

RECORD VERSION

**STATEMENT OF
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SUPERINTENDENT OF THE UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY**

BEFORE THE

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

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**ON MILITARY SERVICE ACADEMIES' ACTION PLANS TO ADDRESS THE
RESULTS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT AND VIOLENCE REPORT AT THE MILITARY
SERVICE ACADEMIES**

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**NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED BY THE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

Congresswoman Speier, Ranking Member Kelly and distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to be here today to talk about the elimination of sexual assault and harassment at West Point. I wish I were here to tell you how we have solved this problem at West Point, but I am not. Instead, I am here to talk about what we have done, the impacts our actions have had, and how we are adjusting our efforts to address sexual assault and sexual harassment in our ranks. The results of the 2018 Service Academy Gender Relations (SAGR) survey have my complete focus and attention. The survey results combined with our internal frequent assessments will better enable us to understand the characteristics of sexual assault and sexual harassment. We must examine how this abhorrent behavior manifests itself within our community, and how we will comprehensively focus our efforts to prevent sexual assault within our ranks.

As the Superintendent and Commanding Officer of West Point, I am personally committed to the safety and security of our people and leading change within our community. Any case of sexual assault or sexual harassment is unacceptable. Our work will never truly be completed, but our determination, vigilance and commitment to meet the American public's expectations for honorable service is steadfast.

An incident of sexual assault can affect an organization at multiple levels. Cadets may never reach their full potential because of the trauma that can derail their goals and aspirations. Sexual assault also destroys trust across professional and personal relationships, negatively impacts unit readiness, and undermines our Army culture.

The mission of the United States Military Academy is to educate, train, and inspire the Corps of Cadets so that each graduate is a 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. When our cadets graduate, they must be ready for the crucible of ground combat where they will fight and win. They must also be leaders of character who treat everyone with dignity and respect and be committed to preventing sexual harassment and sexual assault in their units. Sexual misconduct erodes our ability to accomplish our mission.

I want to clearly and emphatically state that we understand the severity of the problem revealed by this survey and our prevalence numbers. For those cadets who came forward, it took courage and resilience to report these incidents, and I am proud of them for doing so. Our survey results tell us there are more individuals in our formation who have suffered sexual assault and harassment and have not reported these events. At West Point, our goal is to prevent all sexual misconduct, encourage greater reporting, increase trust among our ranks, and establish a safe and secure environment for all.

We expect graduates of West Point to live honorably, lead honorably, and demonstrate excellence. Cadets internalize these attributes through rigorous and challenging experiences tailored to their individual developmental needs. This system would not work without the leadership and mentorship – a community of support - that is vital to character growth. We have a diverse cadre of devoted military and civilian staff, faculty and coaches who provide support, feedback, and mentorship to cadets during their time with us. Throughout its history, West Point has relied on a combination of quality programming and world-class personnel to produce outstanding junior Army officers; this combination will help us prevent sexual assault and harassment at West Point. Sexual assault is a community problem and we need everyone's awareness, focus, and energy to implement a community-wide solution. Most importantly, we must leverage our three greatest strengths at West Point: (1) our cadets, (2) our leadership, and (3) our Army values.

I believe that our character development efforts should begin before cadets arrive at West Point. It begins after they accept their appointment and continues through graduation and beyond as they inherit responsibility for our Soldiers in platoons across the entire U.S. Army. This effort must be led by our military and civilian staff, faculty, and coaches, it must be grounded in a culture of respect, and it must begin and end with the individual cadet.

Current Environment

The Corps of Cadets is comprised of approximately 4,400 young men and women from across the entire country as well as additional individuals from our international partners. They are some of our nation's best and brightest. They are strong mentally, physically, and emotionally, and they have voluntarily chosen, during a time of war, to pursue military service. There are several important factors with respect to this population:

- We are constantly receiving, educating, and training a new population with nearly 1,000 graduating each May, and approximately 1,200 new cadets reporting each July. They come to us from different family backgrounds and individual experiences.
- There is a 25% turnover in personnel every year at the military academy
- Many of our cadets have experienced unwanted sexual contact prior to arriving to West Point (23.6% of female cadets and 9.1% of male cadets indicate experiencing unwanted sexual contact prior to entry: 2018 SAGR Survey).
- Young adults arrive on campus with a different set of interpersonal skills than in prior generations, many of them influenced by hundreds of hours of on-line social media interaction

We know that these issues are present to some extent on all college campuses and are not unique to West Point. In addition, the ongoing national conversation about sexual harassment and sexual assault is uncovering just how prevalent these forms of misconduct are in our society.

