

## Exhibit 3

Cristina Birchum

April 13, 2023

Honorable Kathryn Kimball Mizelle  
United States District Judge  
United States District Court for  
the Middle District of Florida

Your Honor,

My name is Cristina Birchum, my husband Robert "Rob" Birchum (Lt Col, United States Air Force, retired) will be before you on May 15, 2023, for the charge of mishandling classified information, to which he pled guilty in February; a long 7 ½ years of living under duress for our family. For nearly 70 years combined, two South Texans who beat the odds over poverty and traumas have served our country with love and gratitude for what it gave us—purpose.

I met Rob over 20 years ago when he reported to work in the Pentagon, July 2001. We worked together in the Directorate of Intelligence. He was an Intelligence Officer, and I was the Chief of Intelligence Force Structure and Manpower. Our time at the Pentagon was almost immediately impacted by the attack on the Pentagon on 9/11, of which we are both survivors. We live with that trauma daily and so much of our future was decided that day—most importantly our persistent answer to serve and protect our nation. We, as well as other coworkers, survived the attack on the Pentagon on 9/11. In early 2004 Rob was selected by a former Commander familiar with his accomplishments to complete a special assessment and selection process and in June 2004, he reported to a special mission unit in support of the National Mission Force, a prestigious posting. His deployments in support of Special Operations Forces (SOF) began almost immediately and he continued to support Headquarters U.S. Special Operations Command (HQ USSOCOM) in various assignments for the next 14 years until his medical retirement in 2018. Like I said, our lives were defined by the attack on 9/11.

Rob's last deployment from late 2007 to Spring 2008, before reassignment from Ft Bragg, NC to HQ USSOCOM was his longest. It was during this time in February 2008 that he surprised me and asked me to plan our wedding. And it was wedding plans that were inadvertently commingled with his deployed, mission-related material, saved but quickly forgotten after he sent over the wedding invitee list he'd been working on. I suspected something happened on the deployment to cause Rob's urgency to marry shortly after he returned—deployments often have that effect though and I knew he was in the thick of war but unable to share much of what he was going through. As God would have it, I was able to plan a wedding for May 2008 on the edge of the San Antonio River where the first Catholic mass took place, a beautiful, meaningful outdoor venue and reception at a location with historical ties to the Battle of the Alamo. All fell into place in less than 3 months.

Rob became an immediate father to my daughters from a previous marriage, the youngest only 9 years old. Rob welcomed them lovingly. Rob was an instant dad who worked hard to ensure the girls felt loved and cared for—he was a natural even though he had never been married or had kids before. Their bond was instantaneous. Shortly after our wedding we made the move to Tampa, Florida.

But underneath the surface, the effects of 9/11 and traumatic deployments were persistent. Rob has been under continuous pressure due to Post Traumatic Stress (PTS) and multiple medical conditions related to his military service, to include Major Depressive Disorder, anxiety, and suicidal ideation (at least 5 hospitalizations). These are the invisible wounds of war, and he continues to be my hero, despite the charges he faces. The reality of it is, these are the circumstances—deployment and the mental health trauma that ensued—in which classified

information became mingled with post-deployment files and paperwork, quickly forgotten and neglected, but discovered almost 10 years later.

I know Rob would give anything to turn back the hands of time. Over the last seven years, he has worked diligently to be a service to society and his family while continuously undergoing treatment through the Veterans Affairs hospital system trying to overcome his suicidal ideation and lasting effects of battlefield traumas. But his condition is a daily challenge and requires consistent medical care and intervention. Despite all this, he has thrown himself into making up for lost time with our 9-year-old son, John Paul. He's an amazing and present dad. He attends weekly soccer games, swimming lessons, karate lessons, and most importantly, he's heavily involved working with John Paul's school to help him with learning disabilities related to learning to read. He works with John Paul daily and on weekends—he is the best advocate and teacher. While Rob has been unable to work outside the home due to his condition, he uses his military skills and dedication to help John Paul. He researches different methods to help conquer the reading challenges John Paul faces and is the most engaged father I know. His focus now is to be the best father he can be to his only son and to continue giving the best fatherly advice to our four grown daughters, one of whom he inspired to join the University of South Florida ROTC program. With his encouragement and mentoring, Olivia set her sights on becoming a C-130J (Ghostrider) Combat Systems Officer. Through determination and hard work, she earned one of three available slots for her year group and is now assigned to the AF Special Operations Command on her first 6-month deployment—a proud parent moment.

