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SENATE ARMED SERVICES
COMMITTEE

STATEMENT OF
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VICE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON PERSONNEL
OF THE
SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
ON
SEXUAL ASSAULT IN THE ARMED FORCES
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Mr. Chairman and subcommittee members, I greatly appreciate the opportunity to discuss the important issue of sexual assault in the Navy. The Department of the Navy policy is very clear on this matter: there is no place for sexual assault in the Navy, period. In those cases where a sexual assault allegation does occur, the victim is immediately treated with fairness and respect, and every effort is made to hold the accused accountable. Our program has elements of both prevention and response; and in the response phase, it is victim-oriented to minimize revictimization and to provide the best support possible to a service member, a Shipmate if you will, in need.

The Navy is committed to providing a coordinated, multi-faceted effort to prevent and respond to sexual assault. The Navy's efforts are based on several principles which guide us in formulating our policies and programs: prevention; active victim intervention and support; leadership responsibility and accountability; full and complete investigation; timely and accountable prosecution; sound training and education; and rapid reporting with active data collection. When considering an effective approach, we've looked at the problem through the lens of readiness while adhering to the principles articulated above. Prevention leads the list. Command responsibility and accountability are the hallmarks of our profession and thus, become the centerpiece of program implementation. The commander of each unit must create the right climate, sustain an awareness of the issues, conduct training for all hands, and properly report incidents when they occur. In cases where an assault occurs, protecting the victim becomes the top priority. To accomplish this, we thoroughly investigate each case and strive to ensure accurate data is retained, while constantly seeking to improve in every area where an ounce of prevention could avert an incident.

Our broad array of response services encompasses not only service members but their dependents as well, even in cases occurring off Department of Navy installations. To be clear, regardless of the circumstances, we are committed to provide immediate assistance, with specially trained command representatives and victim advocates, regardless of whether an assault occurs onboard a ship, on a military installation, on liberty in a foreign port, or in an apartment out in town.

I thank you for your leadership on this issue. There are a number of ideas the Navy has incorporated into our program because of your past recommendations and the insights of members and staff. This is a very important time and opportunity for all of us to learn, take additional steps forward, and continuously improve.

Background:

In 1990, the Chief of Naval Operations formed the Navy Women’s Study Group. They issued a comprehensive report on the progress of women in the Navy that highlighted problems with sexual assault. Their recommendations included establishment of a Navy-wide sexual assault victim assistance program, all-hands training in sexual assault awareness and prevention, and development of a database to maintain records and attend to any developing trends. Navy leadership, at both the Secretary and Chief of Naval Operations level, supported the recommendations and, as a result, the Sexual Assault Victim Intervention (SAVI) Program was established. The program’s stated mission is: “to provide a comprehensive, standardized Navy-wide advocacy system to prevent and respond to sexual assault.” The effort involved in creating

this and other personnel policy programs was quite considerable as the Navy strove to get these programs right the first time. The program was expanded to include the entire fleet and, in 1994, to provide for SAVI Points of Contact at all commands Navy-wide. The goal of the SAVI program is to provide a comprehensive, standardized, gender-neutral, victim-sensitive system to first, prevent, and second, respond, to sexual assault throughout the Navy.

Current SAVI requirements place heavy emphasis on creating awareness and providing prevention education. The program also ensures victim advocacy and intervention while providing for long-term data collection. Compliance with SAVI requirements is integrated with command responsibility at the Commanding Officer level, the accountable officer for properly executing all facets of this program instruction, with program execution and compliance assured through our 67 Fleet and Family Support Centers (FFSC) worldwide. These centers provide training and support of command SAVI Points of Contact and assist with periodic assessment of SAVI requirements by the Navy Inspector General, Component Commanders, unit senior commanders and Commanding Officers.

Program and Process:

There is a steady-strain focus within the Navy on sexual assault awareness and prevention education. Leadership is engaged. Training on SAVI and general sexual assault awareness specifically occurs at every initial accession point for both officers and enlisted personnel, and through our leadership continuum of schools that are required for each increase in responsibility. Of note, dedicated time is spent on training carefully screened unit leaders: Commanding Officers, Executive Officers, Command Master Chiefs, select Senior Enlisted,

Petty Officers and designated SAVI representatives. I rely heavily on our Commanding Officers, who typically have about 17-18 years of experience. He or she is, in turn, directly assisted by an Executive Officer with about 13 years of experience and a Command Master Chief with 15 to 20 years of experience. My point is that this leadership core is experienced and fully devoted to creating a positive command climate. More importantly, training of these unit leaders is not a one-time affair; it is provided multiple times throughout a career. Sexual assault training is also required for all hands annually and is taught during General Military Training (GMT). Materials are provided to all commands Navy-wide, as they have been since 1996.