We acknowledge and consider such environmental factors and prior influences when we develop our programs. In doing so, we continuously look at the effectiveness of off-the-shelf programs and partner with outside organizations to help us find viable strategies that are sustainable over time. We must also determine how to best equip our cadets to be their best, all day, every day. Furthermore, we must help cadets understand healthy relationships, know what their boundaries are, have the capacity to

engage in open and honest conversations about boundaries, and operate in a space where respect for others is of paramount importance. We must also facilitate a culture in which bystanders are actively looking out for and coming to the aid of other members of the community. Finally, we must work to decrease the conditions which we know to produce a likelihood of sexual assault or harassment.

SAGR Survey Analysis

Behavioral and cultural change is the focus of our sexual assault prevention effort. Despite the increase in prevalence of unwanted sexual contact, this year's SAGR results show several promising trends, indicating our programming efforts are reaching cadets. Aligned with the Secretary of Defense's Action Plan to prevent sexual assault and sexual harassment, some indicators show movement within our program. It appears that education is having an impact as cadets report increased awareness of warning signs of sexual assault, increased knowledge about how to intervene and how to get help for friends dealing with sexual assault and intimate partner violence, and increased understanding of the connection between alcohol and sexual assault. Additionally, cadets are becoming more aware of conditions that may indicate higher risk situations and unhealthy relationships. This particular skill is important to empower and equip bystanders to act. In 2018, nearly 67% of women and 47% of men reported observing risky situations and over 90% of those who witnessed these situations intervened. These are positive building blocks to changing behavior. Personal awareness and understanding one's responsibility in changing culture ultimately contribute to improving our climate.

As we work to create a supportive and empathetic environment, we see indicators that go beyond just our increase in reporting. We also see that cadets continue to report sexual assault because they are encouraged to do so by others (64%) and because they did not want the offender to hurt anyone else (55%). Additionally, 80% of cadets who reported their incident to an authority indicated they would make the same decision again.

Nonetheless, the increase in unwanted sexual contact between 2016 and 2018 is unacceptable. Despite all our work to create an effective program to reduce sexual assault and sexual harassment, this increase in prevalence of unwanted sexual contact solidifies my initial assessment that we must be more intentional about our prevention efforts, making this not just a Corps of Cadets problem, but a West Point community problem. In order to see meaningful improvement and real progress, we must fully mobilize our three greatest strengths.

Our first strength is the men and women that comprise the Corps of Cadets. West Point's admission process involves a comprehensive review of congressional nominations, teacher evaluations, police reports, and essays that require candidates to answer questions on how they would work with and support all genders in a team environment. This process results in the presumption that the overwhelming majority of cadets entering West Point are decent, respectful, and honorable people who would never harass or assault another person. By every indicator, they are motivated to learn how to build and lead strong, inclusive teams that value mutual trust.

Yet we understand that even after our rigorous screening process, some cadets enter West Point with a set of values that are not completely aligned with the Army Values of Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless-Service, Honor, Integrity and Personal Courage. Nor may they be ready to uphold West Point's motto of "Duty, Honor, Country." Knowing this, we have made character development as the foundation of all cadet's first summer at West Point – Cadet Basic Training (CBT). The CBT character education program aspires to meet all new cadets where they are on the spectrum of good character. We educate them on the moral-ethical standards required to build and lead teams within the Corps of Cadets. We instill a sense of individual and group accountability that rewards exemplary decision-making and behavior and that rejects and corrects ill-disciplined and selfish behavior. Strong character is revealed by exemplary decision-making and consistent behavior that leads to mutual trust and confidence.