I can say that in all the time I have known my husband, Rob has been hardworking and trustworthy; this is the only instance where he has seemed anything but. I believe any behavior he displayed that led to charges of mishandling classified information was totally out of character and directly tied to his struggles with PTSD, anxiety, depression, short-term memory problems, and the impossibly high operations tempo, as the Air Force concluded in their own investigation back in 2017, resulting in a Letter of Reprimand and medical retirement, a disheartening end to an otherwise distinguished career.

Rob's life has been characterized by overcoming adversity since his childhood. He was the youngest of four children to a single unstable mother on the southern border of the U.S. in Eagle Pass, TX, where he experienced neglect, malnourishment, and abuse (mental, emotional, physical, and sexual). Although Rob's grandmother was able to step in to raise his three older siblings, due to her age and medical condition, she was unable to take him on other than weekly visits. Sadly, she passed in her late 80s when he was deployed for DESERT STORM, making it impossible for him to attend her funeral. While he carried his mother's maiden name Rodriguez, he also experienced daily abuse while attending school by those who didn't believe he was Mexican. He was bullied and beaten on a regular basis; counselors refused to help him find ways to attend college because he only wanted to be "Mexican" for assistance. He was destined for a life of poverty or worse unless he made a life-changing decision to pursue the military.

In high school, he joined Junior ROTC that gave him focus; leading him to enlist at the age of 18 in the USAF where he completed an Associate of Applied Science degree with the Community College of the AF. After six years of active duty and his first of three tours in Afghanistan serving in Desert Shield/Storm, he was competitively selected by his Commander for nomination to the Texas Tech University ROTC program where he completed a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science. During his time at Texas Tech, he was selected to be the Executive Officer for the ROTC detachment Commander, a reflection of his maturity and discipline. As a student and cadet, he supported himself by becoming a part-time EMT with the city of Lubbock. Upon graduation from Texas Tech, he was commissioned into the USAF and began a long-distinguished career as an Intelligence Officer.

As an Intelligence Officer he continued to demonstrate his tenacity and dedication by serving the greatest nation in the world and to defend freedom, democracy, and further the interests of our nation. He was

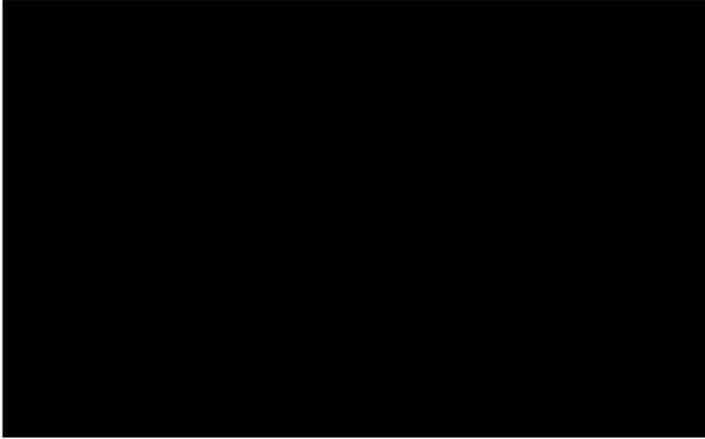
competitively selected from as many as 1,400 intelligence officers and named the Major General John S. Patton Outstanding Active-Duty Intelligence Officer of the Year for 1999 (Level I), a prestigious award recognizing the top company grade Intelligence Officer from among his peers. During his active-duty time, Rob also continued to be recognized in numerous capacities from Intelligence Officer of the Quarter/Year to the Knowlton Award (Army Military Intelligence). The Knowlton Award recognizes those individuals who have made significant contributions to the Military Intelligence Corps, an honor to be recognized as an USAF officer.

