



May 2, 2017

Overview of the Annual Report on Sexual Harassment and Violence at the Military Service Academies

Subcommittee on Military Personnel, Committee on Armed Services,
United States House of Representatives, One Hundred Fifteenth
Congress, First Session

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On July 2, 2008 I took an oath to join the US Navy as a Plebe on Induction Day. I said goodbye to my family and friends for the opportunity to attend the United States Naval Academy. I entered the Navy full of optimism. I truly believed the Naval Academy stood on higher ethical grounds than a civilian school. My family believed the USNA representatives that told us I would be safe--that there wasn't a sexual assault problem at USNA. We were all excited and proud of what I was going to be a part of.

Shortly after the academic year began I experienced two horrible and traumatic events. I was raped not only once, but twice--both times by fellow classmates. These events set the tone for my time at the Naval Academy. A time where I experienced a culture at the Academy that resembles a "boys only" club where men are considered superior to women--where women are frequently referred to as DUBs (Dumb Ugly Bitch) or other derogatory terms. Sadly, most women want to be accepted, say nothing and quickly adapt to the culture.

I tried to stay strong and pretend the events didn't happen or at least pretend they didn't affect me, but I could only lead on so long that I was OK. Upon seeking medical help from the USNA medical facility during my plebe year, I disclosed being raped when asked by the Naval Academy medical doctors, but they never inquired any further as to when and how my rapes had occurred. In 2011 I finally broke and my mental breakdown led to the sequence of events where my case was severely mishandled by USNA administration.

My mental breakdown happened in March 2011 just days before spring break, for which I was not permitted to leave the yard. I was told that because the USNA didn't have personnel to monitor or "baby-sit" me, I was sent under orders of the Commandant Robert Clark to Bethesda Medical where I was admitted to the psychiatric ward and diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD). I contacted my father who came up the following day and convinced my company commander to have me released. I had to spend three days in a psych ward with men who had recently come back from combat.

After Spring Break I came back to the Academy in a fragile mental state, living in such close quarters to someone who had raped me was not something I could handle anymore. I requested to transfer to a different company, but was denied by my immediate Chain of Command (I requested to move companies multiple times after plebe year.) So this time, I called Mast with the Commandant Robert Clarke on the subject. He did not allow me to move companies either and told me to "grow up." None of the leadership ever dug into why I felt so strongly about moving companies and I was scared to tell them about the rapes. No one ever asked if something had happened to me. I thought if I could just get into a different environment, maybe I would be able to get through the remaining time. It wasn't until my Congressman Kenny Marchant stepped in and inquired about my situation that the USNA officials allowed me to move to a different company. I am grateful that Congressman Marchant took a stand for me and realized something was wrong based on his knowledge of me and my character.

Shortly thereafter it became clear that the Academy was going to try and use the diagnosis of Borderline Personality Disorder as a reason to kick me out. I decided to come out about the rapes at this point publicly because I felt my character was being attacked unfairly. I was a damaged person, but not because my personality and character was inherently flawed. I thought it would help the Academy officials to understand there was more to the story behind my breakdown. Unfortunately the fact I was a rape victim was largely ignored during my separation and merely was used as a side note. Somehow members of an Academic board were allowed to make judgments on me based on an inaccurate diagnosis.

On July 20, 2011, an Academic Review Board convened consisting of seven naval officers and one civilian academic dean. Other military officers were present as observers, but were not identified to me. During the hearing, my sensitive personal medical records were openly discussed by the panel without my consent and were ultimately used as a basis for my separation.

There were many discrepancies in the handling of my situation. For example, separation documents provided to me in advance of the hearing contained false and misleading information and was clearly written to present me in the worst light to the panel who in just days would determine my fate.

Also, these decisions about my health and mental condition were based on a diagnosis of Borderline Personality Disorder that was made by a nurse practitioner and not a licensed medical doctor specialized in Psychiatry. After thorough evaluation by Veterans Affairs it has been verified I suffered from PTSD due to being raped. BPD was the convenient catch-all phrase used in my case to cover up my real condition, PTSD from being raped by upperclassmen as a plebe.

Moreover, during my Academic separation hearing, not a single board member had asked if I had consented to the release of my medical records and upon reading my written statement outlining my previous rapes, not one felt compelled to delay the hearing and call for an immediate investigation. The leadership had no issues allowing rapists to continue their time in the Navy while I needed to be rushed out. Instead of wondering why my performance and behavior took a turn for the worse, the administration turned their back on me and never took me seriously about the rapes. They didn't care about me.

The military found it easier to label me as having a personality disorder than to treat me for the trauma of being raped. In fact, according to the written transcript from my separation hearing, the military claims that: "there are no medications approved for treating this condition. And, as supported by her years of counseling, attempts to treat this condition through counseling are rarely successful and not available in the military."

As a rape survivor, I have a suggestion that there actually is an approved treatment—it's called investigate and prosecute. But it seems the motto of the U.S. Marine Corp of "leave no man behind" does not apply to the men and women who, when raped, are frequently and

intentionally left behind to deal with the pain, anguish and long term emotional stress.

Also to note, it's ironic that the Superintendent, Vice Admiral Miller, who recommended I be separated and questioned my character was later relieved of his command and demoted due to his involvement in the Fat Leonard scandal.

Based on my experiences, rather than providing more rape prevention training for the Midshipmen, I believe the USNA needs to train their faculty and leaders to identifying signs and symptoms of sexual assault. I sat through the Sexual Assault Prevention training required on campus and believe it was not taken seriously by the young men I served with. Often jokes of a sexual nature would happen in training sessions about Sexual Assault prevention.

My experience and the stories of others display the template for addressing rape victims in our military. When they begin exhibiting unusual emotional behavior, get them to medical where they can be diagnosed as having a personality disorder, which then is treated with antidepressants and anxiety medications. When that doesn't work, note how their behavior is affecting their life and the lives of their fellow midshipmen and up the dosages. When they are on the brink of suicide, from being prescribed huge dosages of mind altering medications, move to have them separated.

I was repeatedly encouraged to resign by USNA officials (wishing for me to just go away) but I chose not to because I had done nothing wrong and had no reason to resign. I was denied the opportunity of completing my education at the USNA. I was in a dark place and was unable to tell the board that I could commit to serving at that moment, but wished to pursue the opportunity to heal further by the time I would have graduated (1 year later) and then be evaluated for my ability to be commissioned. Instead, they determined that I was not fit to serve based on my "condition." I will never forget the day that I had to return my USNA class ring which represented the 3 years of hell that I had to endure.

The Navy continues to defend the ever-growing claims of military sexual assaults at the USNA as small and that those women who reported being raped were just mentally ill. How shameful! Military leaders then and now defend the growth rate as being good, claiming that they are glad to hear that women are coming forward to report their rapes. What they don't seem to get is that more rapes are bad and that they continue due to the failure by military leaders to address the root cause--that there is a small but active group of rapists whose crimes are rarely investigated let alone prosecuted and the military finds it easier to destroy the life of the victim.

The word is out! If you are a rapist, go into the military where you will be protected after you rape someone. I was processed out of the USNA while my rapists are now serving as officers potentially victimizing more people. Victims who see the treatment of those before them, such as myself, are not likely to come forward like I did, for they know what will be the consequences. Upon leaving the USNA, all forms of medical treatment and counseling ended. I was on my own to fend for myself. I was never contacted by anyone including my classmates, staff, faculty or even my coaches. I was and am shunned by the USNA. That is but a part of the

price I paid.