While Cadet Basic Training provides a foundation, the four-year progression across the Academic, Military, Physical, and Character Programs provides each cadet multiple opportunities to make mistakes, learn, grow, and develop into a leader of character.

This leads us to West Point's second great strength. Our hand-selected military and civilian faculty, staff, and coaches educate, train, and inspire the Corps of Cadets in both group and individual settings. Our faculty, staff, and coaches role model exemplary decision-making and behavior for the Corps of Cadets. They also coach, counsel, and mentor cadets to both promote excellence and address any shortcomings that reveal weak character or selfishness. This layered approach across all four years of a cadet's time at West Point gives them multiple opportunities to live honorably, lead honorably, and demonstrate excellence each year.

Finally, our greatest strength is our Army Values and West Point values. Those values, those words, describe what every member of the U.S. Army and West Point must aspire to be. The values also fully apply to our cadets, staff, faculty, and coaches, and are the words that truly bind us in this effort to develop leaders of character.

I would like to share with you some of our recent efforts and provide a way ahead to bolster our comprehensive strategy to prevent sexual harassment and the crime of sexual assault.

Efforts and Insights

After the SAGR Survey of 2016 and the guidance delivered by our Secretary of Defense, we initiated a number of important initiatives. These initiatives were focused on the four objectives given to us by the Secretary of Defense: (1) reinvigorate prevention, (2) improve sexual assault reporting, (3) enhance a culture of respect, and (4) promote a disciplined force.

To reinvigorate prevention, we hired an external consulting firm, EverFi, to conduct an assessment of our Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP) program. EverFi's mission is to support colleges and universities in making a

transformative impact on critical issues such as sexual assault as well as alcohol and drug use. EverFi helped us see the importance of institutionalizing the program. As a result, we established a character education working group to thoroughly examine our education program across the Academy. There were many outcomes of these efforts. We revised our character development approach with specific emphasis on leader to cadet interaction across every program. We also revised the SHARP component of our Character Education Program by expressing the problems of sexual harassment and sexual assault in terms of character, empathy, and respect. We added EverFi's online training program to our programming efforts. This online program is being used by hundreds of colleges and universities across the country. It includes Haven (sexual violence awareness, response, and prevention), Alcohol.edu, and Prescription Drug Abuse training modules. The Corps took the training in the fall of 2017 for the first time, and we also sent the training to our incoming cadets from the Class of 2022 prior to their arrival.

As part of the EverFi training program, we received data on our cadets' experiences, attitudes, and beliefs. This data allowed us to immediately alter already scheduled training sessions. For instance, survey results indicated that there were some cadets in unhealthy relationships. We conducted One Love Escalation workshops to highlight resources available for someone in a dangerous or violent relationship, and we also provided cadets with skills to help a friend in that situation. In summary, our expanded approach to the prevention of sexual harassment and assault training provided us with opportunities to have deeper and more immediately relevant conversations about topics and issues impacting members of the Corps of Cadets.

We continued our focus to **improve sexual assault reporting**. After making significant SHARP program changes in 2016, we believe the increased reporting is a result of these efforts. We took specific measures to increase the protection of our cadet victims, their anonymity, and their care to include moving the Victim Advocate office to a more central and accessible location for cadets as well as improving the administrative, medical, and legal response to notification of incidents. We have fully implemented protections to:

- Provide cadets who file a report of sexual assault with the opportunity for representation by a special victim's counsel - a military attorney specializing in representing the rights of sexual assault survivors.
- Make certain all unrestricted cases of sexual assault are referred to the Army's independent Criminal Investigation Division and are reviewed by a judge advocate.
- Ensure the command, upon advice from counsel, disposes of sexual misconduct allegations on a case-by-case basis as indicated by the evidence. When warranted, this can be a General Court-Martial or lesser disposition.

Recognizing the importance of culture in this issue and to **enhance the culture of dignity and respect**, we codified our four-year character development program in a publication entitled *Developing Leaders of Character*. This document describes the purposeful integration of individual development and leadership development experiences within a culture of character growth. This new framework emphasizes that to develop leaders of character, it is necessary to not only develop the individual's knowledge, skills, and behaviors, but also to maintain a culture of character growth within which the development occurs.