While primarily serving in an intelligence role, he unselfishly answered the call to serve at the “tip of the spear” in the Global War on Terror, a term commonly used to describe special operations missions, keeping our military’s elite operators informed with life-saving information during the height of the Afghan war, and was an integral part of Special Operations and intelligence gathering. Intelligence support for special operations directly saves lives—an immense responsibility for a no-fail mission. He deployed for Operations Allied Force, Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom, and Freedom’s Sentinel for a total of 3 deployments to Iraq, 3 deployments to Afghanistan, and many other undisclosed missions on behalf of this magnificent nation. One of the most impressive accomplishments I saw as a former AF employee familiar with the military awards process, Rob completed his tour at Ft Bragg, NC with three decorations (Joint Commendation, Defense Meritorious Service, and Bronze Star (for a classified mission)) and six medals, an unusually high number of decorations and awards for an AF member in one tour. This high number of awards recognized Rob’s share of the Special Operations ethos that does not permit giving up. He persisted through adversity, like many others, to ensure he didn’t let his SOF brothers and sisters down and never settled for “good enough.”

Just like many in the Special Operations and military community, Rob showed signs of Post Traumatic Stress (PTS) but like so many, he suffered in silence with these invisible wounds and was adamant to not let it keep him from effectively providing SEALs, Special Forces, National Mission Force, and other government agencies with critical information to complete their mission. He felt that acknowledging his own health would prevent him from saving others. However, the loss of teammates killed in action and his own return home while some didn’t, weighed heavily on him. In the summer of 2008, he started experiencing nightmares, crawling on the floor in the middle of night, along with the many effects of PTS. In 2009, he voluntarily went to the USSOCOM Care Coalition where he began to receive treatment after being told that he too had wounds, and although they were invisible, they were wounds, nonetheless. As he received treatment, he continued to serve his country and deployed one last time in May 2016 to Afghanistan for a 1-year mission to combat ISIS. He was told his medications would be mailed to him, the pinnacle of service over self, which was Rob’s life story since he joined junior ROTC.

I wish you could have known Rob as the man I met in 2001. I have watched his story unfold, the thread of military service, his rock and his foundation, yet also his undoing. Rob epitomizes the ethos of the “quiet professional” that describes the special operations warriors who never felt the need to boast of the many contributions they made for our country and fellow comrades. He simply wanted to give his all and keep as many around him safe and alive so they could make it home to their loved ones and friends. As a stalwart military officer, Rob has acknowledged his mistake and culpability, despite the fact that it occurred in the midst of suicidal ideations, survivors’ guilt, and PTS. Rob was driven to do all he could do to keep our country safe and find the “bad guys,” stretching himself to a point where he made mistakes with the best of intentions. He lived the mantra “no excuses” in the most challenging circumstances. For Rob, our son, our family, and myself, I respectfully plead for leniency for a man who today is a shell of the person who willingly served his country for nearly 30 years and now lives as a permanently and totally disabled veteran—combat related.

Very respectfully,



Cristina Birchum

April 4, 2023

Diana Millard

Dear Honorable Judge Mizzelle,

My name is Diana Millard, I'm writing to you today about my stepdad, Robert Birchum, who we know as Papo. He's been a part of our family for over 15 years now. Writing this letter is harder than I thought it would be. I never thought I'd have to put into words what Robert has meant to me and to this family, not in this context.

Robert is a big family man, he's dependable, being there for my sisters and I no matter what we needed. Over the years he encouraged us to follow our dreams and cheered us on in whatever we did. I can remember learning how to drive stick shift when I was a teenager, my mom had taken me out to drive a couple times, but I wasn't really getting it. It wasn't until Robert took time after work and on the weekends to help me practice and give me advice on what to do that I finally learned and felt confident with driving.

Growing up we went to church as a family on Sundays, most Sundays we'd get Waffle House after service, trying to all cram into one booth. Being teenagers, my sisters and I weren't always happy to get up on Sunday for church, but as an adult now I'm glad we would go as a family. Whether it be birthdays or graduations, he's been there to celebrate with us, being so supportive and proud. That reminds me of my high school graduation, I wasn't sure what to do after school, I wasn't a strong student, due to my dyslexia and dyscalculia, but I liked anything involving hair. Robert was generous and used his GI benefits to help me complete Cosmetology School. I've been a licensed Cosmetologist now for 10 years.

