated and extensive pattern of conduct described by numerous witnesses. Although Mr. Cutrone asserted that he intended to lead well, he also acknowledged that he had fallen short in numerous areas. He also admitted that he could have done a better job making sure his subordinates felt respected and recognizing how they perceived his interactions with them.

We determined that Mr. Cutrone’s harassing behavior was not limited to a single incident, but instead was a repeated, recurring, unwelcome, and offensive course of conduct. His behavior, evaluated under the totality of the circumstances, adversely affected the work environment of his subordinates. As a result, some subordinates tried to avoid him and avoid being “Cutrone’d.” Subordinates with decades of experience in the DoD described Mr. Cutrone as the most toxic boss they ever worked for and someone who poisoned self-confidence, created divisions, and was loathed and despised by his workforce. His leadership style also caused

² DoD 5500.7-R, “Joint Ethics Regulation (JER),” August 30, 1993 (Incorporating Changes 1-7, November 17, 2011), Chapter 12, Section 4, Paragraph 12-401, “Primary Ethical Values.”

³ DoD Instruction 1020.04, Section 1.2, “Policy,” paragraph a.

⁴ DoD Instruction 1020.04, Section 3.1, “Harassment Adversely Affecting the Work Environment.”

⁵ DoD Instruction 1020.04, Section 3.2, “Prohibited Harassment Behaviors.”

some of his subordinates to consider leaving their jobs. Accordingly, we also concluded that Mr. Cutrone's actions towards his subordinates, throughout his 8-month tenure, negatively impacted readiness, mission accomplishment, trust, and organizational cohesion within the ASD(ISA) office and created an intimidating, hostile, and offensive work environment.

Consuming Alcoholic Beverages in the Pentagon Without Written Authorization

We concluded that Mr. Cutrone consumed alcoholic beverages with his subordinates in the Pentagon without written authorization. We considered title 32 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) section 234.11 and a Washington Headquarters Services (WHS) memorandum, which require written authorization by the WHS Director for the consumption of alcoholic beverages or the possession of an open container of an alcoholic beverage within the Pentagon.⁶ We found no written authorization permitting Mr. Cutrone or his subordinates to consume alcohol in the Pentagon.

Mr. Cutrone's Response to Our Conclusions

We provided Mr. Cutrone our tentative conclusions on January 23, 2023, for his review and comment before finalizing our report. On February 13, 2023, Mr. Cutrone, through his attorneys, provided us with a response to our tentative conclusions. In his response, Mr. Cutrone requested that this report of investigation be exempted from public release and that the DoD OIG reexamine evidence and adjust portions of the preliminary report of investigation. We carefully considered Mr. Cutrone's comments on our tentative conclusions, reexamined our evidence, modified our report where applicable and appropriate, and included his comments, in part, throughout this report.

Mr. Cutrone disagreed with our conclusions on his failure to treat subordinates with dignity and respect and creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment. Mr. Cutrone attributed his disagreement to his belief that the DoD OIG failed "to understand and consider the appropriate context of the [ASD(ISA)] working environment" and the time that it took to complete the investigation. He also asserted that the DoD OIG provided minimal detail and clarification during the interview.

Mr. Cutrone acknowledged that our findings and conclusions on his possession and consumption of alcohol with his subordinates were accurate. However, he stated that he believed at the time that consuming alcohol in the Pentagon was permitted. Mr. Cutrone also asserted that his failure to obtain permission was simply a misunderstanding of a policy. He said that this policy was not clearly provided to him during the reduced onboarding process that occurred at the Pentagon during the pandemic.

⁶ WHS Memorandum, "Control of Alcoholic Beverages on the Pentagon Reservation and in Leased Facilities in the National Capital Region (NCR)," July 29, 2016.

We also considered Mr. Cutrone’s request for this report of investigation to be exempted from public release. Among considerations such as the Freedom of Information Act and in accordance with IG Instruction 7000.02, “Public Release of Reports,” October 21, 2021, the DoD OIG must consider whether “public interest in the public disclosure outweighs any protectable privacy interest of any persons identified in the report.” In reviewing Mr. Cutrone’s request, we considered the factors for and against public release. However, substantiated misconduct by senior officials favors disclosure and, in accordance with our Instruction, we determined that public interest in the disclosure of the misconduct of senior officials in this case outweighed the privacy interest expressed by Mr. Cutrone. Accordingly, we determined that the public release of this report is appropriate.

Detailed Results of Our Investigation

The following sections of this report provide the detailed results of our investigation. We first provide background information on Mr. Cutrone and information on the ASD(ISA). We then discuss the complaints, facts, and analysis underlying our conclusions. Next, we discuss our overall conclusions and recommendations.⁷

⁷ We based our conclusions on a preponderance of the evidence, consistent with our normal process in administrative investigations.

Background

Mr. Michael Cutrone

Mr. Cutrone began his career as an intelligence officer with the Central Intelligence Agency in May 2006. He subsequently served in a wide variety of intelligence assignments, including serving as a political analyst covering issues of political instability, counterinsurgency, and counterterrorism, and serving as the Vice President's Special Advisor for South and Central Asia and for the Middle East and North Africa.

Mr. Cutrone became the Principal Deputy ASD(ISA) on May 24, 2020. He became the Acting ASD(ISA) on September 1, 2020, and resigned on January 14, 2021.

Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs

The ASD(ISA) is the principal advisor to the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (USD[P]) and the Secretary of Defense on international security strategy and policy on issues that relate to Europe (including the North Atlantic Treaty Organization), the Middle East, and Africa. The ASD(ISA) also provides oversight of security cooperation programs and foreign military sales programs in these regions. As the Principal Deputy and the Acting ASD(ISA), Mr. Cutrone supervised the Deputy Assistant Secretaries of Defense for African Affairs; Europe and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization; the Middle East; Russia, Ukraine, and Eurasia; the Western Hemisphere; and the Defeat-ISIS Task Force. During the events described in this report, the ASD(ISA) office had approximately 200 staff members, including civil servants, political appointees, military officers, and contractors.

Analysis of the Allegations

Chronology of Significant Events

The following table lists the significant events related to this investigation.

Table. Chronology of Significant Events

Date	Event
May 24, 2020	Mr. Cutrone begins duty as the Principal Deputy ASD(ISA).
Sept. 1, 2020	Mr. Cutrone begins duty as the Acting ASD(ISA).
Dec. 15, 2020	The DoD Hotline receives a complaint against Mr. Cutrone.
Dec. 17, 2020	The USD(P) refers two anonymous complaints against Mr. Cutrone to the DoD OIG.
Jan. 14, 2021	Mr. Cutrone resigns from Government service.
Feb. 22, 2021	The DoD OIG initiates this investigation.

Source: The DoD OIG.

A. Alleged Failure to Treat Subordinates with Dignity and Respect and Creation of an Intimidating, Hostile, or Offensive Work Environment

The DoD Hotline received a complaint on December 15, 2020, alleging that Mr. Cutrone “made two employees cry, berated and yelled at his employees.” The USD(P) also referred two anonymous complaints against Mr. Cutrone to the DoD OIG on December 17, 2021, alleging that Mr. Cutrone “verbally abused” and “criticized employees in a disrespectful way,” and bragged about “bullying” subordinates. The complaints also alleged that Mr. Cutrone “made two female employees cry.”