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STATEMENT OF
VICE ADMIRAL WALTER E. CARTER JR, USN,
SUPERINTENDENT OF THE UNITED STATES NAVAL ACADEMY
BEFORE THE
HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE
ON
MILITARY PERSONNEL
MAY 2, 2017

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Summary

As directed by Congress, DoD assessed the Military Service Academies (MSA) to determine the effectiveness of policies, training, and procedures with respect to Sexual Harassment (SH) and Sexual Assault (SA) involving Academy personnel. DoD accomplished this assessment by reviewing Academy self-assessments and through the administration of the 2016 Service Academy Gender Relations (SAGR) Survey (June 1, 2015 - May 31, 2016), which focused on four specific areas: SA prevention, SA response, efforts to address retaliatory behavior, and SH prevention and response. Results of this survey are informing modifications to our current prevention efforts. Specifically, our future focus will concentrate more on the appropriate use of alcohol and the effects that misuse and binge drinking have on the ability of midshipmen (MIDN) to make sound decisions. The second change in emphasis will address the importance of healthy relationships as MIDN and as they transition from college students to commissioned officers in the Navy and Marine Corps. The final focus will be to more effectively convey what consent entails between two adults and its importance in treating each other with dignity and respect. The Naval Academy will continue to be forthright and honest about our Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) program. Although we have invested significant time and effort in educating the Brigade of Midshipmen, faculty, and staff, results of the Survey indicate that we still have much work to do. Our program uses evidence-based training and we continually evaluate feedback from our MIDN, faculty and staff on ways to improve the program to eliminate SA and SH; behavior which is toxic to military readiness in our Navy and Marine Corps.

Introduction

Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of this committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today on behalf of the United States Naval Academy (USNA). Our mission is to develop midshipmen morally, mentally and physically and to imbue them with the highest ideals of duty, honor and loyalty in order to graduate leaders who are dedicated to a career of naval service. A central theme to the moral development aspect of this mission is treating others with dignity and respect. Despite dedicated efforts by USNA leadership and the Brigade of Midshipmen, we continue to experience incidents of unwanted sexual contact (USC) within our ranks. The 2016 SAGR survey, taken by the Brigade in April of 2016 and released earlier this year, showed that USC increased compared to rates measured in 2014. While the prevalence of USC in 2016 was below that in 2010 and 2012, and despite our continued investment in activities expected to prevent SA, we did not sustain the noticeable decrease we experienced in 2014. Specifically, the percentage of the Brigade experiencing USC increased from 2.8% to 5.2%. For females, the increase went from 8.1 to 14.5%, while male prevalence increased from 1.3% to 2.1%. *We can and must do better.* We are responsible to not only ensure that every member of the Brigade of Midshipmen is afforded an opportunity to develop in an environment of dignity and respect, but to prepare them to better lead Sailors and Marines in the Fleet.

Our Program Must Holistically Address all Influences on Midshipmen

USNA remains committed to maintaining a consistent and effective SAPR program which seeks to sustain a professional environment of trust and mutual respect free of retaliation to victims and those who report sexual assault. Our approach addresses the diverse cultural and

societal influences on our midshipmen by executing DoD, Navy, and USNA directives and by collaborating with national, state, and local resources. Leadership engagement at all levels, combined with a focus on individual accountability, are the keys to successfully achieving our goal of significantly reducing incidences of USC. Our MIDN are not immune to societal influences and we must continue to address the risks of engaging in activities involving the internet, including online dating apps. These technologies risk negatively distorting norms on healthy relationships, privacy, and consent. We must continue teaching midshipmen that they are accountable 24/7—whether in uniform or not—as ambassadors of the Naval Academy, the Navy, and the United States writ large. Inculcating that culture now better prepares them for success in the Fleet.

A successful prevention effort requires a comprehensive approach. Our current sexual harassment and assault prevention program was initially developed in 2006 with assistance of experts in the field, and has continued to evolve based on current research and student feedback. Our current efforts start on day one – Induction Day – and continue through a senior year capstone event. In all, more than 30 hours of education and training are dedicated to every midshipman. Our multi-faceted prevention program includes:

- Plebe Summer SAPR Indoctrination Program. SAPR Staff representatives personally welcome each new candidate of the incoming class of almost 1200 students, and identify the resources available to them while at USNA. Within two weeks, each midshipman is administered a baseline survey on attitudes and beliefs and receives initial training on SAPR program specific procedures such as filing Restricted and Unrestricted Reports. The final summer training session includes an interactive discussion with their Company Officer and Senior Enlisted Leader

where case studies are reviewed and leadership lays out clear expectations of acceptable behavior and actions.

- **SHAPE Program.** The strength of our prevention program lies in the MIDN-led Sexual Harassment and Assault Prevention Education (SHAPE) program (see Figure 1). We believe, and research shows, that peer-to-peer mentorship with sufficient leadership oversight is the most effective way to instill MIDN ownership in sustaining an environment of dignity and respect throughout the Brigade. This 14 hour program is conducted across each midshipman’s 47-month experience at USNA.

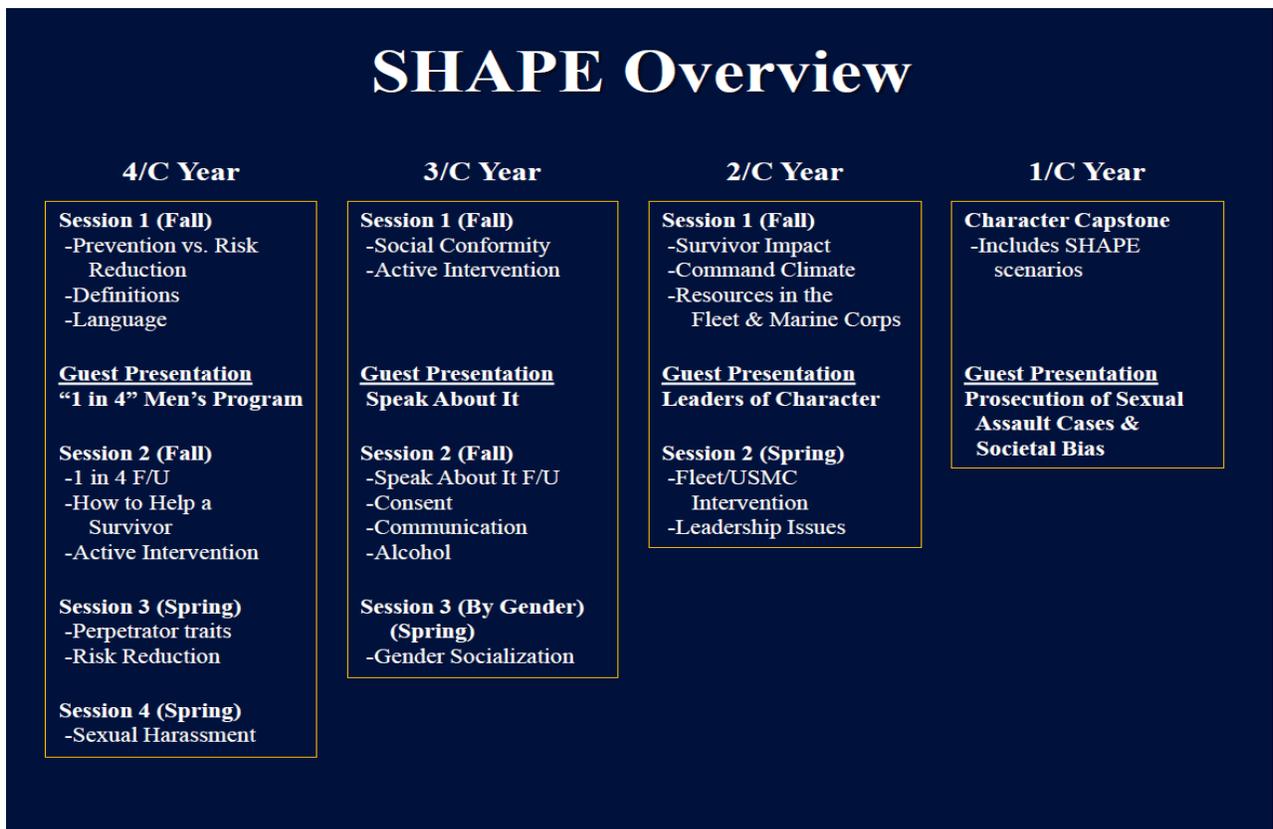


Figure (1)

- Incorporation into Formal Education Curriculum. In addition to the First Class Capstone Course, other formal curricula that address SAPR topics are the Second Class Advanced Leadership Theory and Application, Third Class Moral Reasoning for the Naval Officer, and Fourth Class Intro to Naval Leadership.

