

PAIRS CASE 2019-C-0062

STATEMENT OF
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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

Madam Chair, Ranking Member Kelly, and other distinguished members of the committee, I appreciate the opportunity today to discuss an issue that is of fundamental importance to the health and safety of our cadets at the United States Air Force Academy and an issue of grave importance to our national security. Thank you for your dedication to confronting sexual harassment and sexual assault, misconduct that has no place at our Academies or in our military, and for your concern about the wellbeing of our cadets and cadet candidates. I can assure you that these are concerns shared not only by myself, but also by the dedicated staff, faculty, leadership, and cadets at our Academy.

As the Superintendent of the United States Air Force Academy, I appear before you today on behalf of the future leaders of our Air Force – our 4,281 cadets and 203 Preparatory School cadet candidates – as well as the faculty and staff that are working hard to develop them into a new generation of high-character leaders and innovative warrior-scholars. But I'm also here today as a graduate of our Academy, as a leader of Airmen who has had the privilege to wear this uniform for more than 33 years, and as a father of two young members of this same generation we are training and educating at the Academy. From each of these perspectives, I find the results of the 2017-2018 Sexual Harassment and Violence (SH&V) report very troubling. This is a leadership issue, and I know I speak for everyone at the Academy when I say that the numbers in the report do not reflect the standards we hold ourselves to as leaders, and they do not reflect the core values of our Air Force or our Air Force Academy. We are committed to addressing these issues head-on across our Academy, and to be the example for the Air Force, the Department of Defense, and society. But it is clear that our past efforts have not had the effects we intended or expected. These results are unacceptable.

There is no question – when we have even one instance of sexual assault or sexual harassment at our Academy, we have a problem. Far too many of our cadets have had experiences along the spectrum of harmful behaviors, from sexual harassment to sexual assault. This year’s survey shows that 46 percent of women at the Academy have experienced sexual harassment. While reports to Air Force authorities of sexual assault have gone down from 33 to 29 since the 2016-2017 report, the estimated past-year prevalence of sexual assault against women has increased from 11.2 percent to 15.1 percent, and estimated prevalence of sexual assault against men did not change statistically. This data shows that cadets at the Academy have been harmed, and that too many feel they can’t come forward for the help and support they need. It shows that cadets at the Academy have harmed their peers, those that they intend to serve alongside in defense of our nation. The data does not show us exactly why these egregious acts occurred, but we know that these are people, not statistics, and that leadership is the solution. As leaders, we set the tone for an appropriate culture and climate, enforce standards, and ensure the safety of those entrusted to our care. Where we have fallen short, it is our responsibility to take active ownership of these shortcomings and work aggressively to correct them. I am disheartened and frustrated by the results, but I will not rest until we get this right. Holding perpetrators of these crimes appropriately accountable is key to this effort.

In recent years, this committee has heard testimony from our Academies’ Superintendents, from experts, and from survivors on our progress or lack thereof on this very topic. I appreciate your continued vigilance on this issue – it is a serious problem that requires steadfast attention, and your oversight is rooted in a care for our cadets and our military that I wholeheartedly share. I also share in any frustration, impatience and anger you may have for the results we’ve seen this year. We have a problem, and there is no doubt that we need to do better

to correct it. Any occurrence of sexual harassment and assault is corrosive to our ability to train the leaders of character that our Air Force and our nation need. The data clearly shows that we have fallen short, and it will inform further review and adjustment of our programs and policies. While the programs we have implemented in the past have not yet produced the results we had intended, we have already taken numerous steps in the last year, and we are working diligently to create new programs and adjust existing ones in order to better serve our cadets. I have personally met with survivors, both men and women, one-on-one and I have learned a great deal about their survivor experiences. As a commander, leader, Airman, and father, their stories rock me to the core and they are my motivation to change this culture and stop this crime.

We will continue to conduct research to better understand the numbers, but action can't wait. We are moving out. In addition to direction from the Department of Defense and Department of the Air Force, we have several programs of key importance to the Academy. I would like to highlight a number of recent and ongoing efforts we have undertaken, and several courses of action we are taking in the future. We are encouraged by some of the initial results and feedback from programs and events such as these, and will continue to refine our approach as we remain fully engaged in the fight against sexual harassment and sexual assault at our Academy.