As of September 14, 2020, Mr. Cutrone supervised an organization of approximately 120 military, civilian, and contractor employees. We focused our investigation on interviewing witnesses who interacted with Mr. Cutrone or directly observed his behavior as it related to the allegations. Those witnesses provided us with the names of other witnesses who they believed had information relevant to our investigation. In total, we interviewed 31 ASD(ISA) employees who worked with Mr. Cutrone. We also interviewed an additional witness who had limited interaction with Mr. Cutrone during an overseas engagement.

We asked the 31 ASD(ISA) witnesses to describe the work environment under Mr. Cutrone’s leadership and to describe how Mr. Cutrone treated them and other subordinates. We also asked the witnesses if Mr. Cutrone yelled, used profanity, made subordinates cry, demeaned subordinates, or made disparaging remarks.

Mr. Cutrone's subordinates provided favorable and unfavorable comments about his leadership. In the next two sections, we describe their comments and list a few examples. We also list additional examples and witness statements in Appendix B.

Favorable Comments Regarding Mr. Cutrone's Leadership

Of the 31 ASD(ISA) witnesses we interviewed, 4 used positive terms about aspects of Mr. Cutrone's leadership, comprising:

- very direct,
- friendly,
- intelligent,
- ambitious,
- charismatic,
- energetic,
- hard working,
- highly articulate,
- having good insights into people, and
- a mentor.

Unfavorable Comments Regarding Mr. Cutrone's Leadership

All 31 ASD(ISA) witnesses we interviewed viewed Mr. Cutrone's leadership negatively, including the 4 witnesses mentioned above. The witnesses provided us with a variety of examples that we set forth below and in Appendix B. Collectively, they described him with words and phrases, such as:

- micromanager,
- too stern and too harsh,
- combative,
- was not ready to be a leader,
- toxic,
- bully,
- huge temper,
- overly abrasive,
- overly confrontational, and
- unprofessional.

The following are examples of the witnesses' negative comments.

- “Mr. Cutrone had a huge temper ... it was very common for him to fly off the handle and get heated if he didn't like the way something was going in a way that I thought was inappropriate.”
- “Very Jekyll and Hyde. Like he would either be extremely hot and forceful and angry, or he would be almost like trying to befriend you.”
- “He was an emotional roller coaster. You never knew what mood he was going to be in. He would raise his voice regularly.”

During our interviews, witnesses provided numerous examples of Mr. Cutrone's treatment of subordinates. In the following sections, we summarize instances in which witnesses described Mr. Cutrone yelling, using profanity, and making subordinates cry. We also summarize a few incidents described by witnesses in which Mr. Cutrone disregarded the office's coronavirus disease-2019 (COVID-19) pandemic policies. Additionally, we summarize the impact Mr. Cutrone's leadership had on his subordinates and the ASD(ISA) work environment. We provide additional examples in Appendix B.

Yelling and Using Profanity

Ten witnesses told us that Mr. Cutrone either yelled at them directly or that they witnessed Mr. Cutrone yell at other subordinates. Some of the witnesses characterized Mr. Cutrone's tone as “loud,” “confrontational,” “accusatory,” or “agitated.” One witness, [REDACTED], told us:

There were just, like, regular [confrontational] occurrences And there were plenty of times on the TANDBERG when he would yell at people.⁸ He would claim that he wasn't yelling, but he absolutely was yelling.

Eighteen witnesses told us that they personally heard Mr. Cutrone use profanity, including the “F” word. We list the following examples they provided to us.

- “We're going to go get a f**king coffee.”
- “What the f**k, man?”
- “Why is there a f**king comma there?”
- “This is f**king s**t.”
- “I don't care about their f**king view.”
- “Get the f**king schedule request up now.”

⁸ TANDBERG refers to a video call using TANDBERG video conferencing equipment.

One witness gave us an example when Mr. Cutrone scolded the witness for a “lack of protocol” after the witness contacted a senior political appointee to confirm the appointee’s attendance with Mr. Cutrone at a pending congressional hearing. The witness told us that Mr. Cutrone called the witness into his office and stated, “Are you f**king stupid? You are an action officer. You don’t f**king contact the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs directly.”

Mr. Cutrone’s Comments on Using Profanity

When we asked Mr. Cutrone to describe his use of profanity, Mr. Cutrone told us that he did curse, he used the word “s**t” the most in his conversations, his subordinates said that his use of profanity was okay, and they did not have an issue with it. “I did not take away or ever sort of suspect a concern or discomfort. If I had, I would have immediately pulled back.” Mr. Cutrone also told us that he “should have minimized” his use of profanity and that his use was an “error of judgment.”

Mr. Cutrone also told us that he did not recall scolding a subordinate for a lack of protocol for contacting a senior political appointee. He did not recall asking the witness, “Are you f**king stupid?” He explained, “[H]onestly if someone had spoken to me that way, I would feel the same way. I never intended for a negative or hostile engagement with my team, and the last thing I ever wanted to do was make them feel demeaned.”

Mr. Cutrone asserted, in his response to our tentative conclusions, that he did not and would not use language such as “are you f**king stupid?” when engaging with the subordinate. He added that he “did not personally attack or use abusive or profane language” toward the subordinate. He also asserted that, instead, he provided feedback about the communication “error” and lack of protocol. He added that he generally thought highly of the subordinate and that he strongly advocated for the subordinate’s career advancement.

Making Subordinates Cry

Thirteen witnesses told us that Mr. Cutrone caused them or others to cry, become emotional, or hold back tears. In one instance, a witness said that Mr. Cutrone bragged about how a subordinate was afraid of him and that they thought Mr. Cutrone made that subordinate cry. We present details of four of the crying instances relayed to us by the witnesses or [REDACTED].

One witness told us about a conversation they had with Mr. Cutrone, who was requesting feedback about a meeting that had not yet taken place. The subordinate stated that they informed Mr. Cutrone that the meeting had not taken place, but Mr. Cutrone continued to direct them to provide feedback. The subordinate said that they tried again to explain that the meeting was in a different time zone and had not yet occurred, but Mr. Cutrone abruptly cut them off, stating, “I’m not asking you, I’m telling you [to give me the feedback].” The witness told us that they cried after their interaction with Mr. Cutrone and felt belittled,

demeaned, embarrassed, and as if they were being treated as a small child. [REDACTED] who had worked in the OUSD(P) for more than [REDACTED] years, told us that they could not remember the specifics because these types of interactions with Mr. Cutrone happened so frequently and that “it all runs together at the end of the day.”

A second witness described a crying incident that occurred in Mr. Cutrone’s office. The witness said that they were in a preparatory meeting with Mr. Cutrone for an upcoming congressional hearing. The witness told us that Mr. Cutrone “viciously” and “unfairly” berated them for the quality of their work for the upcoming hearing. The witness told us that they started crying and were crying when they left his office.