USNA's prevention program continues to evolve as we update lessons to include increased emphasis on male victims and move to incorporate more scenario-driven case studies dealing with the impacts of social media and other relevant topics that emerge. Midshipmen are challenged to make decisions that promote healthy relationships, recognize professional and responsible behavior, and be inspired to work and live in accordance with the Navy Core Values and Navy Ethos.

Strong guidance starts with me, the Superintendent. I am fully dedicated to serving as a positive example, building and maintaining a team whose core values include promoting dignity and respect. I expect the same from all of the leaders at the Naval Academy - to be visible and positive leaders of action. Fleet Mentors, academic faculty, staff, company officers, and company senior enlisted leadership all play key roles in shaping MIDN into the leaders of the future. All levels remain critical to ensuring that SAPR program efforts resonate and translate to producing the best junior officers for the Navy and Marine Corps.

A Strong Response Program is Essential

We've made significant progress with our response efforts over the years. We are prepared to respond 24 hours a day and 7 days a week should midshipmen need help and

support. The response efforts demand a coordinated effort across many departments influencing all aspects of midshipman life.

- Sexual Assault Response Coordinators (SARCs). USNA is unique in that we have two fully qualified SARCs. The lead SARC is responsible for overseeing the entire response program, including coordinating Restricted and Unrestricted Reports. The assistant SARC leads education and watch bill coordination. The response office is conveniently located in close proximity to, but not in, Bancroft Hall (USNA's dormitory complex) in order to afford privacy to victims as appropriate – a recent move that has garnered positive feedback.
- Victim Advocates (VA). In addition to the full-time civilian VA on the SAPR staff, the Naval Academy has a cadre of volunteer active duty officers and enlisted men and women who are fully certified, accredited and on call 24/7 via cell phone.
- Victim Legal Counsel (VLC). In 2013, USNA became the first naval installation in the country to have a VLC assigned. The VLC reports directly to the Navy Judge Advocate General's staff (vice any USNA leadership) and solely advocates for the victim of a sexual assault while working closely with the SARCs, VAs, NCIS, and chain-of-command in all investigations and legal proceedings.
- Brigade Medical Unit. Works closely with the rest of the response team for care of victims residing in Bancroft Hall. Rape kits are performed at Mercy Medical Center in Baltimore pursuant to a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Mercy is one of the top three facilities in the country in forensics capabilities.

- Chaplains. Fully trained SAPR responders who work closely with SARCs, Medical, VLC, and chain-of-command to provide support and guidance to the victim throughout the process. Chaplain services are always available to MIDN, whether they make a report of sexual assault or not.
- Midshipman Development Center (MDC). A full-time civilian sexual trauma specialist conducts individual counseling sessions as well as voluntary support groups for both female and male survivors of sexual assault. Like the chaplain services, MDC's services remain available to all midshipman regardless if they choose to report or not.
- Our new Leave of Absence policy now offers victims the chance to concentrate on healing and then return to the Brigade a year later to resume the curriculum where they left off. While this program is new, we have seen early success in its implementation.

We must continue to gain and maintain the trust of our Sailors, Marines, and midshipmen. Results from the 2016 SAGR Survey indicate that we are making positive strides in cultivating this trust. We will continue to refine our response efforts moving forward as we focus on preventing incidences of USC.

Holding Perpetrators Appropriately Accountable Contributes to Prevention

USNA remains dedicated to promptly investigating reports of sexual harassment and sexual assault by utilizing all available resources to yield timely and accurate results. Early vigilance on incidents of sexual harassment helps prevent future sexual assaults. All complaints of sexual harassment are investigated and handled at the appropriate level including informal and

formal counseling, letters of instruction (LOI), developing and giving sexual harassment training, adjudication through the midshipman conduct system, and Dignity and Respect Remediation (a multi-month intensive one-on-one remediation with a Senior Officer).

Every Unrestricted Report of USC is referred to the Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS). NCIS provides exemplary support in sexual assault cases and is committed to completing all investigations within 90 days of initiation. Coordination between NCIS, legal staff, and SAPR VAs has been critical to ensuring prompt and just results in each case, and we remain committed to improving the process wherever possible. Investigative findings are reported to me, the convening authority, for determination of disposition. I remain committed to upholding the military justice process to ensure due process for the accused and judicial closure for the victim.

The Way Forward

The results from the 2016 SAGR Survey indicated that the majority of USC incidents occurred between classmates of the opposite sex, off campus, and with alcohol involved. Informed by the results of this most recent survey, we are directing more attention in three areas: responsible use of alcohol, understanding what healthy relationships should look like, and a better understanding of consent. I have directed the Commandant of Midshipmen to form a task force consisting of officer, enlisted, and midshipmen leadership to address solutions to the epidemic problem of the misuse of alcohol and binge drinking among college students. The task force is considering efforts to promote the appropriate use of alcohol, the importance of moderation, and the understanding of the effects of misuse. In conjunction with the Commandant and the Academic Dean, I have also directed the establishment of a Life Skills

working group. Academic professors, military leaders, SAPR program experts, medical professionals, and midshipmen are seeking ways to better instill life skills in our midshipmen as they navigate tough waters like healthy relationships, online activity, and effective communication. Finally, our prevention training will continue to focus on better defining consent.

Conclusion

Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of this committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. We have developed a very robust program over the years, but we still have a lot of work to do to further affect and sustain positive change. There is no finish line in this endeavor. I am prepared to address any questions you may have regarding my testimony.

RECORD VERSION

**STATEMENT BY
LIEUTENANT GENERAL ROBERT L. CASLEN, JR., USA
SUPERINTENDENT OF THE UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY**

BEFORE THE

**HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL**

FIRST SESSION, 115TH CONGRESS

**ON SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION AND RESPONSE PROGRAMS AT THE
MILITARY SERVICES ACADEMIES**

MAY 2, 2017

**NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED BY THE
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES**

Chairman Coffman, Ranking Member Speier, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, it is an honor to be here today, representing the United States Military Academy community.

West Point's mission is to educate, train, and inspire the Corps of Cadets so that each graduate is a commissioned leader of character committed to the values of Duty, Honor, Country and prepared for a career of professional excellence and service to the Nation as an officer in the United States Army. I have always maintained that you can be a competent leader, but if you fail in character, then you have failed at leadership. Therefore, character development is the most important thing we do at West Point.

To that end, one of my top priorities as Superintendent is the elimination of sexual harassment and sexual assault. I am committed to creating a command climate where everyone, regardless of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, faith or no faith, is treated with dignity and respect, feels like they are a valued member of the team and feels secure both physically and emotionally. Just as importantly, I am also committed to developing leaders who will do the same with the platoons and companies they will command once they leave West Point.

Our work to eliminate sexual harassment and sexual violence at West Point is an ongoing and dynamic program. We see constant changes, with a myriad of factors that influence this generation's culture. Some of these factors we can control, while others we absorb anew each year when we welcome each new class of cadets. As an example, we know that we need to integrate purposeful discussions about building and maintaining healthy relationships and have tough conversations about consent in sexual encounters. These issues are part of what makes collegiate environments so challenging in the area of sexual violence prevention. The flip side of this challenge is that college prevention programs also hold a lot of promise, in that education and skill building, two keys to successful sexual assault prevention programs, are part of the college experience. As a result, our team continually explores ways to modify our programs to respond to these factors.

The recent Service Academy Gender Relations Survey (SAGR) results are very helpful as we understand the men and women entering West Point. While the 2016 survey results for unwanted sexual contact are consistent with the results we saw in

2010 and 2012, the increase between 2014 and 2016 is concerning. All three military service academies (MSAs) saw a decrease in the 2014 survey, and then again all MSA's saw an increase in prevalence in the 2016 survey. West Point had the lowest prevalence for men and women among the three MSAs, but the truth is, one assault is one too many and the work we have to do is far from over. Some of the measures on the surveys have changed over the years, but we see the results as one of the best tools we currently have to understand the culture within the Corps of Cadets. Despite all the work we've done to create an effective program to reduce sexual assault and sexual harassment, the increase in prevalence we have seen only solidifies the growing concern I have had over the past year whether we are implementing the correct strategy that changes behavior at West Point. We know we must be more intentional and targeted in the solutions we apply to ensure a more safe and wholesome environment in our community. In that regard, I would like to share with you some of recent accomplishments related to policy and changes in the command climate, as well as provide a way ahead to bolster our comprehensive SHARP strategy.