In addition to publishing *Developing Leaders of Character*, we initiated several activities whose objective was to enhance the culture of dignity and respect. For example, we created "Hot Topic"-forums based on a suggestion from an admissions officer who had experience with these from graduate school. We had cadet and faculty discussions on topics of specific concern to cadets, especially those related to social issues. These forums have covered a range of character topics from gender and race relations to patriotism and the meaning of the flag. Since social media has such an impact on respect, we added social media and cyber-bullying topics into the character education program. The athletic department implemented the "Trust" campaign, which includes additional training workshops for our cadet-athletes focused on invigorating collaboration, respect, and motivation. An example of this included bringing Ms. Alexis Jones to West Point to present her acclaimed "Locker Room Talk" program to our cadet

athletes. Through her real-life stories, cadets were empowered to say “we don’t do that” when presented with risky options for their behavior.

As a national military academy, we are always focused on **promoting a disciplined force**. Since 2016 we have taken some deliberate actions to improve in this area. The EverFi survey data on alcohol consumption behaviors gave us useful insights into patterns of excessive use, in particular on weekends and at social functions. Therefore, we developed targeted sessions, led by Company Tactical Officers (TACs), deliberately planned prior to major class weekends and celebrations to educate cadets on alcohol awareness, responsible alcohol use, and the prevention of sexual assault and harassment in settings where alcohol might be consumed.

We have initiated numerous efforts, large and small, to prevent inappropriate sexual behavior, improve our reporting, strengthen our culture, and promote a disciplined force. *Most importantly, we continue to learn.* We know this is a complex problem on many college campuses and there are many contributing factors. We have learned that cadets lack the experience and life skills alone to facilitate discussions during education and training sessions, and as such we need seasoned leaders to model appropriate behavior and to facilitate discussions on appropriate sexual behavior. We have learned that leaders need education and training as well so that they can develop effective facilitation skills. We have learned more about how alcohol use and ungoverned spaces create environments that give rise to risky behavior. Finally, we realized that this problem will not be fixed with education alone, and that we must ensure that everyone recognizes their role in contributing to a respectful culture. For true change to happen, we must make some deliberate changes and we need to ensure that everyone recognizes their role in contributing to building an organization where there is zero sexual assault and zero tolerance of it by bystanders. Most importantly we have learned that we must better leverage West Point’s three greatest strengths: our cadets, our staff and faculty, and our values to address the individual behavior and the culture that resulted in the unacceptable levels of sexual violence in the Corps of Cadets.

Action Plan

Moving forward, I have three imperatives in my action plan to address this issue. First, we will work to prevent any instances of sexual harassment or the crime of sexual assault through broad ***integration*** of our deliberate education program into the core of our West Point community. It will no longer be a compartmentalized effort, but an integral part of faculty, staff, and coach actions in all aspects of the academic, military, physical, and character development programs. Second and third are to remain fully committed to providing ***protection*** to sexual assault survivors while holding perpetrators ***accountable***, as appropriate to the individual case, available evidence and in accordance with due process of law for all individuals concerned.

Strong leadership from all our faculty, staff, and coaches is necessary to develop leaders of character and to foster a culture of character growth across the West Point community. We are implementing comprehensive quality programming that consistently reinforces our Army values. Each cadet's academic, military, physical, and character development must be immersed in a culture that consistently fosters this type of character growth. We surround our cadets with leaders, mentors, and peers that are empowered and encouraged to engage in the difficult conversations required to grow in their understanding of healthy relationships. We demand that our staff, faculty, and cadets communicate and enforce consistent standards.

We are expanding our engagement efforts with our Corps of Cadets and reaching out to our incoming new cadets to provide them with preliminary training about healthy relationships and standards of conduct, gather information from them to understand their incoming level of development, and provide information regarding support resources available. We want to set clear expectations up front and ensure we are meeting new cadets where they are so that we can set the appropriate developmental trajectory.