A third subordinate told us that they cried after Mr. Cutrone threatened to punish them and another subordinate for coordinating arrangements for their supervisor to accompany the Deputy Secretary of Defense on official travel. According to [REDACTED] Mr. Cutrone wanted to punish the two subordinates for coordinating directly with the Deputy Secretary’s travel team, and Mr. Cutrone stated, “This is how I’m punishing them for them not being good action officers.” [REDACTED] described that coordinating arrangements was a completely common occurrence and further described Mr. Cutrone’s response as part of the “delusional world he lives in” for wanting to punish subordinates for completely normal activities.

In addition to the incidents cited above, each of the three witnesses who cried during or after interacting with Mr. Cutrone had other negative interactions with him. They described Mr. Cutrone as showing frustration and described these interactions and Mr. Cutrone’s behavior as combative or rude. We discuss these negative interactions in greater detail in the Demeaning Treatment and Disparaging Remarks section of Appendix B.

A fourth [REDACTED] also described an incident in which Mr. Cutrone caused the subordinate to cry. [REDACTED] told us that the subordinate prepared talking points for an upcoming meeting with a foreign dignitary. [REDACTED] explained that Mr. Cutrone asked followup questions about the talking points and became angry and hostile because he did not like the subordinate’s responses. [REDACTED], who did not witness the incident, told us that after the incident, the subordinate came to their office and relayed the exchange. [REDACTED] stated that the subordinate “was very shaken up and started crying” because they thought they were going to be fired.⁹

Mr. Cutrone’s Comments on Making Subordinates Cry

Mr. Cutrone characterized his interactions with the fourth subordinate described above, who cried after their interaction with Mr. Cutrone, as providing “constructive feedback.” Mr. Cutrone told us that when [REDACTED] confronted him about the incident, he was

⁹ The DoD OIG attempted to interview the subordinate and obtain their testimony regarding this incident. However, after multiple attempts for an interview and having scheduled the interview, the witness cancelled it at the last minute and did not respond to additional requests for an interview.

surprised that the subordinate cried because he was just providing “fairly straightforward feedback.” He also told us that after speaking with [REDACTED], they set up another engagement with the subordinate. Mr. Cutrone stated, “We had a really good back and forth ... [They] got positive feedback ... the last thing I wanted to do was create a negative experience or work environment for [them], and I was trying actively to make sure that it was the opposite.”

Mr. Cutrone also told us about the subordinate who left the preparatory session in tears because of the way he treated them. Mr. Cutrone told us that they looked “teary” when they explained that [REDACTED]. He stated that he told the subordinate “[REDACTED].” When we asked Mr. Cutrone to address the comment in which he allegedly bragged about making another employee cry, Mr. Cutrone told us that he did not recall that conversation.

Mr. Cutrone asserted, in his response to our tentative conclusions, that what he meant by not recalling “a conversation where he allegedly bragged of making an employee cry” was that he did not believe that such a conversation occurred. Regarding the subordinate from whom Mr. Cutrone requested feedback for a future meeting, Mr. Cutrone indicated in his response to our tentative conclusions that he did not ask for feedback in the moment. He told us that he instructed the subordinate to provide feedback after the meeting occurred. He added that this was an “unfortunate instance where a subordinate negatively misconstrued a simple instruction.”

Mr. Cutrone’s Actions Related to the Pandemic

Three witnesses told us that they believed that Mr. Cutrone disregarded or dismissed safeguards set in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic. One witness told us that after arriving at a meeting with Mr. Cutrone and noticing that Mr. Cutrone was not wearing a mask, the witness, who was wearing a mask, selected a seat at the table at least 6 feet away from Mr. Cutrone. According to the witness, Mr. Cutrone told them that there was no need for social distancing, physically moving the witness’s chair closer to his, which, according to the witness, felt strange and awkward.¹⁰

Another witness, who sat in a different suite than Mr. Cutrone’s, explained, “We all didn’t want to be going down to that office and risking cross-exposure. But he would still make us come down and get packages and bring them up and bring them back down, even though we would also send electronic versions, so they could’ve just printed it out.”

A third witness told us, “I was on a TANDBERG ... he walked up right behind me. He was not wearing a mask, which was in violation of the office’s [COVID-19 safety policies]. He came pretty close to me, definitely much closer than 6 feet, which, again, [was] a violation of

¹⁰ According to the witness, this incident happened while Mr. Cutrone was the Principal Deputy ASD(ISA), and during this period, mask wearing and social distancing were required pandemic-related protocols.

[COVID-19 safety policies].” This witness also described how Mr. Cutrone once got very close to them and, using a stark tone, told them that he would remove his mask to show them how mad he was. The witness told us that Mr. Cutrone proceeded to take off his mask, stared at them for approximately 3-5 seconds, and then put the mask back on and walked into the meeting.

Mr. Cutrone’s Comments on Actions Related to the Pandemic

Mr. Cutrone told us that the COVID-19 safety protocols were already in place when he arrived at the Pentagon and were always changing during his tenure. He told us that he let the different Deputy Assistant Secretaries of Defense (DASD) determine their comfort level regarding the wearing of masks and enforcing social distancing guidelines for their subordinates. He stated that when people came to his office, he would ask them if they were comfortable not wearing a mask. Mr. Cutrone explained that it was hard to understand if he or they were wearing masks because [REDACTED]. He told us that no one objected to him asking the question about wearing masks, and if they said that they wanted him to wear a mask, he put a mask on. He told us, “I always went with what I called sort of the lowest common denominator whatever ... made people the most comfortable, that was what I went with.”

Mr. Cutrone told us that he did not recall the specific incident of moving the chair of a subordinate closer to him after indicating there was no need to maintain social distancing, but he did state, “I tried to keep my distance from folks.” Mr. Cutrone also told us that he did not recall pulling down his mask in front of a subordinate after exclaiming, “Let me show you how angry I am.” He explained that masks made it hard to understand verbal and nonverbal cues. He also stated, “[I]f I did that, that was a poor judgment call on my part.” Mr. Cutrone further explained that they tried to do the best they could under very unclear and fluctuating guidelines to ensure they built a strong culture, had a successful mission, were mission-focused, and took care of their team.

Mr. Cutrone asserted, in his response to our tentative conclusions, that this section inaccurately implied that he lacked concern for the safety of the workforce. However, three witnesses described to us how his behavior and actions regarding the COVID-19 safety protocols negatively impacted their working environment.

Impact of Mr. Cutrone’s Leadership on His Subordinates

Twenty-one witnesses identified Mr. Cutrone’s actions as having contributed to the low morale of the ASD(ISA) staff and to the hostile work environment there. Three witnesses told us that they wanted to quit or would quit if Mr. Cutrone remained in his current position after the change in administration. Six witnesses told us that they tried to avoid contact with Mr. Cutrone during his tenure. One witness with more than [REDACTED] years of [REDACTED]

DoD service told us, “I will say he is the most toxic boss I have worked for.” According to the witness, their office turned Mr. Cutrone’s name into a verb, describing his demeaning treatment as “getting Cutrone’d.” The witness explained:

So when you got called up to his front office to have it explained to you how you had screwed up, or not followed his directions in some particular way, you know, and you would, you would get harangued, and he would have a very belligerent tone, and he would repeat the same thing over and over, do you understand, do you understand? You know, and it was just, it was rattling. The door’s open. The whole front office team hears you.