I would also like to mention that I am a member of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Board of Governors, and in that capacity I co-chair the NCAA Commission on the Elimination of Sexual Violence on College Campuses in America. The commission includes university and college presidents, athletic directors, coaches, advocates, victims, and legal experts in the Title IX field and in the area of sexual violence on college campuses. The NCAA asked me to co-chair this commission because of the military academies' recognized programs and initiatives, and experience in dealing with these issues. Co-chairing this commission allows me to engage with the latest proven methods, programs and experts in this field, and to bring some of these models of success to our programs at West Point.

First, I would like to share the perspective we have embraced related to the comprehensive nature of our program. We have worked within Department of Defense (DOD) guidance to create a program that aligns with the five lines of effort outlined in the DOD Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) Program: Prevention, Investigation, Accountability, Advocacy and Assessment. This strategy has been the guiding paradigm for our work since its inception in 2013. This approach allowed us to

build strong, supportive, victim-centered processes and systems to respond to reported incidents of sexual assault and sexual harassment.

We understand, through recent work to better shape a comprehensive Sexual Harassment and Assault Response & Prevention (SHARP) Strategy, that these elements (response and support to victims of sexual assault immediately upon report and in the long term as well as strong investigation/adjudication processes for every reported incident) are key to creating a comprehensive and successful Sexual Assault Prevention Program. We have implemented several strong initiatives to further strengthen our efforts to support victims of assault and harassment, as well as our ability to effectively investigate reported incidents, working within the wide array of options available through the UCMJ and administrative measures to build confidence in the system across the entire community. I'll address each initiative and what we think its impact has been to the increase we have seen in the number of victims who have trusted the system to make a report, as well as those who have made the decision to change restricted reports to unrestricted.

I want to make a point specifically to the distinction between prevalence and reporting of sexual violence, because I feel there has been a lot of confusion about this distinction after the survey results were released. The SAGR survey results show that all three MSAs saw an increase in the prevalence of unwanted sexual contact from 2014. Specifically at USMA, we also showed an increase in reporting. Prevalence estimates are based on the number of victims who indicated on the Service Academy Gender Relations Survey that they experienced unwanted sexual contact in a given academic year. Reporting is just that - the number of victims of sexual violence who trusted our system enough to report the incident with a Restricted or Unrestricted Report. Research conducted by the Department of Justice has found that only about one out of four or five incidents of sexual violence are ever reported in the civilian sector. We understand that some victims may never want to report and we must respect that very personal choice. Ultimately, we would like every victim to feel confident enough to report an incident. I personally believe that any increase in reporting, regardless of whether it is restricted or unrestricted, is a good thing. It is a strong signal that our program is taking root and that our cadets trust the system and

their leadership enough to make the report. I expect that we will continue to see an increase in reports for the foreseeable future.

I'd like to spend a few moments sharing with you some of the progress we've seen in several key areas of our program.

So far this academic year, we have seen a 50 percent increase in reports as compared to the last three years. We believe this is the result of several key initiatives designed to create more trust and confidence in the victim support, reporting and investigative processes.

POLICY CHANGE – EFFORTS TO IMPROVE REPORTING:

One of our key changes in the area of improving our Secondary Prevention efforts was a revision of our SHARP Policy, which brought USMA into compliance with DOD Instruction (DoDI) 6495.02. The change allows what is known as "Third Party Disclosures." USMA defines Third Party as anyone who interacts with a victimized cadet and does not hold command authority, such as instructors, coaches, sponsors and cadet peers. These disclosures are not considered confidential reports, and can be subject to investigative discovery as the Criminal Investigation Division (CID) deems necessary. We have seen a marked increase in calls to our SHARP team from personnel in these Third Party groups with knowledge of a situation they believe to be a sexual assault. Our professional SHARP staff members are then able to provide advice and expertise to the concerned individual about how to support the victim, and the options available for reporting. Nearly every case of a phone call like this has resulted in the cadet ultimately making a report. Many are restricted, and again, we believe this is a necessary and safe first step for many survivors of sexual violence. We never want a victim to feel like their hand is being forced. We work very hard to keep our support and response system victim-focused.

Another major policy change this past year is removing cadets in the chain of command from a mandatory reporter status. In many cases, we saw cadets who did not want to come forward, and even some who eventually did make a report. In the past, when cadets had information about an assault, it was very difficult to keep that information private and confidential. There have been cases where victims' identities

and the details of their assault became publically known. The impact of that lack of privacy was very traumatic to the victim, and created a lot of internal turmoil within the cadet companies. All cadets can now provide support and advice to their friends who have been assaulted, without feeling that they have to betray a confidence and report the allegation against the wishes of the victim. We have seen a huge surge of cadets bringing friends they are concerned about to the SHARP Resource Center to connect in person with the Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (SARC) or the Victim Advocate (VA) to get immediate assistance.

Another major initiative we implemented this past year is establishing a SHARP Resource Center (SRC). The previous set-up had the VA and SARC in separate but highly-visible locations on campus, in buildings either connected to senior leadership or in areas where cadets who are in some sort of trouble go for Respect or Honor violation investigative procedures. These locations were not conducive to key elements of the SHARP program's reporting structure, which emphasizes privacy, confidentiality, safety and anonymity. This new center, centrally located in the cadet area, brings the SARC and VA under one roof, so to speak, and provides all of the support and services for victims and anyone looking for SHARP-related information. It is currently in a temporary location as we continue our barracks renovation program, but we have seen such a significant positive impact in our reporting and victim assistance posture, that we've programmed the SRC into the overall barracks renovation program. Ultimately, the SRC will provide a one-stop location for victims to get assistance from advocates, as well as legal and investigative resources.

We are cautiously optimistic that this upward trend in reporting will continue due to our deliberate efforts to create a strong Secondary Prevention environment where victim needs are paramount. While we truly want each report to be investigated, we understand that for many victims, justice comes only after they have regained a personal level of confidence in the system and have developed the power and strength to begin the difficult process of going through an investigation. Our main objective is to create a program that is fully committed to supporting victims throughout the process. We are aware that the primary factor that gets victims to this place is support, and time

to process the experience, whatever that may look like for them.

ACCOUNTABILITY:

In the area of our investigative and adjudication efforts, we continue to see more than 50 percent of offenders held accountable each year, which is one of the highest substantiation rates in the Army. By substantiated, we mean evidence existed to take some kind of action against the accused, such as preferral of court-martial charges, non-judicial punishment, adverse administrative actions, and discharges/disenrollments. This is a double-edged sword: we hold offenders accountable to the fullest extent allowed by the evidence and judicial options available to commanders, but this also creates a strong hesitation among victims who allege they have experienced aggravated or abusive sexual contact (e.g., “touching” assaults - which continue to be the most common type of reported sexual assault), to report the incident. Many decide to report because they realize the impact that event had on their well-being, but usually do so as a restricted report. Victims tell us that their primary hesitation to change to an unrestricted report has a lot to do with their own assessment of the behavior as not “worthy” of the harsh sanctions that can be levied against cadets who “only” touch them. Victims see the behavior as extremely degrading and devastating, but they struggle with the reality that they were not a victim of a penetration or attempted penetration and these victims tend to categorize their assault as less egregious, or not worthy of having the perpetrator get kicked out of the Academy. Their loyalty to their peers, one of the key coping mechanisms many cadets rely on to get through the daily grind they experience as West Point cadets, creates this sense that reporting their assault and ruining the career of the offender is a tough sell. Loyalty to the Corps in these cases subsumes personal agency and personal safety. This is an area we need to integrate into our work to create more impactful and relevant Primary Prevention.

