

Army launches 2nd Sexual Assault Prevention Summit

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Secretary of the Army Pete Geren opened the second annual I. A.M. Strong Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault Prevention Summit April 6 in Arlington, Va., telling the audience that the Army would set the "gold standard when it comes to sexual assault investigation and prosecution." Photo by J.D. Leipold.

WASHINGTON (Army News Service, April 6, 2009) - Secretary of the Army Pete Geren

launched the second "I. A.M. Strong" Sexual Harassment/Sexual Assault Prevention Summit in Arlington, Va., Monday morning, telling the audience of Soldiers and civilians that the Army would become the nation's "gold standard when it comes to sexual assault investigation and prosecution."

Echoing the words of Lt. Gen. Michael D. Rochelle, the Army G-1, to "absolutely eradicate" sexual assault and sexual harassment in the Army, Geren said that since 9/11 nearly 2,000 American Soldiers had been punished for sexually assaulting a fellow Soldier. He also said that sexual assault is one of the country's most under-reported crimes.

"Experts estimate that only one in five sexual assaults are even reported and that's not just within the Army, that's on the outside, but we assume that to be true in the Army," he said. "And, if that is true, those 2,000 reports mean since 9/11 that 10,000 American Soldiers have been assaulted by a fellow Soldier, blue-on-blue ... 10,000 American Soldiers."

As part of Sexual Assault Awareness Month, the second annual summit kicked off phase two of a four-phase strategy to wipe out sexual harassment and sexual assault and mount a campaign of Army-wide conviction whereby all Soldiers and members of the Army community take direct ownership of sexual harassment and assault prevention by proactively engaging as role models who personally take action and address any behavior which can lead to sexual assault.

Phase one began Sept. 9, 2008 at the first Sexual Assault Prevention and Risk Reduction Summit in

which leaders dedicated their efforts to implement the cornerstone of the I. A.M. Strong campaign with senior leader condemnation of sexual harassment and assault.

"I A.M." stands for intervene, act and motivate, the cornerstones of the campaign.

"Last year with the launch of the I. A.M. Strong campaign, we committed to the same sort of historic change within our Army with regard to sexual assault that you accomplished in regard to the ugly stains of racism that lingered for way too long in our values-based organization," Geren told the audience.

"Sexual assault is an assault on the core values of every American Soldier and is repugnant to everything a Soldier stands for," he said.

Geren said the Army Criminal Investigation Command and the Judge Advocate General have taken new measures to support victims and hold offenders accountable. The measures includes hiring experts in the field of prosecution and investigations. Additionally, 30 special investigators and 15 prosecutors have been placed at installations with the highest occurrences of sexual assault.

He also said the Army has brought on board 35 examiners at the Criminal Investigation Laboratory and funded specialized training with the National Advocacy Center for prosecutors. The Army has also established a mobilized investigation training team to train all CID battalions.

According to the secretary, the additional resources will augment current capabilities by establishing a special victim's approach in the handling of sexual assault cases and it will reinforce the Army's commitment to accountability.