



SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
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WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

MAY 01 2015

MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARIES OF THE MILITARY DEPARTMENTS
CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
ACTING UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PERSONNEL
AND READINESS
CHIEFS OF THE MILITARY SERVICES
CHIEF OF THE NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU
GENERAL COUNSEL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

SUBJECT: Initiatives to Address Sexual Assault Prevention and Response and Retaliation
Associated with Reporting Crime

As leaders of the Department of Defense, we share a commitment to an environment free from sexual violence and sexual harassment. In order to retain and attract the best people with the best skills, everyone must know that these closely related behaviors have no place in the military. The force of the future is one that leverages our culture of dignity and respect to prevent crime and other improper behaviors, as well as support those who make the difficult choice to report them.

The “Fiscal Year 2014 Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military,” released today, suggests that the prevalence of sexual assault has decreased across the Department, while reporting of this crime has increased. These and other data gathered in the past year have helped us learn how to better care for victims and prevent sexual assault. In addition, the report demonstrates our resolve to consider and employ new solutions that have been attempted nowhere else. Our approach to prevention and Special Victims’ Counsel programs hold great promise not only for the military, but also for the rest of the country as well. Despite our efforts to date, our fight against sexual assault is far from over. I am concerned that far too many of those who report the crime perceive some kind of retaliation associated with doing so.

While we work to eliminate sexual assault, all who serve or are considering military service must know that we are striving to have the best response system in the Nation. Over the past three years, there have been 71 sections in law containing over 100 unique requirements for sexual assault prevention, response, and military justice. In addition, there have been over 150 recommendations from independent oversight organizations, and – with the four new initiatives I am directing today– 54 Department-led initiatives to improve sexual assault prevention, response, and the administration of military justice. As we continue to direct and sustain our efforts to eliminate this horrible crime from the military, we will always seek new ways to help survivors recover, improve safety, encourage reporting, and support participation in the military justice process.

Understanding the need for continual improvement, we will be updating DoD Instruction 6495.02, “Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program Procedures.” This updated policy

document will incorporate many of the legislative changes, external recommendations, and policy initiatives the Department has undertaken over the past few years. Publication of this document underscores the Department's commitment to a dynamic sexual assault response system that promotes recovery and accountability and an environment that prevents sexual harassment and retaliation.

To further enhance the Department's response to these interrelated problems, I am directing the implementation of the following measures:

- **Improve Organizational Culture to Address Sexual Harassment, Sexual Assault and Reporting-Related Retaliation:** To address the linkages between sexual harassment and sexual assault, the Secretaries of the Military Departments, in collaboration with the Acting Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, will incorporate insights derived from the "2014 RAND Military Workplace Study" into prevention training for sexual harassment, sexual assault, and reporting-related retaliation. Submit your proposed activities to the Acting Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness by September 1, 2015.
- **Evaluate Gender-Focused Treatment Capabilities and Provider Training:** The Acting Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness will assess clinical interventions that address the specific needs of men and women who are seeking treatment for sexual assault. Report your plans for assessing interventions and associated provider training to the Secretary of Defense by September 1, 2015.
- **Employ a Common Prevalence Survey and Feedback Strategy:** The Acting Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness will conduct force-wide sexual assault and sexual harassment prevalence surveys biennially for the Military Services and National Guard, using the measures created for the "2014 RAND Military Workplace Study," consistent with title 10 United States Code section 481. In alternate years, force-wide focus groups will be conducted by the Defense Manpower Data Center to obtain feedback from the field. To better respect Service member survey burden and privacy, all other entities within the Department of Defense will refrain from conducting force-wide surveys for determining the prevalence of sexual assault and sexual harassment. The surveys and focus groups will be developed and conducted in collaboration with the Secretaries of the Military Departments, the Chiefs of the Military Services, and the National Guard Bureau.
- **Develop a Department Strategy to Prevent Retaliation Associated with Reporting Crimes and Other Misconduct:** The Acting Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, in collaboration with the Secretaries of the Military Departments and the Department of Defense Inspector General, will establish a comprehensive strategy to prevent retaliation against Service members who report or intervene on behalf of the victim in instances of sexual assault and other crimes. Report your plans for developing the strategy to the Secretary of Defense by September 1, 2015.

Your strong leadership has been and will continue to be essential in our prevention efforts. As leaders, we all must promote an appropriate climate where sexual assault and other destructive behaviors are prevented, reporting and intervention is encouraged, and victim support is unparalleled.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ash Carter". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

cc:

Under Secretaries of Defense

Commanders of the Combatant Commands

Inspector General of the Department of Defense

Assistant Secretaries of Defense

Directors of the Defense Agencies

Directors of the DoD Field Activities