

Military District of Washington (MDW)/Ft. Belvoir
SAAM Proclamation Signing Ceremony
Ft. Belvoir, VA – April 3, 2014
Major General Jeffrey J. Snow, DoD SAPRO Director
Live Our Values: Step Up to Stop Sexual Assault!

Good morning ladies and gentlemen. I want to thank Major General Buchanan and COL Gadson for extending the invitation to share some thoughts with you today. I also want to thank those in the audience -- the Survivors, the Sexual Assault First Responders, the Leaders, and members of this community, for your continued service, attention, and dedication to preventing sexual assault-- something that threatens the core and credibility of our institution. Sexual Assault Awareness Month is an opportunity for the entire community to reaffirm our commitment to eliminating sexual assault and supporting victims of this crime.

In my 30 plus years of service, I have encountered many tough challenges, and I have had the good fortune of working with many exceptional troops along the way. I love our Army and I love serving with Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines who have made the decision to serve and protect our country. When I think of those same Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines being victimized by a sexual assault, too often by those they serve alongside and trusted, I am saddened, and shamed that this could happen in our military.

Last week, I had the opportunity to meet with six military survivors of sexual assault from across the Services. I know I am not alone in learning more every day - sexual assault is an underreported crime in our military just as it is in society. I want to continue to learn about the dynamics and trauma associated with this particular crime -- and I want to fully understand the impact firsthand. I thought it would give me insights into how we can continue to improve our prevention and response program.

Listening to each of their stories was tremendously sobering and something I will reflect upon each and every day as I continue to execute my responsibilities as the SAPRO Director. Every individual's case demonstrated how this crime takes an emotional toll on its victims, as most of them suffered from Post-Incident Trauma, clinical depression, and anxiety -- not only as a result of the assault, but also from the insensitive treatment they received after reporting.

I am convinced several of the recent changes we have made to our program are a direct result of victim input, such as our Special Victim's Counsel Program, and we will continue to listen to the voices of victims as we move forward. I was inspired by their willingness to come forward to tell their story and their resolve to recover and use their experience to help others. To the victims or survivors of this crime that may be in the audience today -- I want you to know that we are working very hard to establish a climate where these assaults do not happen. However, if you have been a victim, please consider reaching out to your local SHARP Representative, Victim Advocate, health care professional, or the DoD Safe Helpline. You will be treated with the privacy you desire, the sensitivity you deserve, and the seriousness that this crime demands.

After three months on the job, I clearly can't stand up here and tell you I have all the answers. Still, there are a couple things I can say with certainty:

- We recognize we are dealing with a highly complex crime and a multifaceted societal problem, and it will take all of us to eliminate sexual assault from our ranks
- Our commitment to eradicating sexual assault and protecting our men and women who serve is genuine and sincere; and
- We need every one at every level to make a personal commitment to stop sexual assault.

As members of the greatest fighting force in the world, we have to set higher standards and must demonstrate to our brothers and sisters in arms that trust, honor, and fidelity remain the foundation of this great institution.

What does this mean for us? What does this mean for you?

- It means taking action when we recognize situations that pose a risk for sexual harassment, sexual assault, and other criminal behaviors, and
- It means empowering survivors of sexual assault to take the difficult step to come forward through the many avenues that are available, and when they do, supporting them and treating every report with the utmost seriousness.

Under direct leadership from Secretary Hagel, and with the full backing of the Joint Chiefs as well as the Secretary of the Army and Chief of Staff, we are attacking sexual assault from all sides. We want victims and survivors of this crime to know that we have a comprehensive system in place and victims will have the full-range of services and care afforded to them.

- Recent policy changes ensure that survivors will have their safety concerns addressed and will be able to take control of the manner in which they choose to heal;
- Every case is handled as an emergency in our military treatment facilities
- We've put a support system in place that ensures victims have access to trained advocates and dedicated legal representation from the time they report, through the disposition of the case; and
- Every case is fully-investigated by a trained and independent investigator, not the commander or people in your unit, as some critics would have you believe.