PROGRAM ASSESSMENT:

Despite all the progress we have made, the most important (and up to this point the least understood) element at USMA of an effective sexual violence prevention program has to do with our Primary Prevention efforts. Primary prevention focuses on

efforts that stop the crime from occurring in the first place. We have approached this element of our program with a behavior change model of reflection and introspection that takes place through open, candid dialogue in small group, peer-facilitated discussions. We have come to realize through our own internal assessments over the past year is that this model might be causing more cynicism than reflection, because the peer facilitator is also usually the least experienced and mature in the group and therefore inexperienced to facilitate these sensitive and reflective discussions.

Additionally, we hired an external assessment organization called EverFi, whose mission is to support campuses in making transformative impact on critical issues that impact their institutions and the lives of their students. They conducted their assessment in February and we expect to receive their final report in the very near future. In the meantime, we are posturing ourselves as an organization to immediately begin integrating their feedback into our SHARP Program Improvement Plan.

PRIMARY PREVENTION:

Up to this point, our main emphasis in educating our community about sexual violence has been very mechanical, focused on process and procedures. It has also been very negative, focusing on what Cadets should NOT do. This emphasis has placed us into our current situation where survey results tell us that while cadets understand the reporting process and, in many cases are becoming more confident and trusting of the system, it has not resulted in the change in culture we expected. It is clear that part of what we need to do is to change the narrative in our education program to focus more on creating a better understanding of how to create and maintain healthy relationships, which includes discussions and skill building around establishing and sustaining consent during sexual encounters. We continue to see unwanted sexual contact (10.2 percent for women and 1.8 percent for men in the latest 2016 survey). The past 10 years of surveys show little change over time in the prevalence of unwanted sexual contact, with one exception in 2014 when rates decreased significantly for both women and men, to 6.5 percent and 0.8 percent, respectively.

What we feel we are missing is programming that is research informed, data driven and presented in a manner that will generate the type of cultural change we want

to see. We realize that our conversations need to be targeted to our population, to what they have been socialized to believe about themselves in relationships. Essentially, we need to get back to basics and talk about why sexual violence happens. We need to create meaningful and relevant educational interactions with cadets that are aimed at changing attitudes and behaviors that lead to sexual violence. Successful primary prevention programs generate change among the college population when there is an infusion of education focused on changing attitudes and beliefs through new knowledge about sexual violence. We see this as a new direction for our program where we begin to address some of the most common attitudes and beliefs – that can be particularly challenging in a college setting.

1. Impersonal Sexual Encounters (Hook-Up Culture): This behavior, referred to by some in the scientific literature¹ as “hook-up culture,” describes the generational ambivalence towards deep personal connections. It is a function of a generation of young people who communicate and socialize through social media, texting and other methods that do not require face-to-face conversation and often lack the intent to carry a relationship beyond a sexual encounter. Most hook-up situations lack empathy or emotional connection, face-to-face conversational skills are minimized and there is a decreased capacity to be present in-real-time with other people. I am told that offenders often use the ambiguities of such situations to disguise their coercive behaviors and true intentions from their targets.

2. Alcohol: Survey data indicates that alcohol is involved in 50 to 60 percent of our incidents. Responsible alcohol use emphasizes understanding one’s own limits, as well as the impact alcohol has on potential assailants (lowered inhibitions to pursue someone sexually, more aggressive behavior if the other person doesn’t consent), as well as their potential targets (inability to willingly and knowingly give consent or act on their own behalf if the situation becomes inappropriate, etc.). This creates a scenario where force and coercion are involved and ultimately, results in a crime being

¹ Garcia, J.R., Reiber, C., Massey, S.G., and Merriwether, A.M. Sexual hookup culture: A review. *Review of General Psychology*, Jun 2012, 161-176.

committed. It's not about the risk one may experience when drinking. It's about a perpetrator taking advantage of someone's trust and leveraging a substance to commit an offense.

3. Force/Coercion: This factor comes into play all too often, as a perpetrator meets resistance from a sexual partner. The process can take on many forms, and, depending on what the relationship between the two people was prior to the sexual encounter, could range from blackmail-type statements (e.g., "You're drunk, and underage...") to challenging the "feelings" of the other person towards the perpetrator (e.g., "I thought you loved me"), to outright physical force used to disable the victim's ability to prevent the sexual act being committed by the perpetrator. Fundamentally, the inability to accept "No," "Not that," "Not now," "Stop," "Please don't," is based in a sense of entitlement, power, and belief that one deserves sex, or a very toxic sense of one's masculinity.

4. Toxic Masculinity and Inaccurate Social Norms: Some men have been socialized from the time they were young boys that sex is about pushing until the girl stops them, about what they deserve for what they put out (pay for dinner – get sex at the end), or that sex is always on the table and if someone they are with isn't into it, then it's a game to be won. Talk between men that objectifies women typically perpetuates what is usually a false narrative of having lots of sex and always getting what they want. This creates a false expectation where other men in the situation believe that they need to "produce" this same sort of story to remain connected to their social circle. Men who don't agree with such behavior, but are in the peer group, are forced to either be silent or risk becoming a target themselves: silence is part of the unsigned contract that allows men to maintain their status in their peer group. Research indicates that most men disagree with this kind of disrespectful behavior. Efforts that focus on improving social norms allow us to correct these mistaken assumptions about healthy masculine behavior.

5. Pornography: The proliferation of pornography into the digital arena as well as the objectification of women in straight pornography can for some create false expectations about sex. When those expectations aren't met, the combination alcohol,

force, and toxic masculinity can sometimes produce very bad outcomes. As a result, what may have started as a consensual encounter becomes an incident of sexual assault, because the perpetrator is unable to separate their imaginary life in porn from their real life with another human being that deserves their respect.

We must find ways to bring these uncomfortable topics into our conversations with cadets. We need to educate our cadets and the wider USMA community on the negative impacts these and other root causes have in creating and maintaining healthy relationships – friendships and intimate relationships. We need to integrate more conversations about what healthy relationships look like, how to be healthy as individuals and how that translates to healthy relationships.

SUMMARY:

We have only just begun to understand that these issues are the deep seated nature of the “why” of sexual violence. If we really expect to change our culture, we have to embrace the reality about these issues. Our programs are not addressing these issues, or root causes, as we need them to. We have numerous programs in place - SHARP Program, Character Education, Cadets Against Sexual Harassment and Assault, and others. Through these various vehicles, we provide more than 30 hours of character-based education content, in what I described above (small group, peer-facilitated discussions). These interactions with cadets are tailored to their class year and content that is relevant to their leadership positions in the Corps, but as I’ve already mentioned, the content and cadet delivery is a key issue. I have directed our Commandant of Cadets to examine what we are delivering and how we are delivering it, and make recommendations on how we can improve this very crucial aspect of our program. We believe these programs are the building blocks to implement the type of cultural change we have tried to make for the past 10 years. We also expect that the EverFi consultation feedback will address this particular issue as well and are looking forward to seeing their suggestions and best practices that are being leveraged across the country in other higher education institutions.

Systemically, we have seen that we can impact our unwanted sexual contact prevalence rates, as demonstrated in the drastic drop all the MSAs experienced in

2014. This drop was likely due to the combined impact of strongly framed education at the problem. There was a massive injection of high-level training events and massive stand-downs, where leaders from across DOD attacked it head on. Unfortunately, the result of this was, in my opinion, gender avoidance, where men and women stayed away from each other, in order to avoid any possibility of getting into trouble. While the training exposed cadets to the issues, it scared them away from each other. A new verb was coined: SHARP'ed. Rather than hang out in mixed-gender groups and trust themselves to do the right thing and behave respectfully with their peers, cadets would avoid socializing with the opposite gender, for fear of being reported, or "SHARP'ed." This is totally counterproductive in an environment like the MSAs, and was not sustainable in the long run. While gender avoidance accomplished the goal of lowering incidents of sexual assaults, it had the opposite effect on building teams, a critical part of the leader development process.