Pathways to Thriving and survivor care

This past April we held the Pathways to Thriving Summit, which from feedback from attendees including current cadets, past cadets, survivors, and community leaders was an incredibly impactful event. For me personally, this was one of the most eye-opening experiences of my career. At this first-ever event for any Academy, survivors of sexual assault were invited

to gather together for a two-day summit at our campus, where they collaborated with leaders and subject matter experts. The overall intent for the summit, organized by the acting Sexual Assault Prevention and Response program manager, Dr. Kimberly Dickman, who is seated behind me here today, was not only to facilitate healing but also to include sexual assault survivors in the discussion on where the Academy has been on this issue, and how we move forward productively. Working groups gathered together for sessions tasked with coming up with improvements to our Sexual Assault Prevention and Response efforts, and presented these ideas to leadership for implementation. As a direct result of this summit, numerous programs were created and are now in place. I took the opportunity to apologize to survivors for what they went through, but also expressed my gratitude for their willingness to attend, to tell their stories, and to share their ideas on how we can improve. I believe this summit was a productive experience for all involved, and for our Academy. This spring we will hold a second summit called Pathways to Prevention where we will learn about and work on issues specific to our Academy that can impact the prevalence of sexual assault and harassment.

Caring for sexual assault survivors, no matter when or where their assault took place, remains a central priority for the United States Air Force Academy, and for our Sexual Assault Prevention and Response office. This includes providing education, advocacy, emotional support, referrals, and information. This care is provided to cadets whether they were assaulted on base, away on leave, or even before they became cadets at the Academy. My predecessor recognized a problem with our Sexual Assault Prevention and Response office, and we made swift, local changes to ensure that cadets receive the quality of care and support they need. The appropriate programs and resources were tailored to their needs, and in Spring 2018 we replaced all personnel in the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response office, including the Sexual Assault

Response Coordinator and all full-time victim advocates. We also created new positions for a program manager, two violence prevention integrators, and hired a separate, additional sexual assault response coordinator focused on our permanent party Airmen. Our permanent party and cadet Airmen require unique, specialized care given their differences in culture, developmental levels, and living and social environments. This allows one sexual assault response coordinator to focus solely on cadets. All of these changes, made shortly before the survey, were a necessary measure to put the office on a proper footing and build a foundation for better prevention and care. I am confident that the new organizational structure we have in place offers improved capabilities in each of these areas.

I want all survivors to get the support they need and want so that they can reach their full potential as pilots, researchers, engineers, astronauts, athletes, Rhodes Scholars, and above all -- leaders. And, we want perpetrators of sexual violence to be brought to justice and held appropriately accountable. Those found culpable have no place at our Academy or in the Air Force. To remove a barrier to reporting, this past May we implemented a "Safe to Report" policy. The Department of Defense and Air Force determined that collateral misconduct by the victim of a sexual assault is one of the most significant barriers to reporting assault because of the victim's fear of punishment. To remove this barrier and encourage the reporting of sexual assault, the new policy states that if a cadet reports a sexual assault, he or she can get help and support without having to fear that they will be punished for minor collateral misconduct including unauthorized absences, consensual intimate behavior in the cadet area, underage drinking, and fraternization. This ensures a consistent approach that encourages reporting, while also avoiding unnecessary additional stressors and maintaining good order and discipline. While it is difficult to determine the factors that impact reporting numbers, since this was put in place,

we have received positive feedback from cadets indicating that they came forward as a result of this policy. In addition to providing amnesty for survivors, the Safe to Report policy demonstrates to victims and survivors that the Academy's senior leaders hear them. We want them to report. We want them to trust our leadership will not tolerate a lack of respect on our campus.

Other recent policy improvements and campus changes are more broadly targeted at addressing issues in the overall culture and climate at our Academy, as well as promoting good order and discipline:

- **Changes to alcohol policy:** The literature on sexual assault indicates that alcohol is a contributing factor in more than half of unwanted sexual contact. With this in mind, multiple initiatives have been implemented to promote responsible alcohol use at the Air Force Academy. Sophomore cadets receive training related to responsible alcohol consumption and to reduce risk factors associated with alcohol. We also retrained all alcohol servers, and changed alcohol serving policies to promote a safer environment where alcohol is served.
- **Changes to recoupment policy:** Previously only cadets disenrolled during their junior and senior years were subject to pay back the costs of their education. However, this past year, the Secretary of the Air Force changed the policy, which now allows the Secretary to recoup educational costs for any cadet (regardless of year) that is disenrolled for serious misconduct. As a result of this change, we recently saw 5 cadets who were disenrolled for sexual misconduct and received recoupment orders who previously would not have been subject to recoupment.

The amount of recoupment is approximately \$50,000 per year that the cadet attended the Academy.

- **Closed Circuit Television (CCTV):** Over the past year, we have installed several thousand additional CCTV units across our campus. This effort is ongoing, and is intended to enhance the safety and security of our cadets. Additionally, the units serve as a deterrent against criminal conduct, and provide footage for investigations in the event that an incident occurs. Units are not installed in any rooms or areas that would violate the privacy of our cadets.

