



SHARP Stand-Down Focuses On Refresher Training, Review of Credentials

By Pablo Villa

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Senior leaders and NCOs throughout the Army are working to implement a sexual assault prevention and response stand-down based on a memorandum signed by Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel on May 17.

The Army's efforts are part of its ongoing focus on creating a safe and respectful climate for Soldiers through its Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention, or SHARP, program. SHARP is intended to eliminate sexual assaults by creating a climate that respects the dignity of all members of the Army family.

"It's not good enough to say we have a zero-tolerance policy," Hagel told reporters during a news conference May 17 to discuss the issue of sexual assault. "We're going to fix the problem. The problem will be solved here, in this institution."

Hagel's memo — which was sent to the chiefs and secretaries of each military branch — directed them to create stand-down plans that include refresher training for every Soldier and a review of the credentials and

qualifications for those serving as recruiters, sexual assault response coordinators, SHARP victim advocates, drill sergeants and Advanced Individual Training platoon sergeants. Hagel elaborated on his directive on May 28, providing guidance on the implementation of these screenings.

The stand-down period offers the Army a primer toward reaching its SHARP objectives by ensuring its Soldiers in positions of trust and authority are capable of handling their responsibilities. It also gives Soldiers information on all facets of sexual assault and prevention. The move is the first of a three-phase process to bolster the Army's efforts to combat sexual assault. Phase II will expand screening and implement broadened behavioral health interviews with SARCs, victim advocates, recruiters, drill sergeants and AIT platoon sergeants. Phase III will update Army policy, establish Armywide work groups and provide guidance on the frequency of rescreening requirements.

Hagel's directive asks that the Army's active component complete the refresher training and qualifications reviews by July 1. The reserve component must be done by Sept. 1. Civilians will also participate in the SHARP training.

Partner programs

Joining the SHARP campaign/program effort is the Army's I. A.M. Strong program.

Intervene, Act and Motivate (I. A.M.) Strong is the Army's campaign to combat sexual assaults by engaging all Soldiers in preventing sexual assaults before they occur.

"Grounded by our shared belief in the Army Values, we are a band of brothers and sisters, placing mission first, never accepting defeat, never quitting and never leaving a fallen comrade," said Paul Prince, deputy public affairs officer for the assistant secretary of the Army. "Our interdependence and shared respect among com-

rades frames who we are as a team and as an Army — a team that finds sexual assault reprehensible and beyond toleration. Those who commit assaults hurt a member of our team and wound our Army. This criminal act is cowardly and damaging to the very moral fiber that gives our Army its innermost strength. As Soldiers and proud members of our team, we are duty-bound to Intervene, Act and Motivate others to stop sexual assaults and the sexually offensive language and gestures that create an environment friendly to this abuse."

The Army's Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers is also joining the effort. BOSS' mission is to enhance the quality of life and morale of single Soldiers, increase retention and sustain readiness. The program's focus on education and communication make it a natural fit for a partnership with SHARP as Soldiers are exposed to various facets of sexual assault as well as how to fight and prevent it. ■



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