The witness also said that Mr. Cutrone created distrust in the organization between people and that he “poisoned people’s self-confidence, and he created divisions and friction between people in the organization that [the witness had] never seen before.” The witness felt that Mr. Cutrone created a “hostile work environment.”

Another witness, with almost [REDACTED] years of experience in the DoD and experience [REDACTED], told us about their observations of Mr. Cutrone’s behaviors. The witness, [REDACTED], told us, “We had to close the door because Michael [Cutrone] would constantly talk trash about other employees.” The witness told us that the suite doors were normally kept open. The witness stated:

“He would dive bomb the TANDBERG because they call us on video teleconference. And so he would come flying out of his office and very aggressively, very confrontationally would engage [his subordinates] on the TANDBERG. [...] So pretty soon people stopped calling us because they were afraid that, you know, [Mr. Cutrone] was going to confront them about whatever they were calling.

The witness also told us about Mr. Cutrone’s last day in the office. They said, “I have never seen such an almost like collective relief from the organization, and then after he was gone, I have never seen a boss so loathed and despised by his people.”

While testimonial evidence showed that Mr. Cutrone questioned staff about work product quality and timeliness, we found that witnesses described conduct by Mr. Cutrone and the impact of his leadership on his subordinates that went far beyond the norm, as indicted below and in Appendix B.

- Mr. Cutrone called a DASD who worked for him “incompetent” in front of the DASD’s subordinates.
- “I felt like his commentary about my supervisor was publicly denigrating, because there were a whole bunch of, you know, personnel from that front office around him at that point in time.”

- “Our team faces his abuse every day, and [we] are exhausted by it. No matter how hard we try, he will find something to criticize in a disrespectful way, and it is damaging people’s emotional health, not to mention the office productivity, as we bend ourselves in knots trying to determine the formulation of language that will not in some way raise the ire of [M]r. Cutrone.”
- “The thing that bothered me the most was he started a culture of gossip. I mean, he would—every time I brought a package in, he would ask me, like, if the [action officer was] any good”
- “Cumulatively, over time, when you’re constantly having to redo and redo work for what staff perceived as, you know, no critical reason, it takes a negative toll on morale because you feel that your work is not respected, and it just seems to be ego-driven”
- “It took a very significant emotional toll to be motivated to do—to work for very long hours for people that you—that are verbally—can be verbally cruel, who don’t necessarily appreciate your work. Yeah, so, I would say it was hard to motivate myself to continue to do good work for the Department when Michael [Cutrone] was there.”
- “It, it always just felt accusatory. It was always—it always felt disrespectful. I’ve never really been spoken to that way. I have never had a job where I was so miserable and depressed all the time, as when I was working for him. I basically didn’t feel valued at all. I felt very disrespected. I’ve never been in a position where I flat-out just wanted to quit by walking out of a place of work. But that’s, that’s where I got, in those last few months when he was—when he was in charge. And yeah, I, I can only say it was just—it just was hostile and disrespectful.”

Mr. Cutrone’s Comments on the Impact of His Leadership on His Subordinates

Mr. Cutrone told us that he had a three-pronged leadership goal for his time at the ASD(ISA) office: “to do the right thing, to do your best, and to treat each other well.” When we asked Mr. Cutrone to describe how he treated his subordinates during his tenure, he told us, “I tried to build a strong team. I tried to do good by people. [...] I tried to be a strong and supportive boss.” Mr. Cutrone told us that he previously led small teams, but he never led a team “of the size and scope” of the ASD(ISA) office, and it was never his intention to have “any sort of hostile or negative” work environment. Mr. Cutrone explained, “Do I think that I engaged every time the best and the right way? Probably not.” He told us:

If I ever showed frustration, that was never my intent. I always tried to just be a strong collegial team member. I really did not—like I tried to engage my team the best as possible. I did show frustration on occasions as we discussed but that was not—that was a combination I think of not having a full team,

struggling with the bandwidth, and that is not something that I want to do or aim to do, and I'm sorry that I ever made people feel on edge and uncertain about what kind of engagement they were going to get

Mr. Cutrone told us that he was not aware of any individual who left the ASD(ISA) office because of his actions or because of a discussion with him.

Mr. Cutrone asserted, in his response to our tentative conclusions, that his requests for work to be redone were due to his high standards for the work required of him and the information he provided to his leadership. He further indicated that some packages did not meet his expectations. Mr. Cutrone added that "while some subordinates felt they were being asked to redo the same work, for reasons attributed to [my] ego, there was frequently a repeated failure to address the questions and material requested, which would require the subject matter experts to rework portions of the packages." Mr. Cutrone also stated that having work redone was not because of his ego or a lack of respect.

Mr. Cutrone's Comments on Treating Subordinates with Dignity and Respect and Creating an Intimidating, Hostile, or Offensive Work Environment

When we asked Mr. Cutrone to respond to the overall allegation that he failed to treat his subordinates with dignity and respect, he told us:

I would say that I tried to do my best. I tried to do the right thing. I tried to treat people well. I tried to give them strong and supportive, constructive feedback. I tried to engage them to help them and our office as much as possible. I never intended to create any sort of negative or hostile workplace.

Mr. Cutrone acknowledged that he may not have handled interactions with his subordinates in the best manner. He said, "Never did I intend for people to perceive these things in a negative way, and I'm truly sorry for anyone that I did make feel less." Mr. Cutrone added:

I came to the Pentagon, as I said before, with the best of intentions, and I repeatedly highlighted that when I would talk to or send notes to my team about how I wanted us to do the right thing, do the best possible, and treat each other well.

Mr. Cutrone told us that he did not intend to create a negative or hostile work environment and apologized if his actions and comments created that perception. He stated, "That is definitely something that I will take with me moving forward in any engagement I have as a leader and as a subordinate in understanding sort of what there is and how people are perceiving each engagement.

Mr. Cutrone told us that the ASD(ISA)'s work products lacked timeliness, accuracy, and thoroughness. Due to the type of errors he noticed, he believed the staff was careless. For example, he told us that his staff would often copy and paste material from old work

products, which he noticed included dates citing the wrong year. He added that he frequently made the same changes and corrections repeatedly while reviewing different work products every night. He told us that he made comments to his staff, such as, “Oh, this is careless. This is crap or whatever,” which he told us that he should have kept to himself.

Mr. Cutrone explained how some of his comments or actions in interrupting or cutting people off might have demeaned the ASD(ISA) workforce. Regarding interrupting subordinates or not letting them finish, Mr. Cutrone stated:

I do think that I have learned over time to let people finish, to let people complete their argument, their statements, etcetera, etcetera, rather than just jumping in and redirecting the conversation. I think that at the time I did interrupt more, and I did ask those kinds of questions in the middle of a statement because I was trying to do a lot of things and was trying to sort of, in my mind, be more efficient with the time that we had because there was so much to do, but a better style both for making the team feel valued and heard would have been to be a little more stand back and let them complete those things. I think this goes back to the point that I made earlier about sort of ISA was a large portfolio, and while I had team leadership experiences before, none so big, none so massive and expansive, and I was learning how to be a leader. I definitely learned a lot during my time in ISA about how to do these things and I wished that I had been—had those experiences prior to being in ISA so I could have been a better teammate to the folks there.

