



SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
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WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

MAY - 1 2019

MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARIES OF THE MILITARY DEPARTMENTS  
CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF  
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: Actions to Address and Prevent Sexual Assault in the Military

Safeguarding our Nation requires a mission-ready force. Our foundational strength rests with the men and women who volunteer to serve our country and protect our freedoms. Based on the results of the most recent reports on sexual assault at our Military Service Academies and in our active duty force, it is clear that sexual assault and sexual harassment are persistent challenges. This was reaffirmed at the National Discussion on Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment at America's Colleges, Universities and Service Academies, hosted by the Military Department Secretaries this past month. To put it bluntly, we are not performing to the standards and expectations we have for ourselves or for each other. This is unacceptable. We cannot shrink from facing the challenge head on. We must, and will, do better.

After reviewing this year's data from the FY 2018 Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military and the findings and recommendations from the Sexual Assault Accountability and Investigation Task Force (SAAITF) Report, my resolve to eliminate these crimes is stronger than ever. I am, and we all must be, committed to doing more for the women and men who serve this country and ensuring our force is the epitome of good order and discipline in everything we do. We must address how we are structured and how we resource efforts to combat this scourge. We must improve our culture to treat each other with dignity and respect and hold ourselves, and each other, more accountable. The essential elements that give rise to dignity and respect must be part of our daily repertoire of interactions. This is a call to action. To that end, I direct the following:

- **Implement the recommendations of the SAAITF Report, including taking steps to seek a stand-alone military crime of sexual harassment.** Our military justice system is unparalleled and unique in that it treats behaviors counter to good order and discipline as crimes, while providing comprehensive support to victims throughout the process. Remaining unparalleled requires constant scrutiny and reevaluation to identify necessary areas for reform and improvement. The Task Force's recommendations are far-reaching and will lead to improvements at each step of the military justice process. To this end, I approve the recommendations of the SAAITF Report submitted to me on April 30, 2019, and direct the Military Departments and applicable DoD Components to immediately identify needed actions, including necessary changes to structure and resourcing, to implement these recommendations. The Military Services, through their respective Military Departments, and the other concerned DoD Components will provide me, through the Under Secretary of



OSD004373-19/CMD005374-19

Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD(P&R)), a plan of action with milestones on the implementation of these recommendations by September 30, 2019.

- **Develop new climate assessment tools.** To identify emerging climate challenges within military units and provide critical oversight mechanisms, the USD(P&R), in collaboration with the Secretaries of the Military Departments, the Chiefs of the Military Services, and the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, will develop and provide leaders with assessment tools that help them to better understand the extent of such challenges within their units, assist them with developing an appropriate course of action from a suite of interventions, and provide them with feedback on the impact of their efforts. This will require additional resourcing to provide commanders the tools and authorities to maintain good order and discipline within the ranks. The USD(P&R) will provide me a plan of action with milestones on the development of such an assessment system by September 30, 2019.
- **Launch the Catch a Serial Offender (CATCH) Program.** To improve the identification of repeat offenders, the Secretaries of the Military Departments, the Chiefs of the Military Services, and the Chief of the National Guard Bureau will ensure necessary resourcing and structure to incorporate the CATCH Program into their respective sexual assault prevention and response programs when it comes “online” this year. The Military Services and the National Guard will ensure all response personnel, including Sexual Assault Response Coordinators, Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Victim Advocates, Special Victims’ Counsel, Victims’ Legal Counsel, and military justice personnel, are trained on the CATCH Program procedures, to include notification of a match. Sexual Assault Response Coordinators and Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Victim Advocates will offer the program to Service members making a restricted report of sexual assault. I expect you to report your plan of action and milestones for CATCH Program implementation, force education, and response personnel training to me through the USD(P&R) no later than 60 days after the program is implemented.
- **Enhance Efforts to Select Recruits of the Highest Character.** To ensure the men and women recruited into our Armed Forces are compatible with our military’s core values, the DoD Accession Policy Directorate, in collaboration with the Military Departments, Military Services, DoD Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, the Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and the Office of People Analytics shall lead a working group to develop a plan to validate and implement (as applicable) measures to improve assessment of military applicant character prior to selection. The USD(P&R) will submit a plan to me by September 30, 2019, including a projected timeline for piloting proposed assessment measures.
- **Prepare New Leaders and First-Line Supervisors for Applied Leadership Challenges.** To ensure our newest officer and enlisted leaders are prepared to fulfill their supervisory roles to prevent and properly respond to sexual assault and sexual harassment, the Secretaries of the Military Departments, the Chiefs of the Military Services, and the Chief of the National Guard Bureau will create a working group to identify the appropriate knowledge, skills, and abilities needed for training and

education (inclusive of all officer accession pathways and professional military education) to effectively prepare junior officers and junior enlisted leaders for preventing and responding to the applied leadership challenges presented by sexual assault and sexual harassment. Junior leaders are on the frontline of our fight to eradicate these problems in our ranks and must serve as role models in this effort. As such, they must be appropriately prepared and held appropriately accountable for promoting civility and cohesion among their subordinates, setting the example through their own behavior. This includes an appropriate, professional response by peers to a victim and an alleged offender when a sexual assault is reported in a unit. I expect you to report your plan of action and milestones for the working group to better prepare junior officer and junior enlisted leaders to me through the USD(P&R) by September 30, 2019.

- **Execute the DoD Sexual Assault Prevention Plan of Action (PPOA).** To stop sexual assault before it occurs and promote unity of effort throughout the DoD, the Secretaries of the Military Departments, the Chiefs of the Military Services, and the Chief of the National Guard Bureau will implement the Department's PPOA, realigning resources as required. Implementation progress will be reported in four phases in accordance with the "Execution of the Department of Defense Sexual Assault Prevention Plan of Action, 2019-2023" memorandum dated April 26, 2019. The PPOA outlines the process by which we implement and assess our prevention efforts. This includes specific objectives towards rigorous research and evaluation of the effectiveness of targeted prevention strategies. These evaluations align with the feedback from the National Discussion on Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment at America's Colleges, Universities and Service Academies. Although the Department's efforts addressed in the PPOA will focus primarily on sexual assault prevention, the Military Departments, the Military Services, and the National Guard Bureau may define the scope of their respective prevention activities, given many use an integrated approach that incorporates multiple areas. Using the Department's template for phase one of implementation, provide completed frameworks to me through the USD(P&R) no later than December 31, 2019.

Collectively, we must do everything we can to eliminate sexual harassment and assault in the military. In doing so, we must provide the highest-quality response to service members and hold offenders appropriately accountable. Through these combined prevention, accountability, and support efforts, we will better prevent the crime and investigate and adjudicate reports, all while reiterating the Department's emphatic message that sexual assault is illegal and immoral, is inconsistent with the military's mission, and will not be tolerated. We will not rest until all Service members can serve in an environment of dignity and respect.

  
Patrick M. Shanahan  
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