When I got married last September, I asked him to have a father-daughter dance with me, Robert may not be my biological father, but he has been there for me like I was his own daughter.

Even during these hard times, I'm proud to have Robert as a part of our family. For the love I have for my stepdad, I ask you to consider the years he selflessly gave to our country, and to consider my brother, John Paul. My sisters and I may be adults now but he's only 9 and he needs his dad.

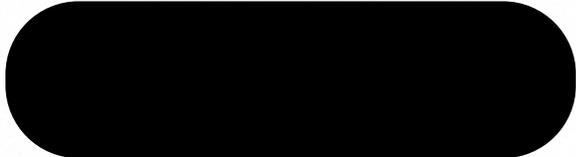
Thank you.

Sincerely,

Diana Millard



Colonel Richard McQuiston, USAF (ret)



21 April 2023

Honorable Kathryn Mizelle  
US District Court  
Middle District of Florida

Your Honor

I am writing with regards to LtCol. Robert Birchum's case. While I do not condone the acts that he is pleading guilty to, I must say that this is not the Rob Birchum that worked for me and whom I had daily contact with while at the Pentagon. I can't but help to think that the legal system, and the medical system, is missing something that has caused this sad turn of events in Rob's life.

Rob Birchum worked for me in our Readiness Section at the Pentagon and also worked as the Executive Officer for our Division Chief during my time at the Pentagon. I had continuous contact with Rob and also had oversight of his work while he was in our Readiness Section. Never once did I have any reason to doubt his loyalty or trustworthiness during this timeframe. The same can be said during his time as the Division Execution Officer.

The Robert Birchum I know is a smart, capable, hard-working, loyal and trustworthy officer. Furthermore, I found him to be a warm, caring, personable and kind individual. In my opinion, he would be somebody that I would consider to be a "kind soul!" He had a ready smile and a willingness to always lend a helping hand. He was diligent in his work, went the "extra mile" to accomplish the mission, and his work was always accomplished to perfection!

The only reasons that I could ever imagine that would cause LtCol. Birchum to deviate from his exemplary character would be from medical issues stemming from his deployments and service. Combat related disability, complete disability rating as determined by the VA, multiple hospitalizations, and even a suicide attempt? If I was his commander, this would be screaming loudly to me that this is a troubled individual in need of medical care vice incarceration. In fact, I must point a finger at LtCol. Birchum's former leadership and command structure for not intervening when he started to exhibit behavior outside of his norm. This didn't just "happen" out of nowhere. Now your Court is in the unenviable position to rule on a case that could've been avoid with more enlightened, responsible, and proactive military leadership.

I do not envy you in this matter. I hope that you will consider the debilitating health issues that Rob has had, the lack of intervention by his prior military leadership and the stress that multiple combat deployments has had on his physical and mental well-being.

Respectfully

RICHARD E. MCQUISTON JR.,  
COLONEL, USAF (RET)

**From:** Mike Perez miguperezjr@gmail.com  
**Subject:** Character Reference Letter  
**Date:** April 15, 2023 at 12:10 PM  
**To:** eric@ericperlaw.com



April 15, 2023

Miguel Perez Jr.

[REDACTED]

Honorable Kathryn Kimball Mizelle  
United States District Judge  
United States District Court for  
the Middle District of Florida

Your Honor,

My name is Miguel Perez, Jr., my long-time dear friend and brother-in-arms, Robert Lawrence Birchum (Lt Colonel, United States Air Force, retired), will be before you on May 15, 2023, for the charge of mishandling classified information, to which he pled guilty in February.

I met Robert in 1986 during my Air Force career. I've had the privilege and honor to have met him then and still to this day, hold a special place in my heart for this Great Man and American.

I am proud to mention, we will forever be known as the Initial Cadre, Administration Department, for the B-1 Lancer Bomber Training School at Dyess Air Force Base, Texas. As a team of five personnel (where my office was authorized eight), we constantly provided exemplary service to 150 permanent personnel and 450 students annually for over five years until my I accepted my new assignment.

Without hesitation, I nominated Robert for several awards -- Airman of the Year, Below-the-Zone Promotion, Airman of the Quarter -- to name a few. His tireless efforts and dedication to serve our country held true as a young enlisted man from Eagle Pass, Texas, to now a retired Air Force Lt Colonel.