Mr. Cutrone also acknowledged his tendency to “dive bomb” the conversations on the TANDBERG. He told us that because his front office setup was similar to a bullpen, he sometimes interjected in subordinates’ conversations when he passed by their workspace or when he sat nearby. He stated:

And unfortunately, and this is uh I think a cultural thing, whereas at my previous organizations, everyone would of just continued to weigh into the conversation in a, as equal participants. At the Pentagon, because of my position, people deferred and let me sort of play a larger role in those conversations, and really I should have just not been part of—I should have just not engaged, and I should have just let my team do what they were doing.

Mr. Cutrone told us that he tried to engage his subordinates and build rapport with them. However, he told us that he never fully understood why his subordinates were all so nervous because in his mind they were “all part of the team trying to drive toward the same outcome.” He said that when he engaged with them, “they didn’t see Michael the teammate, they saw Michael the ISA front office.”

We asked him to clarify what he meant by not understanding why his subordinates were all so nervous. He responded that a better way to word it was that it felt unnecessary for his subordinates to be nervous. He added that he felt his subordinates were rigid and on edge when he tried to have personal interactions with them and believed there were reasons for this behavior. He attributed this to the repeated and unexplained turnover within ASD(ISA)

leadership, which created a climate that permeated the whole place. He also attributed it to articles that were written about him that mentioned he “was coming to the Pentagon to get rid of civil servants.” He stated:

And frankly not true. I was a career civil servant myself. I spent a lot of years serving in the U.S. Government. I wanted good work to be done. I cared about the mission, but things like that influenced and sort of created apprehension and concern for people who didn't know me.

We asked Mr. Cutrone to respond to the perception that he did not trust his subordinates, and he responded that he understood how that was the impression or perception; however, it was not the reality. For example, he understood that joining the TANDBERG conversations might have implied to his subordinates, or the individuals on the other side of the call, that he did not trust them or was not capable of delegating. He stated that his lack of experience in leading a large organization might have contributed to the perception, but “it was not that I didn't trust my team.” He said, “I would like to think that with more time, I would have figured that out, and I would have gotten better about that.”

Mr. Cutrone told us, “I could have done a better job about stopping and recognizing how each engagement or interaction was being perceived by the person on the other end.” He also told us, “I could have done a better job about putting myself in the shoes of my team members and making sure that they felt the way that—that they felt the respect that I had for the effort that they put in place. And that's a failure on my part.”

Mr. Cutrone told us that he could not recall the “I'm sure that kid got beat up in school a lot” comment, but he did state, “I will say at least if you're describing sort of this sounds like briefings that I would do with the Hill and other places where I'd be on mute and frankly nervous during my briefings.¹¹ So sometimes I probably made an offhand comment just to like reduce my own pressure, but once again if I said anything like that I should not have and I should have—I should have just kept my mouth shut and been a better role model for my team.”

Mr. Cutrone also did not recall calling a DASD or any subordinate “incompetent.” He stated, “I don't think I ever used the word incompetent. I think I did say that [the DASD] was in over [the DASD's] head” and that they all needed to work together for the best outcome possible. He told us that he would comment about the office needing to improve and that everyone had the ability and the potential to improve. He also stated that he wanted the workforce “to be the best that we can.”

¹¹ This quote is referenced in Appendix B with examples and witness statements on Mr. Cutrone's demeaning treatment of subordinates and disparaging remarks in front of or about subordinates.

Conclusions on Failing to Treat Subordinates with Dignity and Respect and Creating an Intimidating, Hostile, or Offensive Work Environment

We reviewed the JER, which requires that DoD employees be treated with courtesy, kindness, dignity, and respect.¹² We also reviewed DoD Instruction 1020.04, which establishes that the DoD will not tolerate or condone harassment that adversely affects the work environment, erodes organizational cohesiveness, or is fundamentally at odds with the obligation to treat others with dignity and respect. Additionally, the Instruction prohibits behavior that is offensive to a reasonable person or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment. Furthermore, the Instruction also prohibits, among other harassing behaviors, ridicule or mockery; insults or put-downs; offensive non-verbal gestures; intimidating acts; and derogatory remarks about a person's accent or disability. We concluded that Mr. Cutrone failed to treat subordinates with dignity and respect.

During a relatively short 8-month tenure at the ASD(ISA) office, Mr. Cutrone had a widespread negative impact on the work environment. Subordinates and their supervisors described numerous instances in which Mr. Cutrone was confrontational, made or caused subordinates to cry, and frequently yelled profanities. Additionally, Mr. Cutrone repeatedly denigrated his subordinates by describing them with words such as f**king stupid and incompetent.

We determined that Mr. Cutrone's harassing behavior was not limited to a single incident but instead was a course of conduct that was repeated, recurring, unwelcome, and offensive. His behavior, evaluated under the totality of the circumstances, adversely affected the work environment of his subordinates. As a result, some subordinates tried to avoid him and avoid being "Cutrone'd." His leadership style also caused multiple subordinates to consider leaving their positions. While we generally consider violations of COVID-19 safety protocols as matters of performance, Mr. Cutrone's failure to follow these protocols contributed to his negative leadership style. For instance, his failure to follow mask protocols by removing his mask in close proximity to a subordinate just to emphasize his anger, and in another instance, by physically moving a subordinate closer to him while not wearing a mask, contributed to his intimidating and negative impact on his subordinates.

Mr. Cutrone admitted that he could have done a better job making sure his subordinates felt respected and recognizing how they perceived his interactions with them. He also told us that he could not recall many of the incidents described to us by his subordinates. While he asserted that he intended to lead well, he also acknowledged that he had fallen short in numerous areas. We found that he had some insight at the time of our interview into how his actions could have negatively affected his subordinates and that he acknowledged the experience provided lessons for him on how to be a better leader in the future.

¹² DoD 5500.7-R, "Joint Ethics Regulation (JER)," August 30, 1993 (Incorporating Changes 1-7, November 17, 2011).

We considered Mr. Cutrone's explanations of his own conduct and responses to our questions and found them insufficient to justify the repeated and extensive pattern of conduct described by numerous witnesses. While Mr. Cutrone indicated that he felt that the work product of his subordinates was lacking, his conduct as detailed by multiple witnesses went well beyond what is acceptable in the workplace. When confronted with specific instances of his conduct, Mr. Cutrone was frequently unable to recall the details but offered possible scenarios to explain how people might have reached the conclusions they did, or he acknowledged that if that incident had occurred, he could understand why his subordinates felt the way they did. Additionally, Mr. Cutrone's statements to us that he used profanity in most of his conversations is consistent with his subordinates' testimony, and he acknowledged that his use of profanity was an error in judgement.