As we began to make other program improvements, we saw very little emphasis on the behavioral aspects that lead to sexual violence, while efforts became very process and punishment oriented. These were necessary steps in building a new social norm, but now we must focus on Primary Prevention, which is where our main effort will be in the coming months.

As I mentioned previously, our report from EverFi is expected to provide us with some very pragmatic and actionable steps to create a robust and comprehensive SHARP Prevention Program. We are anxious to integrate this feedback into the normal reset process we go through at the end of each academic year to evaluate what we did, assess the impact of our programming, and develop the actions we need to take to improve.

Again, I thank you for the opportunity to address these concerns with you today and I am prepared to answer any questions you have regarding our program and our way ahead.

STATEMENT OF
LIEUTENANT GENERAL MICHELLE D. JOHNSON, USAF
SUPERINTENDENT OF THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE ACADEMY
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SUBJECT: SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION AND RESPONSE PROGRAMS AT THE
MILITARY SERVICES ACADEMIES

MAY 2, 2017

NOT FOR PUBLICATION
UNTIL RELEASED BY THE
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Introduction

Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today on behalf of the future leaders of our Air Force – the cadets of the United States Air Force Academy – as well as the faculty and staff that support our mission to educate, train, and inspire these young men and women to become leaders of character in service to our nation. And, thank you for your steadfast attention to the critically important issues of sexual harassment and sexual assault, issues that are corrosive to our ability to successfully carry out our mission, and by extension are impediments to military readiness.

As a service academy we occupy a unique space not only within the military but also in higher education. We are a standard bearer for character and leadership education and set a precedent of moral conduct for the entire Air Force in our training of future generations of values driven officers. We expect more of ourselves, and rightfully so, because more is expected of our graduates when they leave our campus and operate in increasingly complex, interconnected and unpredictable battlespaces. So while it is tempting to cling to the fact that our rates of unwanted sexual contact are lower than civilian universities and colleges – (CIV – 11%, USAFA – 3 %) – that's not good enough. We must hold ourselves to a higher standard. Our bottom line is that we cannot tolerate any incidents of sexual harassment or assault, regardless of how rates of these behaviors compare to other institutions.

One sexual assault is too many. The results of the 2016 Service Academy Gender Relations (SAGR) survey and Sexual Harassment and Violence (SH&V) reports indicate that we are not yet where we want to be. We want reporting to go up, prevalence to go down, and ultimately for these incidents to go to zero. As an Academy we are not there yet, so we have

work to do – but based on the initiatives we have begun, we believe we are moving in the right direction.

The 2016 SAGR survey found our incidents of unwanted sexual contact up from 2014, (150 vs. 126), after a decline in reports from 2012 (162). We are working toward greater clarity in these numbers, and to provide additional context we also utilize the Military Service Academy (MSA) Defense Equal Opportunity Climate Survey (DEOCS) to help us better understand the nature of incidents, when and where they are occurring, how they are resolved, and attitudes about leadership response. It is our responsibility as leaders to own the findings outlined by these survey results and reports, to use the data to inform and educate the implementation of our programs and initiatives, and to adjust our efforts accordingly, so that we continue to foster an environment of discovery, learning and growth. That goal can only be accomplished in an inclusive climate of respect that values the worth and dignity of every person.

Culture Change, Prevention Initiatives

The prevalence of sexual assault is a symptom of broader issues in culture, climate, and leadership, and we have seen some positive trends in these areas:

- Significantly more cadets are willing to seek help from their chain of command compared to 2014. The 2016 MSA DEOCS showed an increase in trust at all levels of leadership at the Academy, with an average increase of 3 percent across enlisted and officer leadership, academic faculty and staff, and the athletic department.
- Trust in leadership for cadets' wellbeing, leadership development, and academic success is approximately 95%. Increases in numbers of reports, while troubling

because they reveal more incidents of sexual assault, can also indicate an increase in trust of leadership and the military justice process.

- Trust and support between cadets is also receiving high marks. Results show strong rates of support among cadet leaders, with 94% of cadets agreeing that cadet leaders support each other to address the problem.
- And, our training has improved. Cadets rate training as more effective than in 2014.
- Permanent party staff and leaders are setting the right tone in their organizations.

From the 2016 USAFA DEOCS, 98% of staff reported they feel safe from sexual assault where they work, 91% reported that the chain of command encourages victims to report, and 90% feel they create an environment where victims feel comfortable reporting.

The Air Force Academy's sexual assault prevention strategy is embedded in a transformative culture that is committed to fostering a climate of dignity and respect. This is a multifaceted issue that requires a holistic approach. It is crucial that senior leaders, faculty, staff, commanders, coaches, and cadets all have a role, and we have implemented a number of evidence-based initiatives in support of this strategy:

- All faculty, staff, and the cadets have annual training requirements that address sexual assault prevention and awareness. Faculty and staff received Green Dot bystander intervention training this year as required by AF SAPR. Cadets receive 2.5 hours of training each year that is developmentally specific to their year and roles at the Academy, and attend presentations by subject matter experts from the field of sexual assault prevention. Throughout their four years at the Academy, our cadets receive this regular,

periodic developmental training, which utilizes innovative approaches, for a total of roughly 12 hours.

- Establishing positive culture starts when our cadets arrive for basic training. We start with conversations with our newest cadets about “what right looks like,” and we emphasize the importance of respect in healthy relationships. From the very beginning, this helps them build a foundation for success in their classes, on their teams, and as leaders across our campus, as well as in our surrounding community. New cadets receive training on the second day they are here to set the standards of what is expected on our campus. On day 10 of basic training, cadets participate in an interactive, three hour training that covers specific definitions and responsibilities about sexual harassment and sexual assault.

Our active engagement as leaders in improving our culture and climate means that we set, model, and enforce clear expectations for respectful interactions. Leadership sets the tone and determines our success or failure in the initiatives we undertake. To that end, we established a Directorate for Culture, Climate and Diversity to serve as our strategic leader and principle advisor on these issues, integrating oversight and support for all of our programs across the Academy, including sexual assault prevention and response “sensors.” This alignment streamlines reporting, leverages resources, documenting and assessing efforts, and institutionalizes outcomes.

Prioritizing leadership buy-in and involvement across campus has enabled us to take a broad range of approaches to prevention and awareness, some of which have been uncommon:

- We've held forums ranging from poetry readings to conducting a mock sexual assault trial. Gender focused forums address issues with gender, hyper-masculinity, and diversity. All of these events are designed to help students better understand themselves, other people, and to recognize boundaries.
- A "Finding Our Voices" workshop focused on empowering individuals impacted by sexual violence through art.
- We have employed "Social Impact Theater," which utilizes the latest evidence-based research in theater arts and behavioral science to teach sexual assault bystander intervention techniques and ways to deal with male victimization – tackling questions such as "How do we eliminate sexual assault in our military?" We have been encouraged by callbacks from graduates who've successfully used these techniques.

One element of the Academy where we have made significant strides is in the Athletic Department. Initially, some of our coaches did not understand that their roles encompassed more than simply coaching a sport – that we also expect them to help us develop leaders of character. Central to these efforts has been our work with athletes in conducting healthy relationships training:

- Every intercollegiate athletic team participates in this in small-group training, which establishes mutual respect and effective communication as a foundation for healthy relationships. It focuses on all interpersonal relationships, and utilizes a multidisciplinary approach that includes instructors from SAPR, the Athletic Department, judge advocates, mental health providers, and military family life consultants.

- This training takes place in a judgement-free environment, where the focus is positive and everyone is allowed to speak freely using whatever language they are comfortable with. And, you have to be a good listener and not attack anyone for their thoughts or beliefs.
- The training reinforces that everyone is in a different place with regard to relationships – It doesn't matter where you are, you just need to be comfortable with where you are.
- We train about 1,000 cadet athletes every year in small groups within their teams, and it has been very well received by the cadets themselves. 79% rated it worthwhile or very worthwhile, 21% said somewhat worthwhile, and no one said “not worthwhile.” 67% said the training changed their behavior.
- In the early round of discussions with our female student athletes, at the conclusion of the workshops, we had at least one person come to us and seek help from 4 of the 5 teams.
- In one instance, the captain of the baseball team remarked that the conversation continued in the dormitories some two plus hours past the conclusion of one workshop. And in another instance, a football player requested a second round of conversations to improve his communications skills and build a more meaningful relationship with his girlfriend.