I admire and it's very special to see the man, the husband, and the father he is today.

Robert would be best to stay home to continue his life for better and successful health self-management; enjoy his beautiful wife Christina every day; and treasure and influence God's gift in his son, John Paul. Robert Lawrence Birchum is MY Long-Time Dear Friend, MY Brother-In-Arms, a Great American, MY HERO.

Very Respectfully,

Miguel Perez, Jr.

30 April 2023

To the Honorable Kathryn Mizelle,

I understand my friend Robert Birchum is appearing before the court, I am providing this character reference letter on his behalf.

I am Russell Cuenca, an Air Force Officer currently stationed at Norfolk, Virginia. I have known Rob for over 10 years. I served with Rob in our assignment in Washington DC from July 2012 to August 2015. As a Major in a new assignment, I had a hard time adjusting. I looked to Rob, a Lieutenant Colonel at the time, as a mentor, guiding me through my assignment and giving advice when needed. There was a lot to learn, and I leaned on Rob heavily to understand. He was patient and understanding. I am very thankful for his mentorship. I remember on Veteran's Day in 2014, we both attended the Veteran's Day Memorial service at Arlington National Cemetery. He and I proudly wore our Air Force service dress uniform to honor our Veterans. It was a great moment to share, and I am grateful for him to invite me.

In addition to our work relationship, we had a great friendship outside of work. Once a month we would meet at a local restaurant to catch up. Our unit was small and dispersed in northern Virginia, so we were fortunate to live 10 minutes away from each other in Centreville, VA. On occasions, my wife and I would invite Rob over for small gatherings since he was living on his own while his family was living in Tampa, Florida. He was very personable and honest; we enjoyed his company. During our assignment in 2014, Rob and I both were blessed to each have a boy. He and his wife had John Paul, and my wife and I had Dean. Rob loved and adored his son John Paul and spoke about him often. After completing my Washington DC assignment, we maintained our friendship. Though he and I changed assignments to various locations we kept in touch. Most recently reconnecting last summer 2022. His family has grown, John Paul is now 9 years old and in the third grade and Rob is happily retired in Tampa, Florida.

Rob is a dedicated American veteran, loving father, and husband. He has served our country for 29 years with loyalty and sacrifice, serving multiple deployments away from his family. The hours, days, months, and years he has given to our nation should speak volumes to his allegiance to our country and his positive moral character.

Thank you for taking the time and consideration.

/\*SIGNED\*/

Russell B. Cuenca, Lieutenant Colonel, USAF  
Joint Forces Staff College  
Military Instructor

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Belinda Bonnett. I am 66 years old. Robert L. Birchum is my younger brother.

Robert has always been a very nice, compassionate, giving and caring brother to me and my siblings.

Robert joined the ROTC for his 4 yrs. of High School and always wanted to join the A.F.

He joined the A.F. after graduating from High School and was very proud of doing so and serving his Country.

He was loyal and worked diligently.

If he mistakenly took any classified documents it was most probably due to his PTSD and other health issues. I can attest that he never intentionally did so because he loves his Country, served proudly and would never willingly want to hurt his country in any way.

Sincerely,  
Belinda Bonnett

Honorable Kathryn Mizelle  
United States District Court,  
Middle District of Florida:

Dear Judge Mizelle,  
My name is Noema M. Buschardt,  
I am Robert L. Bischem's oldest  
sister. My sister and I lived  
with my grandmother since we  
were babies, but Robert always  
lived with my Mom. Then my  
sister and I got married and we  
moved away to another city.

We didn't see too much of  
Robert in several years, but he was  
always a good boy. He never got into  
trouble. He must have had a hard  
time living with my mother because  
she had a bad temper. He just graduated  
from High School and went away to  
join the Air Force. He would come to  
visit my Mom and us on the Christmas  
Holidays or whenever he could.

My brother has always been  
loving and respectful to me and everyone  
he knows.

In July of 2006, my husband  
and I went to visit Robert in North  
Carolina. We stayed a month with  
him and he always treated us very nice.