SAVI, in partnership with Naval Education and Training Command, has developed and distributed thousands of copies of three sexual assault prevention and education videos for additional all-hands awareness and training. At every Navy command, SAVI Command Coordinators/Points of Contact are designated by the Commanding Officer to serve as the command SAVI expert. They are responsible for implementing command training requirements and providing victim resource information. Over 1250 SAVI command points of contact were trained on sexual assault and SAVI requirements during this past fiscal year alone. Further, this entire effort has been integrated with the Navy's Right Spirit alcohol deglamorization program due to the high correlation of sexual assaults and alcohol use/abuse. This is certainly one area where increased emphasis could result in improvement. Our efforts to prevent sexual assault continue as we attack the issue through multiple, complementary avenues with SAVI as the primary conduit, and I hold our Commanders and Commanding Officers responsible and accountable for its execution.

When a sexual assault involving Navy personnel is reported – and there are multiple avenues for reporting an incident – the Navy follows a mandatory process designed to provide immediate support to the victim:

- offer immediate advocacy services, including protection, counseling, rights and medical treatment as warranted,
- notify law enforcement officials, command representatives, and Commanding Officers,
- collect and preserve evidence,
- provide victim safety,
- inform victims of their rights,
- submit an immediate Situation Report (SITREP) that informs the chain of command including Navy Headquarters,
- follow through on legal investigation and prosecution, and
- provide victims continuing support and access to services even after official resolution.

A real strength of the SAVI program is in providing multiple avenues for victims to report, seek appropriate criminal investigation, and receive support, advocacy and intervention services.

This, coupled with the assignment of a dedicated representative, encourages victims to participate in investigations while truly minimizing the potential for revictimization.

While SAVI facilitates education, law enforcement, and legal response, we consider victim support as the most important element of the program. Commanders are required to, and do, designate Command Representatives who serve as the liaison with an individual victim. The

representative prevents revictimization by limiting the number of command officials with whom the victim is required to interact and provides a direct line of communication to the Commanding Officer. It greatly increases the opportunity for the victim to voice safety concerns, express preferences and receive information on the command's response to the assault. I believe that the victim's perspective on how Navy commands are doing is vitally important; we get our most important report card from them. In a 2002 survey of SAVI Program users, 100% of those receiving advocacy services indicated that the services helped them cope with the sexual assault and 96% indicated that the program showed concern for Sailors and families. These are positive indicators.

All Navy commands, ashore and afloat, provide 24/7 advocacy for sexual assault victims, either through use of trained military volunteers or community sexual assault advocates. While the SAVI representative provides that single line of communication within a command, the advocate provides guidance throughout the whole process, links to services, as well as emotional support. Almost 1700 additional military volunteers were trained and certified as sexual assault victim advocates in FY03 alone. This year, over 300 deploying/afloat commands had trained SAVI victim advocates assigned aboard their ships and squadrons to respond without delay if sexual assault occurred in a foreign port or while underway. We take our SAVI services with us. Judicious handling of sexual assaults at sea are critical to preserving unit cohesion, good order and discipline, and mission accomplishment. Navy units, as vessels of diplomacy, emphasize good behavior ashore and, while the Navy does not have a perfect track record, fleet commanders and Commanding Officers are fully engaged. This aids in minimizing improper conduct of all kinds while deployed, including sexual assault. When appropriate, professional

intervention services for victims are available within Fleet and Family Support Centers, Navy Medical Treatment Facilities, major units afloat or through referral to available civilian resources. The provision of clinical counseling services within the FFSCs is unique to the Department of the Navy.

Individual commands play a key role in the success of the SAVI program. In addition to annual mandatory training for all-hands, every command is required to publicize a means by which individuals can report situations or circumstances where they perceive they may be at risk of sexual assault. Commands are required to report any alleged sexual assault involving Navy personnel to the Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS) and forward a unit SITREP for all alleged sexual assaults involving active duty or family members, or occurring on Navy property. Command data collection coordinators are responsible for collecting required information from involved third parties, minimizing revictimization, and forwarding information in initial and monthly continuation reports until a final disposition of the incident is reported. Data is then extracted from SITREPS and entered into the SAVI Rape and Sexual Assault System (RASAS) database at Navy Personnel Command headquarters.

Analysis & Initiatives:

The recent call by the Secretary of Defense and the Fowler Report highlight the seriousness of sexual assault in the military. The Navy is committed to improving our efforts in preventing this crime. In doing so, we rely on inputs from subject matter experts like Dr. Terri Rau, who is our SAVI expert and who you will hear from in the next panel, from Commanders and Commanding Officers, from fleet units, shore commands and a review of data on sexual

assaults to improve our program. The data is not as robust as we would like; the most reliable data we have is often historical in nature. And we know from surveys inside and outside the Navy that a significant number of sexual assaults are not reported. Knowing that, we can still move forward by drawing trends from the data we do have.