To reinforce this commitment and ensure consistency and leadership continuity, our athletic director, Mr. Jim Knowlton, established a Director for Culture and Climate who is responsible for the overall health and climate in the athletic department. I'm proud of the direction our Athletic Department is headed in their tangible commitment to confronting sexual

assault. They have leveraged the abilities some of our most effective and natural leaders – our student athletes – to affect culture change across campus. And, improvements to our climate and culture haven't been detrimental to our athletic success: 12 conference coach of the year awards last year, along with a record year in terms of All American status and participation in conference and national championships. To make our institution better, we must not only take stock of our student athletes' accomplishments on the field, but also off the field, in their impact in the community and their positive influence on their fellow cadets.

Other schools have taken notice of these efforts. This past summer I spoke at the annual convention of the National Association of College Directors of Athletics (NACDA) in Dallas, Texas, about some of our initiatives and outcomes, and found an audience hungry for ideas to bring back to their own institutions to help confront this societal issue. The event spawned so many productive conversations that this past month at the Air Force Academy we hosted the inaugural NACDA Spring Symposium, which focused on innovative approaches to leadership and wellbeing, including sexual assault. Dr. Kimberly Dickman, our Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Analyst, presented the day's general session to athletic directors from all across the U.S., which focused on a holistic approach to sexual assault prevention. Any holistic approach to this issue must include a sober assessment of the environment in which cadets operate.

Issues with conduct on social media and in anonymous environments present new questions regarding how leaders of character conduct themselves. To keep pace with swift changes in culture and the development of new dimensions of victimization, our current and future initiatives reflect a paradigm shift in training, focusing more on peer-to-peer approaches and grass roots efforts, and implementing evidence-based programs that use meaningful metrics

to measure impact over time. This focus is transitioning from quantity to quality, and from response to prevention. Our initiatives include:

- Cadet Healthy Personal Skills (CHiPs) for fourth class (freshman) cadets. This evidence-based program is focused on prevention of multiple problem behaviors, including substance abuse, risky sexual behavior, and aggressive behavior. It has three goals: 1) increase personal competence skills in self-management and decision making, 2) increase social competence skills in communication and assertiveness, and 3) improve cognition and attitudes toward sexual consent and pro-health norms.
- Green Dot bystander intervention training has been implemented with our permanent party staff as part of the first phase of a 5-year Air Force-wide violence prevention strategy. Cadets will receive this training starting this summer. The training covers personal and professional relationships, along with discussions on the factors that contribute to higher rates of sexual assault among sophomores than other class years. It is highly interactive and discussion-based and uses realistic scenarios, and cadets are encouraged to speak up whenever they hear disparaging or disrespectful comments, as well as whenever a fellow cadet is in a risky situation.
- In addition, as part of the five-year prevention strategy, we have implemented or will implement initiatives dedicated to: changing attitudes, norms, and environments; addressing risk factors such as substance abuse, emotional maturity, and peer pressure; and addressing relationship risks such as casual sex, relationship conflicts, and gender based attitudes.

Victim Care and Response Initiatives

Victim care is a central priority for our SAPR program, and we have built a robust safety net for victims to ensure their emotional and physical wellbeing. Our programs are meant to help victims regardless of when or where sexual misconduct took place, even if it was before they came to the Air Force Academy. 38% of reports in 2016 were of incidents that occurred prior to military service. The reports of prior assaults are a sign of trust in the system and in leadership. We want all victims to get the help and care that they need so that they are able to continue on the selfless, ambitious paths that brought them to our Academy, and reach their fullest potential as leaders of character in our Air Force.

Our approach to victim care includes medical care, counselors, chaplains, peer support, law enforcement investigation, and a special victims' counsel – a legal expert who represents victims every step of the way, throughout an undeniably difficult process. When a victim chooses to ask for help, a victims' advocate is there to offer support and ensure all resources are available for their recovery. Whether a report is restricted or unrestricted, a safety net of support is immediately in place until the victim says he or she no longer needs it. In addition, our civilian employees are eligible to use the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response program.

Accountability

All incidents across the spectrum of harm – from unwanted touching to forced penetration - are reported and taken seriously. We are committed to conducting professional, responsive, accurate investigations into every sexual assault allegation.

At the Air Force Academy we employ 2 of 24 worldwide Air Force Special Victim Investigation and Prosecution (SVIP) investigators (SAPR agents). Both of these investigators, our Office of Special Investigations (OSI) Detachment commander, and 9 of our 11 agents are

graduates of the Air Force's sex crimes investigator training program (SCITP), while our other agents are awaiting training. The Air Force Academy collaborated with AFOSI to create an Academy orientation program in order to familiarize agents with our mission and the unique facets of cadet life. It is an expectation that all agents assigned to the Academy will attend the training program, and AFOSI has established a Joint Sexual Assault Team (JSAT) trained to investigate specific UCMJ Article 120 cases, including those across the entire spectrum of harm, not only cases involving penetration or evident physical violence. Our Judge Advocates (JA) and OSI team together so that a prosecutor is present for every victim and subject interview. In addition, victims are offered Special Victims Counsel (SVC) representation, with an SVC located in our cadet area to provide victims ease of access.

In the academic year from 2015 to 2016, USAFA had 14 completed investigations. Four resulted in criminal charges (one civilian conviction, one acquittal, one Resignation in Lieu of court Martial (RILO), one pending RILO), six resulted in disenrollment, three resulted in administrative action, one resulted in no action due to the victim denying the allegation, for an overall rate of consequence of 86% (12 out of 14). In the cases that did not result in criminal charges, two victims preferred administrative action, four victims declined to participate, and three cases had evidentiary or legal issues that did not support court martial.

With the inception of the SVC program, we have developed greater insight into the needs and desires of victims regarding the outcomes of sexual assault investigations and cases. In determining the appropriate course of action, our commanders, with input from victims and SVCs, consultation from our judge advocates, and review by myself, consider outcomes including administrative actions, probation, disenrollment, and court-martial. This outcome is determined based on the nature of the offense, strength of evidence, input from the victim, and

the interests of good order and discipline. These multiple levels of review help ensure we reach a just outcome while also ensuring that the Constitutional rights of the accused are protected.

Challenges in Assessment and Continuity

Assessing the effectiveness of our sexual assault prevention and response programs and initiatives is a particularly pressing challenge. In the current process, assessments are done without consideration of other survey instruments, reports are created without factoring in key contextual and environmental factors that may have led to the increase or decrease in sexual assaults, and survey questions – some of which are redundant – continue to change. This frustrates our ability to accurately evaluate our SAPR programs, and limits our capacity to assess the effectiveness of our response and prevention programs over time.

With assistance from the Department of Defense and the Air Force, fusing data from all survey instruments to build a holistic picture of the culture and climate at the Air Force Academy would allow for a more effective assessment process. Proper assessment informs our decision making, allows us to take action most effectively targeted to confront this problem with conviction, and allows us to build upon our progress. Greater consistency in our survey instruments allows for improved analysis of data over time, which aids in continuity of program effectiveness that spans the frequent changes in leadership we're all familiar with in the military. Regardless of how numbers are measured and assessments are made, the Air Force Academy is committed to focusing on improving reporting, enhancing strategic planning, and advancing and sustaining appropriate culture.

Upward trajectory, Keeping the conversation going

In 2015, our yearly “Take Back the Night” event was attended by the Secretary of the Air Force, and was entitled “Shattering the Silence.” The moniker for the event was appropriate, as one key aspect of our approach to these issues has been the encouragement – and indeed facilitation of – frank and open conversations about sexual assault, an issue that has been called a “silent, violent epidemic” in our society. As we strive to increase our enrollment of women at USAFA, and as more women join the military to serve in roles previously closed to them, the importance of these open and frank conversations only becomes more vital to providing a safe environment in which to live, work, and learn, and for the morale and welfare of our entire force.

