

**I AM THE FORCE
BEHIND THE FIGHT.™**

I Am Committed
to Stopping Sexual Harassment
and Sexual Assault.

I Am Living
the Army Values.

I Am Protecting
the Members of My Team.



Eliminating Sexual Assault Begins With Changing the Culture at the Company Level

By Pablo Villa

NCO Journal

The issue of sexual assault within the Army has vaulted into the national spotlight in recent weeks because of several new incidents and a Pentagon study, released in May, that shows incidents of sexual misconduct throughout the military increased 35 percent in 2012.

The Army is working to focus attention on the issue and ensure that commanders and senior NCOs have the tools necessary to provide a unit-level climate that protects victims and ensures respect for all Soldiers.

“We have challenges when it comes to sexual assault,” Sgt. Maj. of the Army Raymond F. Chandler III said during the sixth annual SHARP summit earlier this month, “because from my perspective, we’re not really sure what the Army profession, character and commitment is all about.”

The Army has aggressively worked to prevent sexual abuse and create a safe environment for Soldiers through its Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention,

or SHARP, program. The program is intended to eliminate sexual assaults by creating a climate that respects the dignity of all members of the Army family — Soldiers, their spouses, partners and other family members. The effort also extends to anyone Soldiers come into contact with, including civilian employees.

“The Sexual Assault Prevention and Response program reinforces the Army’s commitment to eliminate incidents of sexual assault through a comprehensive policy that centers on awareness and prevention, training and education, victim advocacy, response, reporting and accountability,” said Paul Prince, deputy public affairs officer for the assistant secretary of the Army. “Army policy promotes sensitive care and confidential reporting for victims of sexual assault and accountability for those who commit these crimes.”

To help reach these goals, the biggest task the Army has charged its ranks with is buying into a cultural shift, Prince said. Soldiers are asked to create a climate

of strong bonds of trust by identifying and eliminating the precursors of sexual assault, such as sexual innuendos, harassment and egregious personal assaults. This in turn promotes better cohesion, especially between leader and Soldier.

“We are creating a culture where all Soldiers live the Warrior Ethos,” Prince said, “where Soldiers never leave a fallen comrade, where Soldiers understand — a climate where every act, word and deed tells another Soldier: ‘I’ve got your back.’”

To help accomplish this, the SHARP strategy has been built around senior leaders based at the unit level. The Army has placed emphasis on holding commanders and NCOs accountable and giving them the resources to improve the climate for Soldiers. Leaders must work to create climates that emphasize dignity and respect as the core values by which Soldiers live. Additionally, leaders must understand and convey that the Army’s efforts to stop sexual violence are not distractions from the mission but rather are essential to unit cohesion, crucial to mission readiness and indispensable to the vitality of the all-volunteer force and the Army Profession.

“Commanders and senior enlisted leaders are the centers of gravity of our SHARP program. They are integral to the Army’s efforts to achieve cultural change,” Prince said.

To help NCOs work toward this cultural change, the SHARP program office advises leaders, executes program management, identifies and funds resource requirements, and coordinates with the Army staff in establishing policy. Furthermore, the office develops training, executes strategic communications and maintains the integrated case reporting system. The SHARP program will go through periodic evaluations and assessments.

Prince spoke after the Army’s SHARP summit, which took place June 10-11 at Joint Base Andrews, Md. The summit brought together Army leaders and experts to share best practices, examine lessons learned and develop new ways to prevent assaults. It came on the heels of a few high-profile incidents, including the suspension of Maj. Gen. Michael Harrison, the Army’s top commander in Japan, for mishandling a case of sexual assault involving a Japanese woman and an American officer.

The sergeant major of the Army was one of the summit’s speakers. He said preventing sexual assault begins with a pledge from Soldiers to adhere to key tenets of the Army Profession — character, integrity and commitment.

“Character is what you’re doing when no one’s looking,” Chandler said. “Commitment is looking out for your fellow Soldier and doing what the Army says you’re supposed to do.”

The Army’s implementation of SHARP is different from other military services that continue to rely on command teams models. The Army places all essential

tools to prevent sexual assault in the hands of commanders, who are charged with impressing upon Soldiers the importance of conducting themselves in accordance with Army Values and calling upon all members of the Army to intervene to stop improper and demeaning behaviors when they occur.