Case Management Group

The Case Management Group has been a requirement by the Department of Defense since the inception of the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response program in 2005. When a survivor chooses to make an unrestricted report of a sexual assault, in addition to connecting them to services with our numerous helping agencies, we convene a monthly Case Management Group meeting. This group is a multidisciplinary team that meets to discuss the well-being of a survivor, and I personally chair these meetings as the Superintendent. One enhancement to this Department of Defense policy that we find beneficial is the inclusion of the Academy's director of culture and climate. In the Air Force we also conduct the Case Management Group for restricted reports. The goal of this meeting is to discuss the support and needs of each survivor amongst Academy leaders. The survivor is notified prior to the meeting and given an opportunity to share his or her thoughts or concerns with the group through his or her representative. This model provides a forum to ensure that survivors are receiving the proper care, support, and respect after making a report, and that they are not experiencing any retaliation. In addition, within 72 hours, the survivor's commander will update him or her on what was discussed during

the meeting. We feel so strongly about the importance and benefits of the Case Management Group for the survivor, the institution, and community that members of the Sexual Assault and Prevention and Response and Judge Advocate offices presented at a national sexual violence prevention conference. Additionally, my team and I recently submitted an article for publication to share our lessons learned with university leaders in the hopes that they might employ a similar initiative at their schools.

Cadet Healthy Personal Skills (CHiPS) Training

Any approach to confronting issues of sexual assault at our Academy must include robust and innovative training and education programs. A number of programs have recently been implemented, some just now maturing enough to evaluate, and others that we have recently implemented and will continue to assess and refine.

- Cadet Healthy Personal Skills consists of 8 hours of training, delivered in three blocks by professional, trained facilitators in small groups.
- The training program focuses on increasing healthy interpersonal relationship skills, and reducing the risk factors for unhealthy relationships. Immediate objectives include:
 - 1) Promoting resiliency and healthy development of cadets
 - 2) Enhancing cadet personal and social competence skills
 - 3) Enhance motivation and skills to deter unhealthy behaviors, especially in risky situations

A research study with the Class of 2021 is showing promising effectiveness for Cadet Healthy Personal Skills compared with a control group. Cadets who received the training have exhibited improved attitudes and skills, especially regarding attitudes toward sexual assault and consent.

Six-month results indicate a decrease in victimization and an increase in consent knowledge and victim support. We are currently reviewing the one-year results of this program. All incoming cadets last year received Cadet Healthy Personal Skills training and it will continue going forward.

Sexual Assault Resistance Education (SARE) Centre programs

Last year, in partnership with the Sexual Assault Resistance Education Centre, we implemented the Enhanced Assess, Acknowledge, Act (EAAA) sexual assault resistance program at the Air Force Academy. This program consists of four, three-hour units, and seeks to empower participants to recognize risk cues for sexual violence. Trainees learn to quickly and accurately assess potentially dangerous sexual situations and to reduce emotional and social obstacles to resistance. Trainees are also instructed in self-defense skills. This is a program based on sound evidence and has shown significant reduction in the prevalence of sexual assault on college campuses. Last year we trained seven members of the Academy to implement EAAA and we will beta test the program this spring. This fall we will conduct research to assess this program's efficacy with the incoming freshman class.

Healthy Relationships Training (HRT)

First implemented in 2015, the Academy Athletic Department, our Sexual Assault Prevention and Response office, and our Judge Advocate office, partnered to develop lessons on healthy relationships with our intercollegiate athletes, who comprise roughly one-quarter of our students. Across colleges and universities, intercollegiate athletes have a higher risk of sexual assault perpetration, warranting this targeted, preemptive intervention to prevent sexual violence

among this portion of our population that comprises a greater percentage of our student body than most other institutions.

A lot of research is coming out on relationships and sexuality education as key to sexual violence prevention both in perpetration and victimization reduction. With this in mind, our team developed formal lessons with objectives and outcomes centered on mutual respect and effective communication. The lessons are informed by evidence from a number of programs shown to reduce sexual violence, and one module is conducted each year in small groups, by every athletic team. The lessons, taken by approximately 1,000 cadets per year, cover:

- **HRT 1**: Starting relationships, dating, what you look for in a partner, red flags and warning signs, consent and finding your voice.
- **HRT 2**: Pushing the limits, setting boundaries in all types of relationships, setting physical/intimate boundaries, consent, and power of vulnerability.
- **HRT 3**: Qualities of a good leader, emotional intelligence, communication, online behavior and sexting, ending relationships in a healthy way, keys to developing a culture that prevents sexual assault.

