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COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SUBJECT: SEXUAL ASSAULT: PREVENTION

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Chairwoman Davis, Congressman Wilson and subcommittee members, it is a privilege to appear before you this morning and I thank you for the opportunity to share with you the sexual assault prevention efforts that the Air Force has and will continue to undertake on behalf of our members. It is also a privilege to be the spokesperson for a team of caring and dedicated professionals who have since February of 2004 worked enthusiastically to address this problem.

As you are aware, our journey began with the US Air Force Academy (USAFA) sexual assault allegations in 2003 and the resulting Fowler Panel Report in September of 2003. Our senior leadership was aggressively working the problem at the USAFA and, in February 2004, they also directed an Air Force-wide assessment of our prevention and response capabilities to include recommendations for improvement. At that time, there was no single office designated to develop, promulgate and maintain policy on sexual assault. I was assigned as the Headquarters Air Force Integrated Process Team (IPT) Lead and stood up a team of functional responders and professionals who had a significant part to play in response, prevention, and accountability that included medical/mental health, personnel, investigation, legal and chaplaincy functional communities. Each Major Command conducted a self-assessment based on our Vice Chief of Staff's direction that focused in 5 areas: program oversight, education and training, reporting, response programs and recommendations. The resulting 96-page *Report Concerning the Assessment of USAF Sexual Assault Prevention and Response* (published in August 2004) focused on findings and recommendations in six topic areas: sexual assault realities; policy and leadership; education and training; reporting; response; and deployment.

I mention this history and assessment report because it produced significant findings relating to our subsequent approach to prevention. The most crucial finding was that we simply did not understand the realities of sexual assault. We did not understand the nature, complexity and prevalence of this crime, nor the impact to the victim and our mission. If we were to be successful in our efforts, we needed subject matter experts, external to the Air Force, who wanted to become part of the solution and share their knowledge, research and expertise as a critical part of the team. The more we know and understand, the better our prevention efforts will be. It was a tremendous learning curve; myths abound and it has proven to be painful education. The Air Force Academy was a step ahead of us as they had already begun working with subject matter experts who had worked this issue and had been doing research in universities and the public sector for a number of years. Initially, we brought onto the “team” Dr David Lisak, Associate Professor of Psychology, University of Massachusetts Boston, a forensic expert and an expert on sex offenders, who had done relevant ground breaking research on undetected rapists; Ms Anne P. Munch, Esq, a former prosecutor with broad expertise on sexual assault in civilian and military cultures; and Dr Heather Schumacher-Karjane, who conducted a congressionally mandated investigation *Research on Procedures of Higher Education to Report Sexual Assault*, funded by the National Institute of Justice. We also sought the advice and assistance of Ms Deborah Tucker, Executive Director, National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence, Austin, Texas who co-chaired the three year long Defense Task Force on Domestic Violence.

The Air Force-wide assessment found that commanders were unaware of the prevalence of sexual assault. Because it is the most underreported crime in America, commanders were not seeing large numbers of reports that would trigger them to look at the problem in the broader

cultural context. Our collective focus as an institution was on individual cases – commanders, investigators, prosecutors and the medical community were dealing with the individual cases but not the overall problem as a cultural issue. Our subject matter experts were critical to our new understanding of the nature of the crime, the myths concerning perpetrators and victims, and the environment in which sexual assault is allowed to exist.

Our first efforts were dedicated to response, specifically, putting a system in place to care for victims. AF senior leaders funded dedicated positions for full time Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (SARC) and support positions at each base with a population over 1,000, including additional positions at training centers with high transient populations, and they also created military positions for the deployed locations. Representing our installation-level SARCs, you heard from Captain Daniel Katka, from Lackland Air Force Base, Texas in last month's hearing on victim care.

I think it's important to emphasize that while the title of this critical position is Sexual Assault Response Coordinator, they are also responsible for prevention efforts. We recognized that prevention is a full-time endeavor involving many individuals, with education, awareness, and community involvement making up the foundation of our efforts. We expect our SARCs to establish and maintain a positive and proactive presence among Airmen on the installation and consistently convey the need for Airmen to look out for one another and to intervene in ways that impact the outcome positively. They are to establish and maintain a positive and proactive network in the surrounding community to coordinate training and prevention efforts, increase awareness of trends and upcoming events and identify potential changes in levels of safety. They

communicate those findings with the installation population through leadership channels and public awareness campaigns, which includes planning local events for Sexual Assault Awareness Month, which is nationally observed during April. They also ensure appropriate emphasis during potentially problematic periods such as holidays and 3-day weekends.

