

# The Psychological and Familial Impact of Abuse on Luke Elliott Sommer

Compiled from Public Federal Court Records  
U.S. District Court, Western District of Washington  
Case No. 2:09-cr-00436-JLR

This report compiles and analyzes verified material from publicly accessible federal court filings, including family testimony, expert psychological evaluations, and defense arguments submitted in support of Luke Elliott Sommer's 2022 motion for compassionate release and sentence reduction. The objective is to demonstrate, through publicly documented evidence, the connection between documented childhood abuse and Sommer's later mental health struggles and behavioral outcomes.

## 1. Executive Summary

Multiple sources within the federal court record consistently document that Luke Elliott Sommer endured significant childhood trauma, including physical, verbal, and emotional abuse by his father, sexual assault at a young age, and later combat-related trauma. Expert psychological evaluations by Dr. C. Brodehl, PsyD, confirm the presence of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and describe his trauma as a direct influence on his emotional regulation, cognitive function, and subsequent behavior. Family testimony provides firsthand corroboration of the abuse, while expert opinion connects these early experiences to Sommer's adult mental health diagnoses and behavioral difficulties.

## 2. Document Sources

All quotations and references in this report are drawn from the following public federal filings:

- Exhibit 4 – Letter from Christel Davidsen (Mother), pp. 15–16
- Psychological Evaluation by Dr. C. Brodehl, PsyD, Bureau of Prisons, p. 107
- Defense Motion for Sentence Reduction and Supporting Memoranda, pp. 31–33
- Letters of Support from Family and Friends, pp. 90–93

### 3. Family Testimony Describing Abuse and Its Effects

Family members and close friends provided extensive statements describing the abusive environment created by Luke Sommer Sr. and its lasting emotional impact on Luke Elliott Sommer. Their testimony presents a clear pattern of control, intimidation, and fear that shaped Sommer's personality and emotional development.

"Elliott suffered a great deal of childhood trauma which he managed to hide with his intelligence and charisma. He was sexually abused at the age of four by a neighbour boy who was eleven years old. His father was controlling and manipulative and verbally and physically abusive."

Context: Exhibit 4 – Letter from Christel Davidsen, pp. 15–16

"His father would drive down a particular road with several hairpin turns and pretend to not make the turn until the last second or stop erratically while trying to yank my phone out of my hand because I was calling for help."

Context: *ibid.*

"When Elliott got older and tried to stand up to his father's abuse things escalated to the point that he had to threaten his dad with a restraining order."

Context: *ibid.*

"He also grew up being told by his father 'death before divorce,' so when I left his father for the sake of the children's safety, it threw his world into total chaos, and we all felt there was a real threat to our lives."

Context: *ibid.*

"He already knew what he wanted to do in life; take care of his family, join the army and proudly give his service... But we could also see that he seemed different from the boy we first met; he had changed."

Context: Letter of Support, p. 92

"Later, after learning of his suffering from PTSD, that change in him made a lot of sense to us."

Context: *ibid.*

These statements indicate that the household environment was not merely strict or dysfunctional, but characterized by persistent psychological and physical intimidation that directly affected the young Sommer's perception of safety, control, and trust. The mother's and friends' testimonies describe emotional withdrawal and behavioral changes consistent with trauma response.

#### 4. Expert Psychological Evaluation and Findings

“Inmate SOMMER was diagnosed with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder while in Canadian custody pending extradition due to suffering from sleep disturbance, nightmares, anxiety, and paranoia following his return from Afghanistan.”

Context: Dr. C. Brodehl, PsyD, Psychological Evaluation, p. 107

“In regard to trauma history, inmate SOMMER reports that he has experienced anxiety and posttraumatic stress in response to emotional and sexual abuse, witnessing significant acts of violence while in the military, and being raped while serving in the military.”

Context: *ibid.*

“A review of his scores indicates he falls within the highly probable range for suffering from PTSD.”

Context: *ibid.*

“Narcissistic traits appear related to his history of traumatic events.”

Context: *ibid.*

Dr. Brodehl's evaluation provides professional confirmation that Sommer's trauma was multi-layered: originating in childhood abuse and reinforced by military and carceral experiences. The report identifies PTSD as the central diagnosis and notes the relationship between his traumatic history and subsequent behavioral difficulties such as emotional detachment, impulsivity, and mistrust.

## 5. Correlation Between Trauma and Later Behavior

“Sommer’s extensive history of trauma is relevant because, as the Court pointed out in *United States v. Johnson* (2021), ‘greater traumatic experiences in childhood correspond with riskier behavior and a greater likelihood of involvement in the criminal justice system.’”

Context: Defense Motion for Sentence Reduction, pp. 31–33

“Sommer’s list of childhood trauma is extensive. He was molested as a child, beaten, psychologically and emotionally abused, neglected, abandoned, and bullied.”

Context: *ibid.*

“As a direct result of Sommer’s childhood and combat experience he developed PTSD, which impacts the regions of the brain associated with cognitive processes.”

Context: *ibid.*

The defense argument integrates scientific findings linking early trauma to impaired executive function and heightened threat response. By referencing precedent and psychological data, the filing positions Sommer’s life history as a mitigating factor—acknowledging that his abusive upbringing produced measurable and lasting harm that contributed to his later judgment deficits and behavior under stress.

## 6. Conclusion

Across multiple sources, the evidence is consistent and mutually reinforcing. Family members documented chronic abuse and emotional instability in Sommer's childhood home. Expert evaluations confirmed the psychological consequences of these experiences, diagnosing complex PTSD and noting behavioral manifestations directly traceable to trauma. Together, these public records demonstrate that Luke Elliott Sommer's early abuse exerted a profound and negative effect on his later emotional state, worldview, and decision-making.

Public Record Statement — All quotations, evaluations, and excerpts in this document are drawn from publicly filed materials in United States v. Luke Elliott Sommer, U.S. District Court for the Western District of Washington, Case No. 2:09-cr-00436-JLR (filed June 21, 2022, and related docket entries). These are public records accessible via PACER and federal archives. No sealed or confidential information has been included.