The training is popular among cadets, and takes place in a judgment-free, positive environment, where everyone is allowed to speak freely. Qualitative responses included cadet-athletes stating:

- “Best training I’ve had at USAFA”
- “Improved my relationships with friends, teammates and family members”
- “Within the locker room it has started serious conversations about relationships and how we treat each other”

- “HRT has helped me because it brings to light issues and situations that are often not talked about in an open forum. It provides a safe environment to be vulnerable to [and] with your teammates.”

A 3rd-party external review of our athletic program highlighted HRT as the best training they have seen at any university. A formal evaluation of the HRT program will be accomplished this Spring, soon followed by a plan to implement the program with all cadets at the Academy. Several other institutions of higher education have visited our campus to learn more about the program, and a number of Air Force bases have asked to use our HRT curriculum.

3rd Party Review

This past summer we voluntarily appointed an outside firm to conduct an independent review of the culture and climate, risk management, and commitment to regulatory compliance within our Athletics Department. We made this decision not out of mistrust of our own ability to assess our effectiveness in these areas, but instead to benefit from an impartial, objective and exhaustive examination of our entire program. The firm we chose to conduct the review, Collegiate Sports Associates, was selected due to their outstanding reputation, relevant expertise, and familiarity with NCAA Division 1 athletic programs.

There are several observations by Collegiate Sports Associates in the review that I am proud to see, including a positive assessment of our previously mentioned HRT program and our creation of a full-time position dedicated to Athletics Department culture and climate. Collegiate Sports Associates’ report stated: “In many ways, the USAFA Athletics Department is a model for NCAA programs with high standards for behavior and performance and specific training protocols for developing future leaders.” But there are other areas where we have opportunities

to improve. We must refine and reinforce where we are progressing, and reexamine and improve where we are lacking. Along those lines of effort, we currently have plans to implement several of the suggested changes identified by Collegiate Sports Associates:

- An ombudsperson will be assigned and trained within the Athletics Department as a resource for all staff and cadet-athletes. We will ensure that cadet-athletes and staff are aware of this resource as well as the many other resources available at the Academy.
- The review reinforced our need for an anonymous reporting option to address any possible gaps in reporting of a variety of misconduct that impacts our cadets and our culture. This will be a campus-wide solution and is projected to be in place as early as this summer.
- We are reviewing ways to complement the current training for coaches and staff, and develop additional ongoing, formal training programs.
- We have already established a cadet-athlete annual experiential evaluation, and are incorporating the unique athlete code of conduct into a cadet-athlete handbook.

External Collaborations

The Academy continues to collaborate with external experts, colleges and universities, and other military organizations. We meet quarterly with our local partners, Colorado College, University of Colorado Colorado Springs, Pikes Peak Community College, Schriever Air Force Base, Peterson Air Force Base, and Fort Carson, to share best practices and innovative ways forward. Our subject matter experts attend and present at national conferences addressing sexual assault on college campuses. Our efforts with leaders and researchers in this field continue our strategic approach to prevention and response. We have a specific population here at the

Academy that requires unique and deliberate efforts based on the best research and knowledge available.

A Culture of Dignity and Respect

Over the past year, like many others across our nation, I have been inspired by the proliferation of courageous voices being heard as part of the #MeToo movement. Voices that for far too long were kept silent are now leading productive and transformative discussions on the change needed in our culture, and these voices are inspiring others to find the courage to speak. Our society is changing swiftly, and our Academy and military must lead these developments. Our newest class at the Air Force Academy included our highest percentage of women applicants (30.3%), and we expect the Class of 2023 to be even higher. Additionally, this year we accepted the highest number of minority cadets in our history (more than 33.3%) and our junior class includes the highest percentage of women in our Academy's history (29.9%). We are not done on this front, and will continue to strive to improve these numbers so that our Academy more closely reflects the society it serves and possesses the greatest strengths of that society.

Diversity increases our effectiveness and fighting capability by providing a wealth of perspectives, skills and talents, derived from different backgrounds, experiences and upbringings. By contrast, treating one another with a lack of dignity and respect disables our effectiveness, and destroys our morale. Like their corrosive cousins of racism, bigotry and hate; sexism, sexual harassment and sexual assault make us a weaker, less capable force. Their prevalence makes us less capable of winning conflicts on the volatile, rapidly evolving battlefields we currently face, where we need the talents and intellects of every last one of our Airmen operating at the peak of their abilities. Last year, I submitted an editorial for publication

by CNN entitled “Why diversity?” and more recently an article for Latina Style Magazine entitled “A Diverse Force is a Strong Force,” both discussing how I feel that a military that reflects one of our nation’s greatest strengths – our uncommon and incredible diversity – is a stronger military. As the Academy’s Superintendent, I’ve been honored to speak about the value of diversity and the importance of dignity and respect to a variety of audiences across the country including the Anti-Defamation League, the National Latina Symposium, and just several weeks ago at an NCAA forum. Air Force Academy leaders will continue this important dialogue whenever and wherever possible, but most importantly in direct conversations with our cadets.