With respect to the frequency of actual incidence, the draft 2002 Armed Forces Sexual Harassment Survey results, conducted by Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) for DoD, indicated that the number of Navy females reporting they had experienced sexual assault in the prior year declined 50% when compared to 1995 data. This is corroborated by our NCIS data indicating a steady decline of about 10% each year from 2001 to 2003 based on a recently completed, case-by-case review.

As these surveys and case reviews indicate, we are trending in the right direction based on caseload. But we are not out of the woods nor will this issue ever disappear, especially as we bring in thousands of new personnel every year, many of them in our most vulnerable age group. While sexual assault is not confined to the junior ranks, in comparing Navy and civilian data, both suggest that there is increased risk for sexual assault among younger members, between acquaintances, and in association with substance abuse, particularly alcohol. Alcohol is a contributing factor in at least 50% of sexual assault incidents. Also troubling, about 75% of sexual assaults are what we call “Blue on Blue”, that is, assault by Navy against Navy personnel. These issues are of great concern. Sexual assault prevention information has been included in all of our Navy Drug and Alcohol Program initiatives. In light of our demographics and the

seriousness of sexual assault, *constant vigilance* is required. That is one reason for our proactive measures to ensure elements of SAVI are embedded in other programs.

To add to our understanding and awareness at Navy Headquarters in the near term, we have also instituted an internal monthly review of sexual assault data to identify trends and address corrective action early. The Chief of Naval Personnel will conduct this review and any significant trends will be directly reported to the CNO and me. For instance, we know that there were twelve Navy cases of alleged sexual assault in CENTCOM in FY03-FY04, with five currently still active. We recognize that improved data collection and tracking case disposition will come as a result of Navy implementation of the Consolidated Law Enforcement Operations Center (CLEOC). CLEOC is a coordinated effort by the Navy and Marine Corps to provide the means to capture and report data to the Defense Incident Base Reporting System (DIBRS). Navy security forces and NCIS began reporting to CLEOC in January 2004. From this database, we hope to draw additional insights which are statistically significant and credible in order to better focus our preventive efforts in the future.

The recently published Fowler Report, following the incidents of sexual assault at the United States Air Force Academy, was mostly complimentary with regards to programs and policies they found at the United States Naval Academy. There are, however, areas that require improvement at the Naval Academy. The Navy is putting in place an Executive Steering Group composed of myself, senior Marine Corps officers and Department of the Navy civilians for broad oversight of issues at the Naval Academy, including sexual assault. This Executive Steering Group will advise the Chief of Naval Operations and the Secretary of the Navy.

Continuing our efforts in prevention education, a new public awareness campaign and updated general military training were developed in 2003. The prevention of sexual assault public awareness initiative forwarded to FFSCs this month highlights the Navy SAVI Program. The campaign, “Take a Stand! Speak Up! Stop Sexual Assault!,” includes a public service announcement, example press release, posters, and informational brochures on SAVI, victim assistance and avoiding risk. Installations may further adapt the materials by providing locally specific contact numbers and information. GMT materials, already under development, consider recent trends and refocus on specific areas of concern. Specifically, the new annual materials will address:

- effective sexual assault responses,
- roles of leadership at all levels,
- what constitutes consent versus sexual assault,
- decreasing high-risk behavior, and
- basic self-protective strategies.

We are also working to improve web access to SAVI information and expect to have a SAVI program website in place by the end of this fiscal year. The website will provide information and resources to those executing the SAVI program as well as victims reaching out for information. Considering the nature of this crime, we expect that the anonymity of the Internet will help encourage victims to educate themselves on our program and then, hopefully, to report the crime. In the future, it may also serve as a vehicle for anonymous surveys and other initiatives requiring survey-type data.

There is still plenty of room to move ahead and make more progress. Specifically, I want to get a better handle on our many systems of reporting and tracking statistics, including case close-out, to enhance my systemic indicators at the highest level. I'd also like to increase the frequency and expand the sampling populations of surveys, institute periodic data reviews with follow-up action, improve the quality of preventive training and tie-ins with casual factors like alcohol, and continue victim surveys. Where our data shows an increase in education and training will continue to improve awareness and improve trends through prevention, I want more resources applied. We must always ensure we stay focused strongly on prevention, on the victims' needs and holding responsible parties accountable.

Summary and Conclusion:

Thank you for holding this hearing and for your continued support as we pursue the important challenge of responding effectively to complex personnel issues like sexual assault. We are committed to improvement. Our first goal is prevention, and our most important goal is to provide the best possible support to victims. Your Navy is committed to fostering the culture that protects victims of sexual assault, holds those who commit sexual assault accountable for their actions, and engenders trust in the chain of command. We are investing more than ever in our individual Sailors and Officers to support a strong Navy that is ready to respond to events throughout the world. Sexual assault has no place in the Navy. This hearing offers a valuable opportunity to evaluate where we are and to take additional steps to ensure our programs are the very best in the world to support the Navy operating around the world, around the clock.