

Combatting Sexual Assaults in the Military

Dozens of sweeping, historic reforms over the past two years to better empower survivors, hold commanders accountable, and prosecute criminals

- ✓ Commanders have been stripped of the power to overturn convictions & are accountable under rigorous new standards.
- ✓ Every victim who reports a sexual assault gets their own independent lawyer to protect their rights and fight for their interests—a reform that has no parallel in the civilian justice system.

“... a victory for the estimated tens of thousands of troops who have been sexually abused in recent years, as well as a triumph for the growing number of women serving in Congress...”
- [Washington Post: Congress approves reforms to address sexual assault, rape in military](#)

- ✓ Civilian review is now required if a commander decides against a prosecution in a sexual assault case when a prosecutor wants to go to trial.
- ✓ Dishonorable discharge is now a required minimum sentence for anyone convicted of a sexual assault.
- ✓ It is now a crime for any servicemember to retaliate against a victim who reports a sexual assault.

“The percentage of military personnel who said they were victims of sexual assault dropped dramatically over the past two years...” - [CNN: Sharp decrease of sexual assault in military, study finds](#)

- ✓ The pre-trial “Article 32” process, which came under scrutiny following a recent case at the Naval Academy, has been reformed to better protect victims.
- ✓ The statute of limitations in these cases has now been eliminated, a particularly important development in a sustained battle against sexual assaults.
- ✓ The “good soldier” defense has been eliminated for servicemembers accused of sexual assault under most circumstances.
- ✓ Victims are now allowed formal input on whether their case is tried in military or civilian court.

“... While the slow pace of change has made it difficult to see progress, both advocates for survivors of military sexual assault and military leaders can point to the Special Victims Counsel program as a reason for cautious optimism...” – [MSNBC: New military program to protect victims sees early success](#)

- ✓ Survivors can now challenge their discharge or separation from service.
- ✓ The role of the prosecutor in advising commanders on going to court-martial has been strengthened.
- ✓ Accountability over commanders has been boosted for setting appropriate command climate.
- ✓ Protections have been extended to the Military Service Academies.

“... Officials said a 27 percent drop in the prevalence of sexual assault, coupled with an increase in the number of people actually reporting the crime was positive news because it showed Pentagon efforts to fight the problem were bearing fruit...”
– [Reuters: Sexual assault in U.S. military has fallen - Pentagon survey](#)