

Army Chief of Staff addresses Sexual Assault & Harassment

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Over the last twelve years of war, our Army has demonstrated exceptional competence, courage, and resiliency in adapting to the demands of war and accomplishing the mission. Today, however, the Army is failing in its efforts to combat sexual assault and sexual harassment. It is time we take on the fight against sexual assault and sexual harassment as our primary mission. It is up to every one of us, civilian and Soldier, general officer to private, to solve this problem within our ranks.

The Army is committed to the safety and security of every Soldier, civilian, and family member. Our Army is based on a bedrock of trust – the trust between Soldiers and leaders that we will take care of each other. Recent incidents of sexual assault and sexual harassment demonstrate that we have violated that trust. In fact, these acts violate everything our Army stands for. They are contrary to our Army Values and they must not be tolerated.

It is up to every individual to contribute to a culture in which our Soldiers, civilians, and family members can reach their full potential. It is imperative that we protect potential victims from ever experiencing a sexual crime. We must provide compassionate care and protect survivors after a crime has been committed. Our people must be confident that complaints will be handled quickly and decisively, and that our system will deliver justice and protection throughout the reporting, investigation and adjudication process.

Commanders, non-commissioned officers, and law enforcement must ensure that every allegation of sexual assault and sexual harassment is thoroughly and professionally investigated and that appropriate action is taken. Leaders at every level are responsible for establishing a command climate and culture of mutual respect, trust, and safety. Leaders must develop systems to “see” their units, and understand the extent to which their leadership promotes a positive command climate for all Soldiers. I urge everyone to start a conversation within your unit or organization, among leaders, peers, and subordinates and with family and friends to better understand one another’s experiences and to develop better solutions to this problem.

Our profession is built on the bedrock of trust; sexual assault and sexual harassment betray that trust. They have a corrosive effect on our unit readiness, team cohesion, good order and discipline. We are entrusted with ensuring the health and welfare of America's sons and daughters. There are no bystanders in this effort. Our Soldiers, their families, and the American people are counting on us to lead the way in solving this problem within our ranks.

Raymond T. Odierno
General, 38th Chief of Staff
U.S. Army

The strength of our Nation is our Army

The strength of our Army is our Soldiers

The strength of our Soldiers is our Families.

This is what makes us *Army Strong!*

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