Our ultimate goal is to create an environment and culture where sexual assault does not occur – and frankly, we recognize it will be a long and difficult journey. Again, our subject matter expert partners were and continue to be key advisors. We recognized early on that a significant approach was needed...and I say approach, because prevention is not an individual action or program but a never-ending commitment. It requires consistent and continuing education and training; consistent and continuing emphasis on standards and values by leadership; consistent support for victims that is visible; and deterrence - holding perpetrators accountable, which is accomplished by having well-trained investigators and prosecutors.

Shortly after standing up our response program in the field we began our first prevention effort: to educate every Air Force member at all levels about the crime, to debunk the myths that exist and to introduce the positive role that they can take to prevent a sexual assault before it happens. We developed a video-supported training session, *Targeting Sexual Assault – Air Force Campaign Plan for Prevention and Response* that was mandatory training for all Air Force members. Prevention begins with a strong leadership message and commanders are key to setting tone and expectations at all levels of the Air Force. The video featured leadership messages, but the meat of the video portrayed, in a scenario-based vignette, an airman executing the sexual assault of another airman and the impact to that victim. Dr David Lisak moderated the

video at key intervals to explain the perpetrator and victim actions and behaviors and the actions and behaviors of those who assisted the assault (although they may not have realized it); those who “facilitated” the perpetrator in making the victim more vulnerable and those bystanders who were uncomfortable with what they were observing but didn’t intervene. It also dealt with the aftermath for the victim. In the first sixteen months of using the video, we trained in excess of 540,000 Air Force members.

At the same time that this training was released, we took every opportunity to speak to large groups, such as the annual Air Force First Sergeants’ Conference, to educate them about sexual assault and debunk the myths. Although some rapists wear ski masks and attack strangers, the majority of assaults, both in the military and the general population are not done by strangers but by non-strangers: friends, family, co-workers, or acquaintances. Our reports confirm this. In our AF reports, 85% of offenders were known by the victim. College studies confirm 80 to 90% of assaults are by non-strangers. Among these non-stranger assailants, there are those individuals who cross the line into criminal behavior because of a one time particular set of circumstances culminating in the assault. However, also among these non-stranger assailants, there are serial sexual predators who do significant damage, premeditate their assaults and get away with them because their victims do not report.

In an article in the New England Board of Higher Education, Connection Summer 2004, Dr Lisak wrote: “Research on undetected rapists tells us that actually a very small percentage of men – serial sexual predators—are responsible for a vastly disproportionate amount of the sexual violence in any community. These men cannot be reached or educated. They must be identified

and removed from our communities. Our prevention and education efforts must be focused on the vast majority of men who will never themselves cross the line into criminal behavior, but who by their participation in peer groups and activities either actively or passively provide support or camouflage for the sexual predators in their midst.”

Dr Lisak’s research shows that, throughout their lifetime, these serial rapists also commit additional acts of interpersonal violence and abuse on partners and children. These individuals understand the vulnerabilities of potential victims and know how to exploit them. They may use tools such as alcohol and drugs or use others to help facilitate the assault. A serial perpetrator is able to use the normal, good things about the military to their advantage – the camaraderie, feelings of family and trust.

Another goal of our prevention efforts is to change the long held societal practice of victim blaming. In order to encourage victims to come forward and report, we must create an environment where they are treated with dignity and respect. We focus on this aspect of sexual assault at all training levels.

At the same time that we released the *Targeting Sexual Assault* training, our Air Training and Education Command (AETC) began development of standardized training for schools and professional military education at all levels, beginning with accession into the Air Force. AETC has developed several different types of education, designed to reach all Air Force members throughout their career. Each new level of training builds on what the participants have learned in earlier sessions. Standardized sexual assault prevention and response modules have been

included at Basic Military Training, all Technical Training schools, and all pre-commissioning programs since 2006. Airmen then receive follow-on training at their first base of assignment in the First Term Airman Center (FTAC) for enlisted personnel.