Since my first day as Superintendent, I have made it clear that fostering a culture of dignity and respect for everyone on campus is foundational to everything we do at our Academy. Top to bottom, left to right, and regardless of rank, position or job title, we will treat one another with dignity and respect no matter a person’s race, gender, age, religion, ethnicity or sexual orientation. Sexual violence is about more than sex – it is about exploiting and manipulating disparities in power, and it is about control, and this behavior violates even the most minimal definition of respectful and dignified conduct. The bottom line is that if a person cannot adhere to our standards, they have no place at our Academy. They have no place in our Air Force.

Accountability

We cannot tolerate any instance of sexual assault in our Air Force or at our Academy. We will hold those culpable accountable and we have a variety of options to do that. When a victim makes an unrestricted report of sexual assault, we not only make sure the victim is getting necessary care and support, the Air Force Office of Special Investigations begins their investigation. We provide updates on that investigation to the victim, through the

Special Victims' Counsel and the Judge Advocate's Victim-Witness Liaison. Once the investigation is complete we seek out the victim's input on how the case should be handled. Once the Judge Advocate's Office receives the victim's preference, they work with commanders at all levels to ensure we are taking appropriate action.

At the Academy, in addition to courts-martial and administrative discipline tools available across the Air Force, we have a cadet discipline system that allows me to disenroll cadets for misconduct, as well as boards of inquiry typically used for officer discharges. For those victims who are hesitant to testify publicly, these processes give victims a voice in a non-public setting while affording those accused of these heinous crimes their due process rights. As discussed above, the newly-expanded recoupment policy allows the Secretary to recoup the costs of a cadet's Academy education if they are disenrolled or discharged for serious misconduct, regardless of their class year.

Conclusion

We will not rest until every cadet at the Air Force Academy is safe. We are guided by both Secretary of Defense and Secretary of the Air Force directives to examine this issue with the best in science, personnel and leadership. Service secretaries are bringing us together with other universities and colleges in April to examine prevention at all levels. We will bring these best practices back to the Air Force Academy to help in the fight against sexual violence on our campus and in society.

Confronting these issues requires a broad and vigilant approach that gets at the root of institutional culture and climate. The stakes are high, and we must get this right. I often tell our cadets that they will shape the future of our Air Force when they leave our campus, and they

must be prepared to encounter threats and challenges that we haven't yet fathomed. In the near future they will graduate and stand with my generation in uniform, serving alongside us. But soon they will replace us, and will guide our military services into an uncertain future. They must create a better Air Force, one that is even more capable, creative and innovative. Beyond that, they must create an Air Force that is more inclusive, more understanding, and more inquisitive. I not only want that our cadets be better space operators, pilots, engineers, and logisticians, but I expect and our nation demands that they be better people than those who came before them.

Prevention is our primary goal. As I have described today, we are fully invested in a deliberate multipronged approach. We invite you to come visit our campus, see our programs first hand, and speak with faculty, staff, and cadets. We hope that through these transparent interactions we can also get your insights on how we can improve our Academy. Our approach has to be evidence informed and tailored to the cadet experience. This means looking at individual, interpersonal, and cultural factors that contribute to this crime.

We encourage survivors to continue to come forward, whether it is through anonymous reports or our established restricted or unrestricted reporting channels. That means we have to remove barriers and create an environment where they know they will be supported. Anonymously, survivors have told us that they reported to stop this from happening to others and they feel it's their duty. When survivors raise their voice, we take every allegation seriously, investigate, and hold perpetrators appropriately accountable.

Any instance of sexual harassment or sexual assault is a violation of the sacred trust we must have to be the best force for our nation. Airmen who are incapable of behaving with dignity and respect, who sexually harass or assault others, are not who I want standing next to me. They

have no place at our Academy, and no place in our Air Force. I will not rest – nor will anyone under my command – until every cadet at our Academy is in an environment where they can focus solely on their professional and personal development. Those that fall short of this standard will continue to be held accountable. Our prevalence numbers clearly show there is more work to be done.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to speak before this committee on a topic so vital to the future our Academy and our military, and to the health and safety of this generation of young people. I look forward to answering any questions you might have.