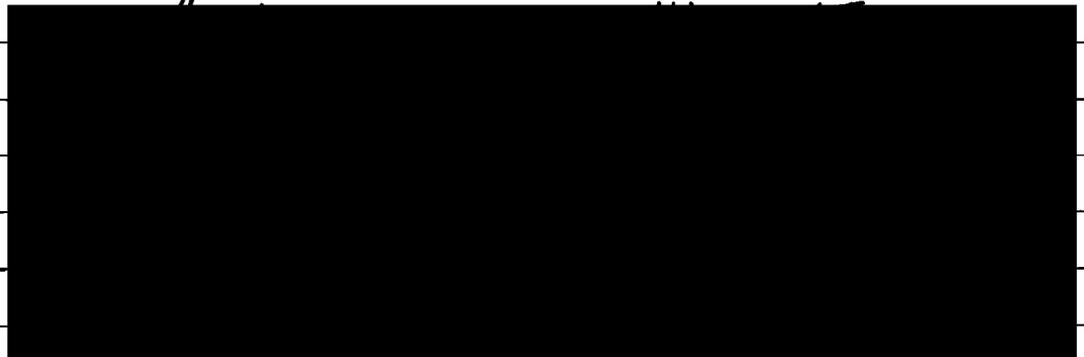
We had a great time. Later he got married and we didn't see him very much.

Judge Mizelle I hope you are lined out with my brother while sentencing. I am sure whatever he did, he didn't mean to break the law. To my knowledge he has always been responsible in his job. He took his job very seriously.

He has had a hard life, but yet he has been a great Dad to his little boy. He loves him very much. Thank you for reading my letter.

If you have any questions this is my address:

phone



Sincerely yours,  
Noema M. Burchardt

**From:** Anita Caceres 19caceresanita@gmail.com  
**Subject:** Character Reference Letter on Behalf of Robert Birchum  
**Date:** April 18, 2023 at 10:04 PM  
**To:** eric@ericroperlaw.com



My/Our: Anita Caceres Friend of Robert Birchum since 1999 & Richard Rodriguez Brother of Robert Birchum submit this letter on Behalf of Robert Birchum to His Attorney Mr.Eric Roper, P A.

We ask consideration of His sentencing to hopefully Grant & Reconsider an unexpected favor of less time He'll have to serve on Probation. Due to Robert not having no criminal background & or His continued Medical Conditions.

His Character is that of being a good Son, Brother, Husband & Father to His Son John Paul 7y.o. Having memorable moments. A Veteran as He served His/Our Country with much Respect & Responsibility, so that we could Live in A Free Country. Serving The U.S. Air Force & Core Values with a Good Reputation & Honesty, Responsibility as a Lt. Col.(Ret.) for the many years I've (Anita Caceres) known Him. He helped Us during a difficult time of homelessness & provided not only financially, but emotionally.

The Positive effect it'll do for His 7y.o.Son John Paul & Wife Cristina. To soothe the tensions, favoring a swift resolution of conflicts & disagreements.

For Robert to have the Opportunity in His Life to serve Probation instead of Prison Time, for this mistake in His life He is now facing.

Many parts of His life have already changed. I only have one last need to saying Behalf of Robert Birchum. I'm Proud of Him Serving His Country, especially while in Afghanistan, regardless the circumstances are today.

I feel that if it is possible for You today Judge K. Mizelle. I wish with all my heart to reconsider to continue this Privileged man, a life for Robert Birchum where Peace, Joy, & Happiness Reign Supremely for Him. And that He is given a fair chance to continue to achieve all His goals. To stop experiencing anxiety & maintain optimum mental wellness.

I often imagine seeing bad people pass me by. While I manage to build a circle of trusted Loving Family & Friends. Robert Birchum lives for His Son & Wife.

He spent many years Serving The Purpose of God in insignificant places while In The U.S. Air Force developing into a Great Man.

None of us can for tell the great Things God has in store for Us, but we can Trust His Plan Completely.

Few of Us are going to live even 100 yrs. So whatever will become in this life. We're in the process of becoming right now. Given a little of My time for this letter on Behalf of Robert Birchum that did so much for Our Country, Family & Friends.

Thank You Sincerely,  
Anita Caceres Friend of Robert Birchum  
Richard Rodriguez Brother of Robert Birchum