



SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
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WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

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MEMORANDUM FOR SENIOR PENTAGON LEADERSHIP  
COMMANDERS OF THE COMBATANT COMMANDS  
DEFENSE AGENCY AND DOD FIELD ACTIVITY DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: Actions to Address and Prevent Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment in the  
Military

On my first full day in office as Secretary of Defense, I directed that we must do more as a Department to counter the scourge of sexual assault and sexual harassment in our military. Shortly thereafter, I established the Independent Review Commission (IRC) on Sexual Assault in the Military to take an impartial look at the changes required to improve our efforts in accountability, prevention, climate and culture, and victim care. In September 2021, I directed the Department to move swiftly and deliberately to implement the necessary and significant changes informed by the work of the IRC, including the implementation of the IRC's recommendations wherever possible. I also directed immediate actions to enhance greater awareness by leaders regarding emerging, problematic climates, and I launched prevention actions to ensure our leaders are equipped with the tools and resources to promote safer climates.

The Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military demonstrates in stark detail that sexual assault and sexual harassment remain persistent and corrosive problems for our Service members. The Report underscores the importance and urgency of our work. The unprecedented investments that we are making now and in the forthcoming years are intended to restore the trust of our Service members, as well as those considering military service.

To that end, I require your personal attention and commitment to address sexual assault and sexual harassment in the military. This includes:

- **Readying the Offices of Special Trial Counsel** to provide expertise in prosecutorial decisions and restore Service member trust in the military justice process. Pursuant to the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2022, not later than December 27, 2023, the Secretaries of the Military Departments must ensure that an Office of Special Trial Counsel (OSTC), with respect to each Military Service within their respective Military Department, is at full operational capability, and ready to exercise its legal authorities on December 28, 2023. The Military Departments have all achieved initial operating capability for the OSTCs. In furtherance of full operational capability, the Secretaries of the Military Departments will pursue the following actions, completion of which will be reported to the General Counsel of the Department of Defense: recommend nominees for Lead Special Trial Counsel by September 30, 2022; identify other necessary Special Trial Counsel by October 15, 2022; and develop and issue initial training and education policies for the Offices of Special Trial Counsel by December 31, 2022.



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- **Hiring, Training, and Empowering the Prevention Workforce** so that this critical, new prevention capability will enhance leaders' ability to identify and reduce risks that give rise to sexual assault and other harmful behaviors. I am directing the Military Departments to prioritize these hiring actions where possible, train new staff within 90 days of hiring, and evaluate their impact over time using forthcoming metrics developed by the Department.
- **Professionalizing and Strengthening the Sexual Assault Response Workforce** by significantly reducing reliance upon collateral duty personnel. The Military Departments' staffing approach will provide Sexual Assault Response Coordinators and Victim Advocates greater independence from the military command structure and expanded skill sets to better support victim recovery.
- **Launching New On-Site Installation Evaluations** in early 2023 to target our prevention efforts to installations with heightened risk factors, and to enhance senior leaders' visibility of workforce climate in a variety of operational settings. The Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness will identify and conduct 20 site visits to locations that show elevated risk or exceptionally positive workforce climate to draw lessons learned and to ensure resources are targeted effectively to where they are most needed.
- **Supporting the 2023 Force-wide Climate Assessment** to maximize the opportunity to hear every voice. Commanders will employ the Defense Organizational Climate Survey and take action to address risk to Service members within their units, as directed by and on the schedule set by the Department. Commanders will also support Department assessment efforts by providing on-duty time in private settings for their military personnel to voluntarily complete the 2023 Workplace and Gender Relations Survey.

Solving this problem requires that the Department's most senior leaders continue to stay laser-focused. The ongoing efforts to track IRC implementation through the Deputy's Workforce Council will help identify common solutions, overcome barriers to implementation, and ensure alignment across the Force. In order to ensure continued momentum, I am further directing that the Secretaries of the Military Departments, Chiefs of the Military Services, and the Chief of the National Guard Bureau personally brief me in the first quarter of FY 2023 on the progress made in FY 2022 and plans for FY 2023.

Together we will restore the trust that empowers the U.S. military and our national defense. We will make continued and sustained progress to bolster warfighter faith in leadership, set the conditions to prevent sexual assault, assist sexual assault and sexual harassment survivors with recovery, and hold alleged offenders appropriately accountable. We will make abundantly clear that sexual violence will not be tolerated within our ranks. And as I have said before – this is a leadership issue and we will lead.

