

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

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## **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.