To help unit leaders, Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. Raymond T. Odierno has laid out five imperatives on which leaders can focus with regard to sexual assault. The first is protecting of victims, providing care to them and protecting their privacy. The second is investigating sexual assaults in a professional manner and taking appropriate action based on the results of such inquiries. The third imperative is creating an appropriate, positive command climate where trust and respect are the cornerstones. For Soldiers to trust that appropriate actions will be taken by their chain of command, an “attitude of respect” must pervade among the ranks.

Odierno’s fourth imperative is that the Army must hold accountable individuals, units, commanders and leaders when incidents occur. Lastly, the chain of command must be fully engaged, responsible for everything in its unit and accountable for what goes on inside of that unit.

At the SHARP summit, Chandler highlighted the role NCOs and senior-level leaders play in the Army’s fight against sexual assault.

“At the end of the day, those young Soldiers want leadership, purpose, direction, motivation and understanding that we love them and we’re committed to them,” he told the audience of about 200 sergeants major and senior officers at the summit. “It takes an Army of action and a Noncommissioned Officer Corps willing to do its part.”

David Vergun of Army News Service contributed to this report.

Get help

If you have been sexually assaulted or think you have been:

- Go to a safe location away from the attacker.
- Call 877-995-5247 or text a location or ZIP code to 55-247 (within CONUS) or 202-470-5546 (OCONUS) or online chat with a counselor at www.SafeHelpline.org 24 hours a day or contact your local sexual assault response coordinator, victim advocate or health care provider. You may also contact your chain of command or law enforcement (military or civilian); however if you do, an investigation will occur and you will not have the option of making a restricted report. To search the SARC roster, visit www.preventsexualassault.army.mil/sarc-roster/
- Seek medical care as soon as possible. Even if you do not have any physical injuries, you may be at risk of becoming pregnant or acquiring a sexually transmitted disease. Ask the health care provider to conduct a

sexual assault forensic examination (SAFE) to preserve forensic evidence. If you suspect you were drugged, request that a urine sample be collected.

- Preserve all evidence of the assault. Do not bathe, wash your hands, eat, drink or brush your teeth. Do not clean or straighten up the crime scene.
- Write down or record by any other means all the details you can recall about the assault and your assailant.

If you know someone who has been sexually assaulted or see any activity that indicates an assault may take place, you should report it immediately.

You should also remember the following:

- Get assistance for the victim, but never leave the victim alone.
- Support the victim and show respect, but don't be overly protective.
- Demonstrate empathy by concentrating on helping your friend, fellow Soldier or colleague.
- Listen to the victim and take the allegations seriously, without asking the victim for details.
- Do not make judgments about the victim or the alleged offender.
- Encourage the victim to report the crime.

However, you should also report the sexual assault to the proper authorities.

- Protect the victim's confidentiality by not discussing the assault with anyone, except the authorities.
- Repeat this message to the victim: You are not to blame.

Learn more

The SHARP program exists as the Army's tool in support of the campaign to eliminate incidents of sexual harassment and sexual assault through awareness, prevention, training, education, victim advocacy, response, reporting and accountability.

Army leaders are committed to — and accountable

for — eliminating sexual harassment/assault incidents by creating a climate with unrestricted reporting where Soldiers feel safe from this threat. The Army will:

- Provide compassionate care to survivors and protect the accused and victim's rights with thorough investigations.
- Hire 902 sexual assault response coordinators, victim advocates and trainers. The Army is increasing the professional standards for all SHARP personnel to include professional credentialing. The credentialing process involves 80 hours of training. Candidates must also undergo a background check, have letters of recommendation and be certified by the National Organization of Victim Assistance.
- Develop behavioral health check policies for personnel selected for SARC and VA positions. These policies will be applied to candidates' background checks.
- Continue to integrate SHARP training into all professional military education and operational unit training. The Army is also working to incorporate SHARP into the Civilian Education System.
- Institute more frequent command climate surveys and other forms of continuous assessment to measure progress in its sexual assault prevention strategy, as well as identify and address conditions that may escalate to sexual violence.
- Continue to formally investigate every allegation of sexual assault resulting from unrestricted reporting. Though this practice may contribute to a seemingly high number of cases, it demonstrates the Army's commitment to fostering a climate that minimizes, with the goal of eliminating, sexual assault incidents.
- Direct a stand-down period for refresher training for SHARP personnel and Army leaders to engage their personnel about SHARP principles and Army Values. ■

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