



COMMANDING OFFICER'S STATEMENT ON SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION AND RESPONSE



Sexual assault is a crime that is inconsistent with Marine Corps values. It is an intolerable criminal act that degrades unit readiness and overall warfighting capability and capacity. Every member of this command must become familiar with the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) policies and procedures set forth in Marine Corps Order 1752.5C and do his or her part to cultivate a climate of respect and prevention-focused leadership. This command is fully committed to fostering a climate of dignity, decency, and respect for every Marine, Sailor, DoD Civilian, and their families.

An often-overlooked element of Marine Corps SAPR policy, but one that contributes to prevention, is the concept of consent. Consent is a freely given agreement to the conduct at issue by a competent person. Prevention is a key element of my command philosophy and requires engaged leadership at every level. I charge all leaders to actively promote a healthy command climate and to intervene to prevent destructive behaviors, including sexism and sexual harassment, which contribute to a continuum of harm. To fully understand the definition of consent is to appreciate that consent cannot be assumed, can be withdrawn, and that there are many factors that do not constitute consent and/or render a person incapable of giving it. My expectation is that every member of this command will cultivate healthy and respectful interpersonal relationships within the confines of this definition of consent. Bystanders must take decisive action to prevent incidents before they occur; doing nothing is not an option.

Too many sexual assaults go unreported every year. This is an injustice to victims and highly corrosive to unit morale, order and discipline. My sincere goal is for us, collectively, to foster an environment that encourages reporting of sexual assaults without fear of reprisal or ostracism. I view reporting as a sign of strength, not weakness, and will work diligently alongside my command team to ensure victims receive the care they deserve. This command has a zero-tolerance policy for any form of retaliation against a person who reports an incident, intervenes to prevent an assault, or assists a victim. Any individual found engaging in such retaliatory behavior will be held appropriately accountable.

Two reporting options are available. A **Restricted Report**, made to a SAPR VA or SARC, provides confidential medical, advocacy, Victims' Legal Counsel, Chaplain, and counseling services without command or law enforcement notification. Under expanded eligibility, victims may still file restrictively even if their command was informed, provided they did not personally report the incident to a Military Criminal Investigative Organization (MCIO)/law enforcement or previously file an unrestricted report. An **Unrestricted Report** offers the same services, plus command support and an official investigation by an MCIO, such as the Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS). Made to law enforcement, Command, SAPR VA, or SARC, this report is not confidential, but the victim's identity is strictly protected and released only to those with an actual need-to-know, such as commanders and investigating authorities.

I fully support both options. All Unrestricted Reports will be referred to the appropriate MCIO, such as NCIS, and substantiated offenders will be held strictly accountable under the UCMJ.

For 24/7 assistance, contact the Sexual Assault Support Line at (229) 881-3883 or the DoD Safe Helpline at 877-995-5247.

Semper Fidelis.

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