

Army committed to safety, well-being of Soldiers

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SHARP: Army committed to safety, well-being of fellow Soldiers

April 1, 2009 -- "It's about leadership. It's about discipline," said Gen. George Casey, Jr., Army Chief of Staff. "Respecting and protecting the dignity of all our Soldier's is the cornerstone of the Army,"

Casey insisted on changing the Army's cultural understanding of sexual assault at the Army Sexual Assault Prevention and Risk Reduction Training Summit in Alexandria, Va. The address, given this past September, is a part of the Army's new program Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention, or SHARP. April is the Army's Sexual Assault Awareness Month.

Loyalty. Duty. Respect. Selfless Service. Honor. Integrity. Personal Courage. The same seven values our Soldiers know well were emphasized by the chief.

"When a Soldier fails to intervene to protect a comrade from harassment or the risk of assault, he or she has forsaken the duty to never leave a fallen comrade," said Casey.

These values and the statements echoing them may sound like an ordinary speech typically given by the Chief of Staff of the Army. However, this specific speech was on anything but an ordinary topic.

SHARP Program

In 2008, Department of Defense had approximately 2,900 reported cases of sexual assault, up eight percent from the previous year. Among those reports, 1,584 were within the Army. This is more than double the rate of the other services.

SHARP was created as an education campaign designed to arm Soldiers with the information to both respond to and prevent sexual assaults.

As a part of the April awareness campaign, SHARP has provided "I A.M. STRONG" sexual harassment and response kits throughout Army posts world-wide. I A.M. stands for "Intervene, Act, and Motivate." Soldiers are encouraged to intervene when there is a threat to a fellow Soldier, to take action, and to motivate each other in keeping fellow Soldiers safe.

Defining Sexual Assault and Harassment

Sexual harassment is a form of gender discrimination that involves unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

Sexual assault refers specifically to rape, forcible sodomy, indecent assault, or carnal knowledge. It is a crime punishable by the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

Sexual assault involves physical contact. While sexual harassment can involve physical contact, it also refers to verbal or other forms of gender discrimination of a sexual nature.

Reporting Sexual Assault

Sexual assault is the most underreported crime in the nation. As a part of the prevention program, the Army has created several resources for these crimes to be reported. Victims should seek medical care as soon as possible.

You can call:

-Carlisle Barracks Sexual Assault Response Coordinator 245-3775

-Carlisle Barracks Criminal Investigation 245-4807/3059

Additional Resources:

-Military One-Source Consultants 1-800-655-4545

-Carlisle Barracks Military Family Life Consultant 713-9173

From the SHARP website <http://www.sexualassault.army.mil/>

Q: What you should do if you know someone who has been sexually assaulted?

A: As an Army Soldier, you should report immediately any activity that indicates a sexual assault may take place or has taken place.

Guidance and Action:

- Get assistance for the victim, but never leave the victim alone.
- Support the victim and show respect, but don't be overly protective.
- Demonstrate empathy by concentrating on helping your friend, fellow Soldier, or colleague.
- Listen to the victim and take the allegations seriously, without asking the victim for details.
- Do not make judgments about the victim or the alleged offender.
- Encourage the victim to report the crime; however you should report the sexual assault to the proper authorities.
- Protect the victim's confidentiality by not discussing the assault with anyone, except the authorities.
- Repeat this message to the victim: "You are not to blame."

The safety of your fellow Soldiers, your unit, and your community may depend on your reporting of these incidents. Report any suspicious behavior immediately.

Watch the SHARP Training Video http://www.sexualassault.army.mil/training_packages.cfm