I want you to know how serious our Secretary of Defense takes this issue.

Over the past year, Secretary Hagel has directed a wide-range of initiatives, taking action to expand victim rights, to improve victim legal support and standardize protections, to elevate oversight and enhance commander accountability, and to assess the military justice system. And I continue to meet with him and senior military and civilian leaders from all the Services every week to report on our efforts to reduce sexual assault from our ranks.

Policy is important, but we're not going to solve this problem by policies alone. We all have a critical role in preventing and responding to sexual assault. I want to speak to you about the personal commitment combatting this crime requires. To me, this year's Department of Defense Sexual Assault Awareness Month theme clearly illustrates the climate and the culture that we desire in our military: **Live Our Values, Step Up to Stop Sexual Assault**. The Army variation of this theme is **Speak Up! A voice unheard is an Army defeated!**

When I say or read those words, I think about courage – a quality you surely possess as a member of the United States military. More specifically, I think about social courage, which is critical to eradicating sexual assault from our ranks. Since some of you may not be familiar with what I mean by that term, let me define it for you in plain language.

- Social courage is having the guts to safely step up and stop it – or to seek help -- when you see inappropriate or illegal behavior.
- Social courage is showing empathy and support for those being wrongfully mistreated.
- In the words of Winston Churchill, “Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.”

That is what we want each of you to do – step up, be counted, intervene, act, listen, and support.

We continue to learn a great deal about this crime. One thing we know for certain is that sexual assaults occur in environments where crude and offensive behavior, unwanted sexual attention, coercion, and sexual harassment are tolerated, condoned, or worse, ignored. These are the behaviors we are seeking to change – and that is why we are putting specific initiatives in place to get after them.

- We revised performance reports across the Services to hold officers and NCOs accountable for establishing a climate of dignity and respect and for responding appropriately to reports of sexual harassment and sexual assault.
- We have expanded our cadre of first responders to over 25,000 professionally-certified response coordinators or SHARPS that are available around the clock worldwide to provide support and care to survivors; and
- We have established a requirement to conduct troop surveys in every unit at every location to assess the command climate and provide leaders insight into their commands.
- And, we are constantly checking our work and assessing our progress to make sure we are getting it right.

Every single one of you has a role in solving this problem. I encourage you to use the tools at your disposal and lean on the expertise of Sexual Assault Response Coordinators and SAPR Victim Advocates or SHARP personnel.

So what can you do? How can you contribute? You can make a difference by setting the right example and living by the standards and values we expect of those that wear our uniform. There are five things that each of you can personally do to make a difference:

- First, as I said earlier, treat all reports with the utmost seriousness;
- Second, protect the privacy of survivors and respect their decisions about how, when, and who they choose to disclose information to about the incident;
- Third, allow survivors to take control of the means by which they recover by making sure they have a clear understanding of their reporting options and the support avenues that are available;
- Fourth, protect survivors from further trauma by watching for signs of retaliation and exclusion; and
- Finally, and most important, in every environment and in every unit, encourage your peers to demonstrate the social courage necessary to identify and safely correct inappropriate behavior, regardless of the perceived costs to their social standing. [Pause]

You know who is obeying the rules, who is skirting the rules, and who is breaking the rules.

I am the first to admit that our mission is not easy. We all have a lot to learn and I know I have learned a lot over the course of the last 90 days.

There will be days when we will be able to demonstrate progress. And there will be days when we are faced with trying situations and difficult decisions. Your job is to improve awareness of sexual assault, operationalize our commitment, and live our values every day. [Pause] If you don't understand our core values and are not prepared to live and enforce those values every day, then we don't want you in our military. To be successful, leaders need to lead on this issue and every Soldier needs to personally demonstrate the kind of social courage it takes to **Step Up and Stop Sexual Assault**.

Thank you for your commitment to creating an environment in our Army and our Armed Forces that is intolerant of sexist behaviors, an environment that is intolerant of sexual harassment, and one that rids sexual assault from our military, this month and every month! Thank you very much. Army Strong!