Specifically, I have or will execute the following actions, with respect to ***integration*** of West Point's effort:

- My two highest priorities are Developing Leaders of Character and Strengthening a Culture of Character Growth. These priorities shape our strategy and focus our planning, efforts, and assessment.
- We will establish a Character Development Cell at the institutional level to provide oversight of West Point's efforts, integrate and synchronize our training and education, and to provide an assessment capability to measure progress.
- We will continue our efforts to engage, educate and better evaluate our candidate population to ensure they understand the importance of Army Values, the culture they are about to join, the behavior we expect of every one of them, and consider ways to better screen those candidates for compatibility with those values.
- West Point will conduct a specific day of reflection at the beginning of each semester, a 'stand-down', focused solely on character required to prevent sexual assault, and reinforcing the culture required to sustain our efforts. All activity in other programs will stop as the entire West Point community, including cadets, staff, faculty, and coaches conduct workshops, attend presentations, and engage in group and individual dialogue on the prevention of sexual assault and harassment.
- Our cadets are among the most important leaders within West Point. We will empower cadets to be an active part of diagnosing the root causes of this problem and in actively implementing the comprehensive solution towards solving it.
- We will implement more deliberate cadet peer and subordinate evaluations and identify cadets who have demonstrated strong bystander behavior (to learn from and to reward publicly).
- We will deliberately review our efforts using measurable objectives to provide continued transparency and improvement to our program, and we will provide that feedback to the Secretary of the Army and Chief of Staff of the Army.

To lead in our character development efforts, we will engage with and learn from outside practitioners that can offer insights into solving these problems. We are excited

to be a part of a Service Secretary initiative in April at the United States Naval Academy to discuss best practices and innovative ways to approach the problem of sexual assault and harassment on college campuses. We will continue to build on our existing partnerships in higher education, including with our peers in the Patriot League, Tufts University, and others. We will remain engaged with the Department of Defense Sexual Assault and Prevention Response Office to harness the capabilities of government and private research organizations to ensure we seek continuous improvement of our program.

From the ***protection and accountability*** standpoint, the entire West Point Community will remain committed to strengthening and reinforcing our survivor assistance programs so that we maximize reporting of sexual harassment and sexual assault incidents and provide the support needed to survivors. We cannot enforce full accountability within the West Point community until every instance of sexual assault is reported. To do this, we must maintain an environment where survivors feel empowered to report, safe from any reprisal, and are confident in the investigative and adjudicative processes that address these crimes.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we have a lot of work to do and we are committed to this work. As the Superintendent of the United States Military Academy, I am personally responsible for creating a safe and secure environment that enables our cadets' personal and professional growth as leaders of character and future commissioned officers in our Army. We will leverage our three greatest strengths in this effort, our cadets, our leaders, and our Values, across the entire community and in every program.

We are committed to empowering our people and revamping our programs to foster a community-wide culture that works to prevent sexual assault and harassment. We are committed to ensuring that our programming impacts the cultures and values of all 4,400 cadets as well as the thousands more that constitute the West Point community. This is a community problem and we need to engage the entire community with our

solutions. These are big muscle movements and culture change does not occur overnight. Even still, I am heartened that we are moving in the right direction given some of the more recent changes we have made. We will continue our values-based character education approach and bolster it to provide even more emphasis on sexual assault prevention.

We will continue to fully empower our administration, our faculty, our staff, our coaches, and everyone else that works with our cadets to take direct responsibility for the prevention of sexual harassment and assault. We will continue to provide top-notch care to survivors of sexual assault by protecting their identity and harnessing all the resources necessary to work with them in the aftermath of this trauma. Finally, I am determined to ensure that West Point fully investigates and takes appropriate action in every case of sexual harassment and assault.

I appreciate the time and opportunity to share this with the committee and we look forward to the many discussions that will follow. Ultimately though, we look forward to watching our current and future efforts make a meaningful impact on West Point's culture. Our cadets will be held to task in preventing this behavior in our ranks as we set the safe and secure conditions to develop leaders of character for our Army and Nation.