We found that the incidents described by subordinates appeared to have made a larger impression on them than Mr. Cutrone, making it more likely that they recalled the specific facts more accurately than Mr. Cutrone. Additionally, Mr. Cutrone did not deny his conduct in many of the incidents but instead told us that he could not recall those incidents. We similarly attributed great weight to subordinates with decades of experience in the DoD who described Mr. Cutrone as the most toxic boss they ever worked for, and someone who poisoned self-confidence, created divisions, and was loathed and despised by his workforce.

Accordingly, based on a preponderance of the evidence, we concluded that Mr. Cutrone failed to treat subordinates with dignity and respect in violation of ethical conduct and anti-harassment standards as outlined in the JER and DoD Instruction 1020.04. Mr. Cutrone's actions toward his subordinates negatively impacted the readiness, mission accomplishment, trust, and organizational cohesion within the ASD(ISA) office and also created an intimidating, hostile, and offensive work environment.

Mr. Cutrone's Response to Our Conclusions on Failing to Treat Subordinates with Dignity and Respect and Creating an Intimidating, Hostile, or Offensive Work Environment

As described previously in this report, Mr. Cutrone disagreed with our conclusions on his failure to treat subordinates with dignity and respect and creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment. Where applicable and appropriate, we modified our report based on his response. However, having fully considered Mr. Cutrone's responses, we stand by our conclusions that Mr. Cutrone failed to treat subordinates with dignity and respect and that he engaged in harassment that adversely affected the work environment through the creation of a hostile work environment.

B. Possession and Consumption of Alcohol in the Pentagon

During our investigation, we received an allegation that Mr. Cutrone drank alcohol in the Pentagon without written authorization. Three witnesses told us that Mr. Cutrone possessed and consumed alcohol in his office in the Pentagon. One witness told us that Mr. Cutrone stored beer in his office refrigerator and offered his front office staff a beer during duty hours, around noon. Another witness confirmed that Mr. Cutrone offered them a beer and recalled Mr. Cutrone making the same offer to three other front office subordinates “maybe, like, three times or something.” The witness also told us that they saw between one and two six-packs of beer in Mr. Cutrone’s refrigerator while they were restocking Mr. Cutrone’s refrigerator with water.

We asked the witnesses whether they were aware of any written authorization for the possession or consumption of alcohol either for the ASD(ISA) office or for Mr. Cutrone. Several witnesses told us that they believed there was a waiver or a letter.¹³ We contacted WHS Facilities Services and requested copies of any approved alcohol permits for the ASD(ISA) office, but WHS found no permits for Mr. Cutrone or his subordinates to consume alcohol in the Pentagon.

Mr. Cutrone’s Comments on Consuming Alcohol in the Pentagon

Mr. Cutrone told us that he stored a small amount of beer, up to 12 cans, in the small refrigerator in his office in the Pentagon. He told us that a member of his front office staff also stored a bottle of scotch in his office. Mr. Cutrone told us that “on a small number of occasions, I did have some of those beers with individuals” and said that they drank beers in the office about once a month. He told us that they normally drank the beer after “a really long day” after “business hours.”

Mr. Cutrone explained that during his in-processing when he arrived at the Pentagon, the previous Acting ASD and the OUSD(P) Chief Operating Officer (COO) told him that Senior Executive Service officials were allowed to permit alcohol in the office. Mr. Cutrone told us that he was unaware of any requirements to obtain written permission for the possession and consumption of alcohol in the Pentagon. He explained, “I think this was a misunderstanding of a policy as opposed to a desire to violate a policy.”

As the previous Acting ASD has departed Government service, we contacted the former OUSD(P) COO who remains in Government employ and asked him about Mr. Cutrone’s assertion that the former COO told Mr. Cutrone that Senior Executive Service officials

¹³ While we found no approved permits for the ASD(ISA) under Mr. Cutrone’s leadership, we found an approved alcohol permit for the OUSD(P) for a December 13, 2019 holiday party, the year before Mr. Cutrone joined the office.

could permit alcohol in their Pentagon offices. The former COO told us, “I don’t think I did. I wouldn’t do that. I would have told him how to get a [written alcohol authorization letter from WHS].”

Conclusions on Possessing and Consuming Alcohol in the Pentagon

We reviewed 32 CFR section 234.11 and a WHS memorandum, which outline the process to gain written approval to consume or possess an open container of alcohol in the Pentagon.¹⁴

Mr. Cutrone told us that he was under the mistaken belief that Senior Executive Service officials could authorize the consumption of alcohol in their offices in the Pentagon.

He also told us that he was unaware of the requirement for written authorization to consume alcohol or provide alcoholic beverages to his subordinates. The evidence established that he consumed alcohol in the office with his subordinates without written authorization.

Therefore, we concluded that Mr. Cutrone consumed alcohol with his subordinates in the Pentagon without written authorization.

Mr. Cutrone’s Response to Our Conclusions on Possessing and Consuming Alcohol in the Pentagon

In his response to our tentative conclusions, Mr. Cutrone acknowledged that he had taken beer to the office to thank his front office staff for their hard work “as part of an effort to build a good rapport and team dynamic.” Mr. Cutrone stated that he believed this was permitted and further stated that had he been informed by his supervisor or the OUSD(P) COO that he needed “written permission for the possession and consumption of alcohol at the Pentagon,” he “simply would have made these requests.”

After considering Mr. Cutrone’s response and reexamining our evidence, we stand by our conclusion that Mr. Cutrone possessed open containers of alcohol and consumed alcohol with his subordinates in the Pentagon. We also stand by our conclusion that he did so without the required written authorization.

¹⁴ WHS Memorandum, “Control of Alcoholic Beverages on the Pentagon Reservation and in Leased Facilities in the National Capital Region (NCR),” July 29, 2016. This memorandum states that the WHS Director delegates the authority to grant exemptions for the consumption of alcoholic beverages in assigned office space on the Pentagon Reservation and WHS-leased space in the National Capital Region to specified individuals or entities, which does not include Mr. Cutrone’s position or the individual in the position.

Overall Conclusions

We substantiated the allegations that Mr. Cutrone failed to treat subordinates with dignity and respect in violation of ethical conduct standards as outlined in the JER. Furthermore, we substantiated the allegations that Mr. Cutrone's behavior toward his subordinates was unwelcome or offensive to a reasonable person and that it interfered with their work performance and created an intimidating, hostile, and offensive work environment within the ASD(ISA) office that negatively impacted readiness, mission accomplishment, trust, and organizational cohesion in violation of DoD Instruction 1020.04.

Additionally, we substantiated the allegation that Mr. Cutrone consumed alcohol with his subordinates in the Pentagon without authorization.

Recommendations

Mr. Cutrone resigned from Government service.

Based on a number of recent substantiated allegations of misconduct by DoD senior officials involving possession or consumption of alcohol in DoD workspaces, we recommend that the Director, WHS, update, re-issue, and publicize the guidance contained in the 2016 memorandum, "Control of Alcoholic Beverages on the Pentagon Reservation and in Leased Facilities in the National Capital Region (NCR)."

