



THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
1000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

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MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARIES OF THE MILITARY DEPARTMENTS
CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
UNDER SECRETARIES OF DEFENSE
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CHIEF, NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU
ASSISTANT SECRETARIES OF DEFENSE
GENERAL COUNSEL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
DIRECTOR, OPERATIONAL TEST AND EVALUATION
INSPECTOR GENERAL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
ASSISTANTS TO THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
DIRECTOR, ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT
DIRECTOR, PROGRAM ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION
DIRECTOR, NET ASSESSMENT
DIRECTORS OF THE DEFENSE AGENCIES
DIRECTORS OF THE DOD FIELD ACTIVITIES

SUBJECT: Sexual Assault Awareness Month – April 2009

April marks the Department of Defense's fifth observance of National Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM). This observance was designated to address an important concern in our ranks – the reduction of sexual harassment and assault of service personnel. The Department of Defense has a no-tolerance policy toward sexual assault. This type of act not only does unconscionable harm to the victim; it destabilizes the workplace and threatens national security.

The 2009 SAAM theme, "*Our Strength is for Defending*," reflects the Department's efforts to raise awareness and stop sexual violence. Fighting this crime begins with accountability and strong leadership – up, down, and across the chain of command – from junior enlisted members to senior noncommissioned officers to commanders. Every employee must know how to prevent such situations and report any incident that occurs. Leaders must promote proper workplace behavior and take action as necessary.

Sexual assault is not a matter to take lightly, and the Department of Defense remains committed to the safety, welfare, and readiness of its personnel. Trained sexual assault coordinators and victim advocates from the Services are available for assistance with prevention and intervention. More information about the Department of Defense's efforts is available at www.MyDuty.mil.



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