SARCs currently provide training at installations for FTAC, deploying members and civilians, Air and Space Basic Courses (for officers) and for the Air Force's mandatory annual refresher training. Moreover, AETC is about to release standardized FTAC and pre-deployment modules. These modules will provide a uniform, consistent message. In addition, each of the professional military education (PME) and commander courses currently include sexual assault prevention and response training that is provided by individual Major Command (MAJCOM) and local SARCS. Mr Carl Buchanan, the Air Staff Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program Manager, trains future Group, Vice, and Wing Commanders at pre-command training at Maxwell AFB, Alabama.

AETC is developing four additional standardized training segments, which will be taught using automated computer-based modules with a trained facilitator. These new training modules will be used in (1) instructor courses, to educate all new Air Force instructors; (2) officer courses; (3) enlisted professional military education; and (4) leader courses (for commanders, first sergeants, superintendents). AETC anticipates delivery of these new modules in 2009. AETC continues to use subject matter experts in these development efforts as well. In addition to the experts mentioned above, AETC has employed the use of additional subject matter experts as they have developed the training. Mr Jackson Katz, M.Ed., an expert on bystander intervention and men



holding men accountable has advised on several of the current modules, as has Dr Alan D. Berkowitz, an expert on bystander intervention and social norm theory.

Another factor that is both influencing and challenging our response and prevention efforts is that there are indications that women enter the military with very high rates of prior sexual victimization. According to the National Women's Study, (*Rape in America*, National Victim Center & Crime Victims Research Center and Treatment Center (1992)), women who were forcibly raped were asked how old they were when they were raped. They reported being forcibly raped at the following ages: 29.3% were under 11 years old; 32.3% were between the ages of 11-17; and 22.2% were between the ages of 18-24. Surveys at the USAFA reflect that the cadet population also reported high rates of prior sexual victimization. Our SARCs at both basic military training and technical schools are also telling us that new recruits are coming forward for assistance – not to report the prior abuse – but to talk with someone about their prior abuse. Many enter the military seeking stability and a sense of belonging. We know that individuals with prior victimization are at a high risk for mental and physical health problems, drug/alcohol use, suicide and are at a high risk for future victimization.

In 2005, we hired as our first Headquarters Air Force Sexual Assault Response Program Manager, Ms Claudia J. Bayliff, Esq, an attorney with broad expertise on sexual assault in civilian and military cultures and in developing curricula in these areas. During the two years that Ms Bayliff worked for the Air Force, she began an effort that laid the framework and foundation for a focused prevention training effort based on bystander intervention. Initially, in March, 2007 she held a national sexual assault prevention symposium, bringing together top

national experts and Air Force leaders to help create the Air Force's prevention strategy. The Air Force invited twenty national experts to present the state-of-the-art research on the most effective sexual assault prevention methods and their recommendations on how to adapt this knowledge to a military environment. Attendees included professionals with a wide-variety of expertise: Dr Antonia Abbey, Wayne State University, an expert on the role of alcohol in sexual assault, offenders and program evaluation; Dr Victoria Banyard, University of New Hampshire, an expert on bystander intervention (community model) and evaluation; Dr Alan Berkowitz, an expert on bystander intervention and social norm theory; Ms Michelle Garcia, MPP, National Center for Victims of Crime, an expert on stalking; Dr Christine Gidycz, Ohio University, an expert on risk reduction for women and evaluation; Dr Elizabeth Holmes, Director of Assessment, Stockdale Center for Ethical Leadership, professor at the Naval Academy and expert on ethics, and women in the military; Mr Byron Hurt, God Bless the Child Productions, an expert on bystander intervention who created a documentary on violence in the hip-hop culture, which premiered nationally on PBS; Dr Tom Jackson, Dean, Graduate College, Northeastern State University, an expert on prevention with high risk groups; Dr Alan McEvoy, Wittenberg State University, an expert on healthy and "toxic" relationships and interpersonal communication; Ms Lynn Hecht Schafran, Esq, National Judicial Education Program, Legal Momentum, an expert on gender bias, curricula development, sexual assault and intimate partner sexual abuse; Mr. Brett Sokolow, Esq, The National Center for Higher Education Risk Management, Ltd, a risk management attorney with expertise in role of alcohol in sexual assault; Ms. Gail Stern, M.Ed, Education Director, Catharsis Productions, an expert on sexual assault with experience with the Air Force, Army and Navy; Mr. Jackson Katz, M.Ed, an expert on bystander intervention and men holding men accountable; Mr Patrick Lemmon, Men Can Stop