Appendix A: Standards

DoD Instruction 1020.04, “Harassment Prevention and Responses for DoD Civilian Employees,” June 30, 2020

DoD Instruction 1020.04, Section 1.2, “Policy,” paragraph a, states that the DoD will “[n]ot tolerate or condone harassment, to include harassment that is not unlawful but adversely affects the work environment. Harassment jeopardizes combat readiness and mission accomplishment, weakens trust, and erodes organizational cohesion. Harassment is fundamentally at odds with the obligations of Service members and DoD civilian employees to treat others with dignity and respect.”

Section 3, “Prohibited Harassment”

Section 3.1, “Harassment Adversely Affecting the Work Environment”

Section 3.1 discusses harassment adversely affecting the work environment. The conduct prohibited by this policy includes, but is broader than, the legal definitions of harassment and sexual harassment. Behavior that is unwelcome or offensive to a reasonable person and that interferes with work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment is prohibited. All allegations of harassment must be evaluated under the totality of the circumstances, including an assessment of the nature of the conduct and the context in which the conduct occurred. In some circumstances, a single incident of harassing behavior is prohibited harassment whereas, in other circumstances, repeated or recurring harassing behavior may be required to constitute prohibited harassment.

Section 3.2, “Prohibited Harassment Behaviors”

- a. Harassing behavior may include:
 - (1) Unwanted physical contact.
 - (2) Offensive jokes.
 - (3) Epithets or name-calling.
 - (4) Ridicule or mockery.
 - (5) Insults or put-downs.
 - (6) Displays of offensive objects or imagery.
 - (7) Offensive non-verbal gestures.
 - (8) Stereotyping.
 - (9) Intimidating acts.
 - (10) Veiled threats of violence.

- (11) Threatening or provoking remarks.
- (12) Racial or other slurs.
- (13) Derogatory remarks about a person's accent or disability.
- (14) Displays of racially offensive symbols. Hazing.
- (15) Bullying.

b. Unlawful harassing conduct may include:

- (1) Unlawful discriminatory harassment.
- (2) Sexual harassment.
- (3) Stalking.

Section 3.3, "Means of Harassment"

Harassment can be oral, visual, written, physical, or electronic. Harassment can occur through electronic communications, including social media, other forms of communication, and in person.

Section 3.4, "Behavior that is Not Harassment"

Activities or actions undertaken for a proper military or governmental purpose, such as combat survival training, assignment of work related to the duties and responsibilities of the employee, and performance counseling, are not harassing behaviors. Moreover, this policy prohibiting harassment is not a "general civility code." Behavior that is rude, ignorant, abrasive, or unkind, but does not adversely affect the work environment as described in Paragraph 3.1, is not harassment.

DoD 5500.7-R, "Joint Ethics Regulation (JER)," August 30, 1993 (Incorporating Changes 1-7, November 17, 2011)

The JER provides a single source of standards of ethical conduct and ethics guidance for DoD employees.

Chapter 12, "Ethical Conduct," Section 4, "Ethical Values"

12-401. Primary Ethical Values

"d. Accountability. DoD employees are required to accept responsibility for their decisions and the resulting consequences. This includes avoiding even the appearance of impropriety because appearances affect public confidence. Accountability promotes careful, well thought-out decision-making and limits thoughtless action."

“e. Fairness. Open-mindedness and impartiality are important aspects of fairness. DoD employees must be committed to justice in the performance of their official duties. Decisions must not be arbitrary, capricious or biased. Individuals must be treated equally and with tolerance.”

“f. Caring. Compassion is an essential element of good government. Courtesy and kindness, both to those we serve and to those we work with, help to ensure that individuals are not treated solely as a means to an end. Caring for others is the counterbalance against the temptation to pursue the mission at any cost.”

“g. Respect. To treat people with dignity, to honor privacy and to allow self-determination are critical in a government of diverse people. Lack of respect leads to a breakdown of loyalty and honesty within a government and brings chaos to the international community.”

Title 32 CFR Part 234, “Conduct On The Pentagon Reservation”

Title 32 CFR part 234 provides the standards of conduct on the Pentagon Reservation.

Section 234.11. Alcoholic Beverages and Controlled Substances

- (a) *Alcoholic beverages*. The consumption of alcoholic beverages or the possession of an open container of an alcoholic beverage within the Pentagon Reservation is prohibited unless authorized by the Director, Washington Headquarters Services, or his designee, the installation commander, or the heads of the Military Departments or their designees. Written notice of such authorizations will be provided to the Pentagon Force Protection Agency.
- (b) *Controlled substances*. The following are prohibited.
- (1) The delivery of a controlled substance, except when distribution is made by a licensed physician or pharmacist in accordance with applicable law. For the purposes of this paragraph, delivery means the actual, attempted, or constructive transfer of a controlled substance.
 - (2) The possession of a controlled substance, unless such substance was obtained by the possessor directly from, or pursuant to a valid prescription or order by, a licensed physician or pharmacist, or as otherwise allowed by Federal or state law.
- (c) Presence on the Pentagon Reservation when under the influence of alcohol, a drug, a controlled substance, or any combination thereof, to a degree that might endanger oneself or another person or damage property, is prohibited.

Washington Headquarters Services Memorandum, “Control of Alcoholic Beverages on the Pentagon Reservation and in Leased Facilities in the National Capital Region (NCR),” July 29, 2016

On July 29, 2016, the WHS Director issued a memorandum to DoD personnel titled, “Control of Alcoholic Beverages on the Pentagon Reservation and in Leased Facilities in the National Capital Region (NCR).” This memorandum states that pursuant to 32 CFR sec. 234.11, the consumption of alcoholic beverages or the possession of an open container of an alcoholic beverage is prohibited within the Pentagon Reservation.

In the memorandum, the WHS Director delegates the authority to grant exemptions for the consumption of alcoholic beverages in assigned office space on the Pentagon Reservation and WHS-leased space in the National Capital Region to specified individuals or entities. This includes authority delegated to the heads of Defense agencies for office spaced assigned to the Defense agencies.

Appendix B: Failure to Treat Subordinates with Dignity and Respect and Creating an Intimidating, Hostile, or Offensive Work Environment

In this appendix, we provide additional examples and witness statements about Mr. Cutrone's leadership and yelling and using profanity. We also present examples and witness statements on Mr. Cutrone's demeaning treatment of subordinates and disparaging remarks in front of or about subordinates. Furthermore, we provide additional comments about the impact of Mr. Cutrone's leadership on his subordinates and the ASD(ISA) work environment.

Leadership

- “Just felt like he took the blame out on us, and, and kind of turned us into the punching bag.”
- “I just saw the way he treated his front office staff, the people directly underneath him, just in terms of, like, yelling at them, seemed all the time. And just thought to myself, like, ‘I’m glad that’s not—glad that’s not me.’”
- “There was a heavy tone at almost all times that basically you were never good enough, and his word was law, and he never cared what anybody else said sort of situation. [...] His tone was very condescending.”
- “Well, I would say he’s not the most diplomatic human being that I have met. He came across as aggressive. [...] He was very focused on himself and his achievements.”
- “I think that going to the front office was something that everybody dreaded. [...] So, I would say that going up there usually would just make your day worse.”
- “It’s just added a level of anxiety, you know, uncomfortableness that you just have to navigate over the course of the day that you normally wouldn’t just because of Michael [Cutrone]’s personality.”

