



Army Leaders Gather To Fight Sexual Assault

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Stars and Stripes

Nearly every Soldier who wears two or more stars gathered near Washington on Monday to rally around the idea that fighting sexual assault is priority No. 1 from the top to the bottom of the Army.

Hagel said during a news conference that defense minister meetings brought some clarity to the “Resolute Support” operation NATO will launch to train, advise and assist Afghan forces after those forces have assumed full security responsibility by the end of 2014.

Some 250 generals and top noncommissioned officers attended the Army’s sixth annual Sexual Harassment/Assault Prevention summit at Joint Base Andrews, Md., for sessions that included emotional

talks by servicemembers about their own experiences of sexual assault.

This year’s conference takes place amid a deepening scandal over military sexual assault, with a recent Pentagon report indicating incidences of unwanted sexual contact rose sharply from 2011 to 2012. It may also carry added resonance for commanders because one of their own, Maj. Gen. Michael T. Harrison, commander of Army forces in Japan, was suspended Friday by Chief of Staff Gen. Ray Odierno for allegedly failing to properly investigate a sexual assault complaint.

Odierno would not discuss Harrison with reporters Friday, but suggested that some Army leaders haven’t

seen the sexual assault problem clearly as it built in intensity.

“The amount of reports that are now coming out — people willing to go public, which I think is a good thing — has brought this to a head for me,” he said. “Maybe we have a bigger problem than I imagined.”

While the sessions at the summit were themselves

off the record, a succession of top generals spoke with media members, and told them that zeroing in on habitual sexual predators is key.

“There’s no unit who doesn’t have a problem,” Odierno said. “There’s a predator, probably, in almost every unit of some size.” ■



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