Rape, an expert on prevention programs for young men and social marketing; Dr David Lisak and Ms Anne Munch, mentioned earlier; Mr Don McPherson, Executive Director of the Sports Leadership Institute, Adelphi University, a speaker on men holding men accountable and a former professional football player; Mr Jeff O'Brien, M.Ed the Director of Mentors in Violence Prevention, The National Consortium for Academics and Sports, University of Central Florida, an expert on bystander intervention and men holding men accountable; and Ms Deborah Tucker, mentioned earlier.

The Air Force also invited representatives from the Department of Defense SAPRO office, the other Services, key civilian advocacy organizations and other key governmental agencies, such as the Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women. The Symposium brought these communities together for the first time and has fostered a collaboration that continues to this day.

In May 2007, an additional planning session was held with Air Force MAJCOM SARC's and other Air Force leaders to identify priorities to implement the strategy. We decided that the first priority would be to develop an interactive, Air Force wide, bystander intervention training program. Bystander intervention is a strategy that motivates and mobilizes people who may see, hear or otherwise recognize signs of an inappropriate or unsafe situation to **act** in a positive, prosocial way. We learned in our Symposium that it is the most effective prevention strategy. We decided to create three different modules: one for Air Force leaders, one for men and one for women. While our normal military education is integrated, our experts advised that, for this subject matter, creating separate programs for men and women enhances the training and is more effective in shifting behaviors.

In December 2007, we began development of our Bystander Intervention program. These modules will be interactive and will teach participants the skills they need to intervene in a prosocial way. Again subject matter experts (Ms Munch, Ms Stern and Mr O'Brien) are involved as advisors in development of the training. These modules have been field tested, rewritten and field tested again and we anticipate delivery this summer. As the education will be delivered in small groups to enhance effectiveness, we anticipate this being a one to two year effort to reach everyone in the Air Force.

Traditional prevention programs have been targeted at risk reduction for potential victims. They also focused primarily on stranger rape, when the vast majority of sexual assaults are actually committed by someone the victim knows. Traditionally the focus has been solely on changing the behavior of potential victims (primarily female), assuming that if they "dressed properly", etc -- in other words, didn't put themselves in an unsafe situation, that they would not be assaulted. Those assumptions were based on a number of myths, including that certain behaviors, such as that mentioned above, "provoked" sexual assault and that real rapes were always perpetrated by strangers. This assumption often led to victim blaming. To encourage victims to report, we must create an environment where they are treated with dignity and respect.

Our approach to prevention and risk reduction is to also focus on a perpetrator's behavior. Leadership is responsible for operational risk management. They set the tone of no tolerance and enforce it. Commanders create safe working environments and living conditions such as lighted parking lots and latrines (in the deployed environment) but, more importantly, commanders are

in a prime position to establish and maintain a climate that does not tolerate disrespectful or inappropriate behavior. Risk reduction also includes training on making responsible choices, setting good boundaries, developing good communication skills, and avoiding behaviors such as underage drinking and use of drugs that can make a person vulnerable to a sexual assault.

Our installation SARC's have been very creative as they look for ways to prevent and reduce the risk of sexual assault. Although we are very clear that alcohol use does not "cause" sexual assault, alcohol continues to be a factor in a large percentage of our reports of sexual assault. In our USAF Assessment in 2004, we found that at a minimum, 54% of Air Force victims and 69% of Air Force perpetrators consumed alcohol near the time of the sexual assault. Recently, our Air Force SARC in Hawaii, Captain Maritza Sayle-Walker, facilitated a cooperative effort between Hickam AFB, the State of Hawaii and the Air National Guard to reduce alcohol-related incidents. As one of four bases to receive the Enforcing Underage Drinking Laws Grant of \$950,000.00 from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Program, Hickam observed a 25% reduction in alcohol-related incidents in fiscal year 2008.