Two months ago I had the privilege of being invited to discuss the role of leadership in combatting sexual assault in a session at the South by Southwest conference in Austin, TX, where I discussed the need for active and engaged leadership, open and unembarrassed dialogue, and some of the more successful initiatives we’ve implemented at the Air Force Academy. After speaking I was approached by a concerned mother who thanked me for the simple act of speaking publicly about sexual assault. And, this past month I was interviewed by the Chronicle of Higher Education for an article focused on initiating conversations about sexual assault at the Academy. Throughout these speaking engagements and interviews, I expressed that taking ownership and having compassion as leaders, and facilitating frank and effective communication are key to ending this problem, and that while I don’t enjoy talking about sexual assault, we must overcome any reluctance we have to talk openly about this damaging issue.

Conclusion

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to speak about a topic so vital to the wellbeing of our cadets and service

members, and for the opportunity to keep this conversation going. Thank you for your concern about the future leaders of our Air Force. We owe it to them to get this right, and we are committed to fueling an upward trajectory in positive culture change. This effort will require a united front in consistent reinforcement, fairness, and continuity, going beyond adherence to the bedrock honor codes our MSAs have built education and leadership foundations upon. We must ensure that across our organizations, from top to bottom, we are living and leading honorably, and with impeccable character, in all that we do. At the United States Air Force Academy we are making strides, but there is more work to be done.

I am now prepared to answer any questions you might have.

STATEMENT

OF

DR. VAN WINKLE

PERFORMING THE DUTIES OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

READINESS

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL

HEARING ON

SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION AND RESPONSE PROGRAMS

AT THE MILITARY SERVICE ACADEMIES

MAY 2, 2017

Introduction

Chairman Coffman, Ranking Member Speier, and military personnel subcommittee members – Thank you very much for having us here today to discuss the results of the DoD Annual Report on Sexual Harassment and Violence at the Military Service Academies for Academic Program Year 2015-2016.

The Department is committed to promoting an environment where all Service members are treated with dignity and respect. Sexual assault and sexual harassment have no place in our Armed Forces. These repugnant behaviors affect our people's well-being, and they undermine the overall readiness of the military. These behaviors are inconsistent with our core values and the expectations of the American people. They are issues that continue to receive a great deal of attention from senior leadership in the Department -- and they are front and center with me in my current role.

I began performing the duties of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Readiness in January. Prior to this role, I spent the last five years leading our workplace and gender relations survey and focus group efforts, both at the Academies and in the military force at large.

I mention this for two reasons.

First, from this experience, I am intimately familiar with the methodology used to gather data, the results, and the implications of the findings in the report we are here to talk about today.

Second, as I just mentioned, I understand the impact sexual assault has on our people, force readiness, and the Services' ability to carry out our national military

strategy. Just one instance of sexual assault, harassment, or sexualized misconduct can send ripples through a unit and distract its people from their mission.

Preventing criminal behavior and misconduct, providing care for Service members, and holding offenders appropriately accountable continues to be a top priority among our Department leaders. In the force at large, we have seen some significant progress over the past several years on our key indicators of progress. Sexual assault is occurring less often and the crime is being reported more frequently. All military installations – including the Academies - have a host of support services and restorative care options. However, one of the things we have learned since creating the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response program in 2005 is that context and environment matter. The right combination of mission, people, and environment can produce a great deal of progress in combatting these problems. Sometimes, however, our approach must be tailored to take into account unique subcultures and environments. There is no “one size fits all” solution to the problem of sexual assault. This is not just our observation, but one also acknowledged by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in their recommendations on preventing sexual violence.

Our Military Service Academies are held in high regard by the American people and by other colleges and universities, not just because of the quality of education they provide, but also because of their attention to leadership and character development. Each of you have nominated young women and men to the Academies, knowing that in doing so your nominee has the opportunity for a great education, personal growth, and service to our country as a leader. This indeed is the experience for the vast majority of students at the Military Service Academies.

The Department's assessment of the Military Service Academies for this past academic year affirms this. We found substantive evidence of the Academy leaderships' continued efforts in promoting a safe environment for all cadets and midshipmen and providing first-class support services for victims. We are encouraged by the continued engagement we see from leaders on this issue and the involvement at the student-level. In fact, the Military Service Academies' efforts to prevent and respond to sexual assault reflect much of the Department's progress in this mission space. However, effective prevention practices continue to be a challenging goal for the Academies and the Military Services alike. Unfortunately, rates of unwanted sexual contact increased at all three Academies during this academic program year, returning to levels commensurate with what we observed in 2010 and 2012. In addition, while the trend line over the past several years indicates that reporting of sexual assault has increased, reporting at the Academies has not echoed the large increases we have seen throughout the active force since 2013. Finally, the experience of sexual harassment is far too common at the Academies – with nearly half of women and over ten percent of men surveyed indicating they have experienced behaviors inconsistent with the dignity and respect we require from our future leaders.

As I stated before, approaches to address sexual assault and sexual harassment must be tailored to the specific needs of the environment in which they are to be employed. Academies differ from the active force because they are educational institutions. They are an officer accession source, admitting people new to each Military Service and teaching them to be leaders. In addition, there is a completely new mix of cadets and midshipmen every four years, and the men and women joining our

Academies are at a critical point in their development, with regard to maturity, judgment, and individuation. This is perhaps our greatest opportunity for growth.

While there have been improvements at the Academies over the past ten years, our efforts to improve prevention and reporting have not made the gains we'd all like to see. That is not for lack of effort and attention. All three Superintendents and their leadership teams speak regularly on this topic to their cadets and midshipmen. In fact, our surveys indicate that the majority of cadets and midshipmen trust the Academies to protect victim privacy, ensure victim safety, and treat victims with dignity and respect. In addition, the vast majority of cadets and midshipmen indicate that commissioned officers and senior enlisted leaders at the Academies set good examples in their own behavior and talk.

Each of the Academies has developed some benchmark practices. For example, the US Military Academy has incorporated sexual harassment and assault prevention and response into their Character Development Curriculum, known as their Gold Book. They have placed emphasis on their peer leadership program to deliver many of the lessons in this curriculum. At the US Naval Academy, they invested in a program to enhance the skills and abilities of peer leaders in Sexual Harassment and Assault Prevention Education – or SHAPE. Midshipmen in SHAPE must audition and learn how to lead small group discussions on topics such as prevention, consent, and healthy relationships. At the US Air Force Academy, the Athletic Director initiated a program to employ athletes as positive role models. Representatives from his staff and the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response program hold small group discussions with sports teams' members, emphasizing the importance of respect in relationships and how to

actively intervene to prevent sexual assault. Each of the Superintendents here today will go into greater detail about their efforts.

Going forward, we must place greater emphasis on these and other evidence-based prevention programs that are designed to make a lasting impact. We are confident that we can do more to prevent sexual assault and sexual harassment at the Academies, through an approach that considers the full spectrum of readiness-impacting behaviors. Many of the readiness impacting behaviors can be prevented by encouraging Service members to be more involved in each other's lives and the cadets and midshipman can benefit particularly at the student leadership level. We must help them recognize warning signs with their peers, and empower them to take steps to protect and help each other when they notice something that isn't right. However, this is not something that can be immediately achieved with policies. It can only be achieved through a unified effort to help our cadets and midshipmen understand the duty they have to each other in all aspects of their behavior. Our society emphasizes the freedom of the individual. Our fighting force depends upon the strength of the military unit. Ultimately, this change in putting service before self, is the culture change we require of everyone wishing to join our ranks. We must become more involved in each other's lives if we are to learn how to treat each other with dignity and respect – and have a military culture free from sexual assault and harassment.

In closing, I and other senior leaders throughout the Department are committed to creating the safest and most supportive learning environment possible at the Military Service Academies. We will not stop until we get this right. We appreciate your concern and support as we work to protect the people who volunteer to keep our nation safe.