



SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
1000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

4/18/2018

MEMORANDUM FOR ALL MEMBERS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

SUBJECT: Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention

Those entrusted by our Nation with the lives of our troops and with carrying out violence must demonstrate self and unit discipline in all aspects of our performance. This requires us to do what is right at all times, regardless of the circumstances or whether anyone is watching. We are warfighters, defenders of our Nation, and exemplars of our Nation's values. Unit cohesion is what holds us together under stress and keeps us combat effective when the chips are down. Admired leadership builds the trust of all hands, trust being the coin of the realm and our bedrock in building a cohesive team, one free of denigrating behavior.

In this regard, I am highlighting our Department's commitment to assertively prevent and swiftly and appropriately respond to any sexual assault in our ranks. I expect every member of the Department to use their initiative and courage to model ethical and legal behavior in the workplace, at home, and online. My objective is that we communicate and behave in a way that reflects positively on America's military and builds trust daily in our chain of command, and I am directing a re-doubled effort from our most senior to most junior on insisting on an assault-free military.

Preventing sexual assault is our moral duty. By its nature, sexual assault is one of the most destructive factors in building a mission-focused military. Self-discipline, alert Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs), and attuned chains of command are essential if we are to set standards that strengthen our military readiness to fight well and increase our ability to recruit and retain the finest all-volunteer force this world has ever known. Leaders in the Department also have a special obligation, an *in loco parentis* responsibility, for our young members that buttresses unit cohesion and combat effectiveness.

Due to the age at which nearly all recruits enter the military, NCOs and officers must carry this special responsibility for the care of our troops. While casualties on the battlefield are understood to be consistent with our military duties, I accept no casualties due to sexual assault within our ranks. Military leaders are to be zealous in carrying out *in loco parentis* responsibilities and ridding our ranks of such illegal, abhorrent behavior.

I know that the overwhelming majority of our military and civilian personnel represent the highest standards of decorum and maturity. However, I expect disciplined behavior from all hands without exception. I charge all officers, NCOs, and supervisors to use their authority and force of personality to prevent and eliminate sexual assault from our ranks.

Jan Mattis