Prevention in the deployed environment is not significantly different but presents some unique challenges – there are multiple opportunities for good and bad things to happen as people live together 24/7 and face significant dangers together, which is further complicated by having a diverse force of multi-nationals, contractors, and locals...all with varying cultural norms. We have recently developed additional and specialized training for our deploying SARC's to enhance their ability to do their mission in the deployed locations. Our senior leaders go to Shaw Air Force Base for their deployment orientation and sexual assault prevention and response is a

portion of that orientation. In his testimony at the last hearing, Captain Katka shared some of the challenges and ways in which he met them while deployed.

As we continue our prevention efforts, we are also developing metrics to measure our progress. Measuring the effectiveness of our prevention efforts is a complicated and difficult task. We are trying to determine if our efforts are having the desired effects and achieving cultural change. Since sexual assault is such a vastly underreported crime, we cannot just rely on the number of reported sexual assaults to determine if we have successfully reduced the number of assaults. We need to know the actual number of sexual assaults (both reported and unreported) over time in order to determine whether we are actually reducing that number. In order to find out how many sexual assaults are actually being committed, we have initiated contract actions to conduct an internal multi-part prevalence and incidence study. The purpose of this study, to be completed within the next twelve months, is to determine, using anonymous surveys and focus groups, relevant demographic variables, environmental conditions, and unwanted sexual contact that the respondents may have experienced, using behaviorally based questions. We anticipate the outcome of this study will allow us to determine the actual rate of sexual assault committed over a specific period of time. Once we get an accurate incidence rate, we can determine the reporting rate (by measuring the number of sexual assaults that occurred against the number that were officially reported) and begin to measure the effectiveness of our prevention efforts.

Also critical to our prevention approach is the need to constantly evaluate the effectiveness of our training. At present, the Air Force Inspector General's Office as a matter of its routine

inspection process is assessing whether the required topics (as specified in DODI 6495.02 *Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program Procedures, Enc 6*) are included in first responder training and whether first responders have received the required training. However, since these assessments focus on compliance with established guidance and policy, we feel we need to do more to determine the actual effectiveness of our training and are launching a training effectiveness study to measure transfer of knowledge and resultant behavior. How often do we have to train for it to take? Are we using the most effective training methods for the different demographics? Once this study is complete, we will evaluate all of our training and make any needed improvements.

To continue our prevention efforts into the future and have a clear guiding vector of what needs to be accomplished, the Air Force conducted an internal strategic planning session in February 2009. The purpose of this planning session was to review the Department of Defense (DOD) Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office's recently completed strategic prevention plan; and, begin the process of applying processes and procedures to the theories and concepts contained in the over-arching plan. Our fundamental goal was to begin formulating clearly defined operational goals and milestones that we can measure against program activities.

I would be remiss if I did not mention our partnership with our sister Services, the National Guard and Reserve components, the Joint Staff and with Dr Whitley and the SAPRO staff. This is a complex problem and it takes all of us working it to the best of our ability. There is not one day that goes by that we are not either talking or meeting to find new and better ways to work this problem.

As I mentioned in the beginning, it has been my privilege since 2004 to work as a member of the Air Force sexual assault response and prevention team. The Air Staff Program Manager, Mr. Carl Buchanan, and I are full partners with the Major Command SARCs and with the team members from the Air Force Surgeon General, the Office of the Inspector General (Office of Special Investigations), the Air Force Security Forces, the Office of the Judge Advocate General, the Office of the General Counsel, and the Air Force Chaplain. We have enjoyed the strong support of our senior leaders and commanders at all levels. Our Secretary and Chief of Staff have specifically charged AF leaders with the responsibility to set and uphold the highest standards that will not tolerate behavior that compromises the wellness of our Airmen and the subsequent accomplishment of our mission. We will all continue to serve our people with the passion they deserve.

Thank you for this opportunity to present our journey thus far. We appreciate your interest and dedication to this issue.