Yelling and Using Profanity

- One witness, a senior leader, described an incident in which they and Mr. Cutrone were preparing for a meeting with USD(P) leadership. The witness told us that they referred to a package they had just received and asked Mr. Cutrone if he wanted to review it or have them brief it during the meeting. The witness told us that Mr. Cutrone started yelling and telling them that he (Mr. Cutrone) “always gets to see these documents first.”

- In describing Mr. Cutrone’s frequent use of the “F” word, one witness said, “You could literally just pick a sentence and then insert ‘f**king’ into it somewhere, and that would probably be a verbatim quote from [Mr. Cutrone].”

Demeaning Treatment and Disparaging Remarks

During our interviews, 17 witnesses provided examples of Mr. Cutrone’s demeaning treatment of subordinates and disparaging remarks in front of or about subordinates. We present examples of their testimony in the following bullets.

- [REDACTED] described an incident they witnessed one morning. The witness explained that when Mr. Cutrone arrived in the office, a subordinate approached Mr. Cutrone, “and [they] said, ‘I have these talking points for you,’ and before [they] could explain the talking points, he stopped. He gave [them], like, a death stare. [...] He looked back up at [them], took the paper aggressively out of [their] hands, crumpled it up into the ball, dropped it on the ground, and just walked into his office.” The witness told us that the subordinate’s face turned “beet red” and looked like they were about to cry. The witness also told us that they and [REDACTED] individually approached Mr. Cutrone at least a dozen times about his treatment of subordinates. In addition, the witness told us that they and [REDACTED] would compare notes at the end of the day “methaphorically,” but that neither kept written notes of these interactions. The witness also told us that they would routinely tell Mr. Cutrone to “knock it off.”
- [REDACTED] told us that they and the witness told Mr. Cutrone several times, “Hey, I don’t know if you understand how you are coming across, but that didn’t go well. ... you’ve got to remember that you are, you know, a higher ranking boss and that you might not see how that feedback comes across. ... it might not come across as rough. But for folks who are below you ... they essentially [think] they’re getting chewed out by the boss, honestly.”
- One witness told us that they and Mr. Cutrone were on a call during a congressional briefing. The witness stated that Mr. Cutrone muted his telephone and stated that a senior Department of State official who was speaking talked “funny” and sounded like “Foghorn Leghorn.”¹⁵ The witness also told us that Mr. Cutrone made a similar comment about another Department of State official’s voice and said, “I’m sure that kid got beat up in school a lot.”
- One witness said, “He’d [Mr. Cutrone] come over the top of you, you know, not let you finish a sentence.” The witness characterized Mr. Cutrone’s voice as raised when he did this. The witness also told us that Mr. Cutrone was a “big guy” and that he sometimes got “pretty close” when talking and would often “stand up ... to make his point.”

¹⁵ “Foghorn Leghorn” refers to an animated cartoon character, a rooster that appeared in animated cartoons from 1946 through 1964.

- Another witness told us that they were taking notes during a phone call between Mr. Cutrone and a foreign dignitary. While they were listening to the call, Mr. Cutrone snapped his fingers in front of their face to get their attention. The witness explained that Mr. Cutrone had muted his phone to ask them questions during the call and could have called their name or simply asked another question instead of snapping his fingers in their face to get their attention. They told us, “I felt like it was pretty rude and something that maybe someone would do, like, [to] a dog, not to a human.”
- One witness, an experienced subordinate, told us that Mr. Cutrone “denigrated my capability and integrity. He humiliated me in front of other people.” This witness described being “dressed down” by Mr. Cutrone, who pointed his finger while telling them, “You work for me. Do you understand that? You work for me.”
- One witness told us about a negative interaction they had with Mr. Cutrone. They explained that he was frustrated when there was a dispute in his front office over whether the Secretary of Defense’s office wanted his briefing material printed one- or two-sided. The witness told us that they could not remember Mr. Cutrone’s exact words but that he essentially proclaimed, “Hey, I’m right. Do what my preference is for the printing. I don’t care what the Secretary’s office wants.” The witness told us that Mr. Cutrone also kind of barked at them, “The Secretary’s front office can come to me to talk to me if this is wrong.” The witness also told us that the Secretary’s front office later called and said, “This is completely wrong. Redo it,” which caused them to reprint 10 or 20 binders of information.
- One witness told us that Mr. Cutrone stated that none of their action officers could give a strategic brief because they “can’t shut up.”
- Another witness told us, “You tried to do everything you could to not have to brief him, because you knew it would be like a very tense exchange where you would try to lay out—lay out information. And he’d interrupt you, and then, maybe he’d make a comment. And yes, profanity is a part of that, but that wasn’t—that wasn’t really what made it so difficult. It was just his—he was very [combative] in all of his interactions with staff.”
- ██████████ told us that Mr. Cutrone yelled at an action officer just for copying ██████████ on an e-mail.
- One witness stated, “I remember him throwing, like physically throwing a pad of paper across the room and just being very frustrated with, again, our ability to not be able to fix the technology.”
- One witness told us that Mr. Cutrone seemed to enjoy “kind of putting people off, or putting people back on their heels.”

- One witness told us that they referenced their direct supervisor during conversations with Mr. Cutrone. The witness told us that Mr. Cutrone asked them a couple of times in an authoritative tone, “[W]ho’s the boss?” or “[W]ho’s your boss?”
- A different witness stated, “He would sometimes refer to civil servants in the organization as muppets. You know, like the—you know, like Kermit the Frog”
- Another witness told us that Mr. Cutrone would use one-on-one meetings to get people to say bad things about their leadership or to get the inside scoop about what was going on in their section.

Mr. Cutrone’s Impact on the ASD(ISA) Work Environment

- “Certainly took a lot of the motivation out of it. It certainly didn’t feel as if it was—it was worth investing as much time and energy into it, if he was going to criticize or throw it back at us.”
- “I’m constantly having to defend these people ... and to have him constantly berate them to us, give us their products, and say that they were garbage was just—it just really wore on you.”
- “[Mr. Cutrone] frequently reaches down and directs which AOs [action officers] he wants in which meetings, bypassing the DASD and directors. Frequently this causes panic in the office, as sometimes he asks for AOs who are not SMEs [subject matter experts] on the meeting topic. He does not follow normal procedures, i.e., deferring to whatever AO the DASD-ship deems appropriate for the specific meeting.”
- “At one point in time, he prohibited us from communicating with any of our State Department, or DoD, or service colleagues, or embassy colleagues without sending e-mails through him, which is not an effective way to work. Yeah. It was just like the whole culture was controlling and invasive.”

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ASD(ISA)	Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
COO	Chief Operating Officer
COVID-19	coronavirus disease–2019
DASD	Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense
DoD OIG	Department of Defense Office of Inspector General
JER	Joint Ethics Regulation
OUSD(P)	Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy
USD(P)	Under Secretary of Defense for Policy
WHS	Washington Headquarters Services

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