

Message to leaders: Shape the command climate for valued members

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Commandant gathers leaders to build trust, build better teams, focus forward

Aug. 31, 2016 -- You're going to help me make this a better place, said the commandant to the forum of leaders invited from across the War College, Dunham Clinic, and Carlisle Barracks Garrison, as he charged them each, civilian and military leaders alike, to be part of the solution, ensuring that sexual assault and sexual harassment is "Not on my team."

"Our purpose today is to talk about our collective responsibility with respect to the command climate, said Commandant Maj. Gen. Bill Rapp. "The fix starts with you and me, the leaders of this organization."

In his leader-to-leader dialogue, he reminded them of what the Army War College teaches about leadership priorities. "The first is to address the command climate," he said. "That means every single person in the organization feels valued, feels safe, and feels that they can come to work and be the very best that they can be.



Maj. Gen. Rapp, Commandant of the USAWC presents his Bottom Line: Each of us plays an important part in maintaining a workplace where respect for others is the standard, where everyone feels safe and secure, and where teammates intervene when needed, SHARP Summit, Bliss Hall, Aug 29.

"By doing that, we build trust. By building that trust, we imbue the organization with positive energy. That positive energy and that trust allows your teams to be built."

Rapp continued with the second primary responsibility of a commander: “To provide a vision, direction for that organization because that then allows that teamwork, that trust to be focused towards something positive and that also allows for the execution of what we call ‘discipline initiative’ ... allowing you as leaders to do what you think is best to further the mission and vision of your organization.”



The Department of Defense identifies Carlisle Barracks as a low-risk, high-maturity environment where sexual harassment/ abuse trends seen in other installations are less likely to occur, he told the leaders. That doesn't mean there are not places where offensive language or behavior takes place and employees don't feel empowered or encouraged to step forward, to report, or to do something about it, he continued.

Laura Massey Crawford from the Department of the Army's SHARP office presents during the 2016 SHARP Summit held at Bliss Hall, Aug. 29

Rapp introduced a set of speakers selected to clarify that this is everybody's responsibility – leaders particularly – to commit to his challenge to prevent sexual harassment and abuse: 'Not on my team.'

Laura M. Massey Crawford talked of trust and understanding up and down the chain of command. The first guest speaker, she is chief of the Policy and Oversight Branch Chief with the Army's Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention Program Office. Commanders who build trust and respect up and down the chain will have soldiers with the courage to step up and to intervene, since the Army's primary focus is to prevent such incidents, she said.

Crawford spoke as well about the Army work to include civilian employees under the umbrella of sexual harassment/ abuse prevention and response, e.g., the exception to policy in restrictive reporting, availability of SHARP services to DA civilians and a DA civilian guidebook.

Ruth Moore heads Engagement, Diversity and Inclusion for the Pennsylvania Psychiatric Institute. She opened the morning's second presentation with a series of questions about work place situations,

intended to engage the audience in the problems and think about their own work environment and its culture. Moore urged the audience of leaders to take a stand and learn about themselves so they can be aware of and accept cultural differences.

Russell Strand, a retired U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Division, or CID, special agent, is chief of the Behavioral Sciences Education & Training Division for the Army Military Police School.

Strand started his presentation with a story of how culture changes. He took out a cigarette and demonstrated how he'd emulate his Dad when he was young. His father rolled a cigarette pack in his shirt sleeve, tapped the cigarette his hand before lighting it. Young Strand followed his lead with a "candy cigarette" because he knew that his dad was cool and, therefore, got the message that smoking "was the coolest thing to do." But that shared culture about cigarettes in America has changed, he noted. It's up to the leaders to change the messages that permeate the workplace today.



Russell Strand holds a cigarette as he tells the story about how he saw smoking as being so cool because his father did, during the 2016 SHARP Summit, Bliss Hall, Aug 29

"Messages that you send as leaders are far more powerful than policy that the DoD or the Department of the Army can provide," said Strand. "If you're not holding people accountable for disrespecting, harassing and ostracizing people, then you should be held responsible," he said. "You should know what is going on in your units at every level.

"What we are setting out to do is bring about culture change," said Strand.

SHARP Leadership Summit presentations by Rapp, Crawford, Moore and Strand are posted at www.youtube.com/usarmywarcollege.