



Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month - April 2017

Our military is an impressive instrument of power, dedicated to supporting the principles of liberty and defending our constitutional republic. It is an organization built, organized, resourced and trained to preserve the fundamental principles that we hold dear. It is a powerful force for good, with a charter clearly enumerated under the rule of law that places primacy on basic individual rights. But at the end of the day our highly expert force of professionals consists of people—it is in fact, a “people business.” With that in mind we must never lose sight of the fact that we must always take care of our single most important resource. Uniformed service members and civilians alike, our “team of teams” cannot function without the valued contribution of *everyone*.

Protecting our People Protects our Mission. That is the theme across USFK for April 2017 as we observe, reflect, and educate ourselves on Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention (SAAP). We will fulfill our responsibilities as leaders to ensure the highest state of readiness to accomplish our missions by protecting our most precious commodity. In order to do this, everyone has a duty to ensure that the men and women around us live and work in an environment free from intimidation and sexual violence.

Each service member and civilian regardless of rank must understand our core values and standards of conduct to eliminate not only sexual assault but *any* inappropriate conduct. Education and training are critically important and so is having an open dialogue about what we can do to stop it. We must create an environment where predatory behavior is prevented, confronted and eliminated.

Sexual Assault is not only devastating to the individual, it affects the ability of the unit as a whole to function. It is also a violation of the sacred trust that we have with one another. It all boils down to dignity and respect—two things that will be honored for everyone no matter who they are. Sexual harassment and sexual assault are fundamentally incompatible with good order and discipline and as such cannot, and will not be tolerated in any way, shape, or form.

Reporting has risen in the past ten years, peaking in the early 2010s because of our concerted efforts to ensure our climate is one that values and supports victims. Since then, slowly but surely, the number of reported incidents has fallen. The last two years have witnessed a 30% reduction in the number of unrestricted reports throughout USFK, and while on the surface this may seem to represent significant progress toward eliminating sexual assault in our ranks, the statistics may be

deceptive. Can we be sure that the number reported is, in fact, equal to the number of incidents that occurred? No more, no less? I ask you all to stand with me to ensure that the numbers reported accurately reflect reality, and that we diligently work together until we achieve our objective of no sexual assaults across the entire command.

Our ultimate goal has a twofold description, with both conditions being required for us to be successful. First, for 100% incident reporting; which means that if something happened it was reported. Second, for there to be zero sexual assaults—which is the only acceptable number of incidents. While this relationship of 100% and 0 may seem counterintuitive, the first directly supports the second.

April is Sexual Assault Awareness & Prevention Month and I encourage you to support and participate in the planned activities. It is a great time to remind everyone how important this issue is and to commit ourselves to do our part as Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and Civilians to foster a climate that is equally motivated to eradicate sexual assault and harassment while at the same time supporting victims. This is an excellent opportunity for leaders at every level to evaluate the mentorship and education programs they have in place while ensuring that mechanisms for restricted and unrestricted reports are both viable and universally understood.

I greatly appreciate the steps you take every day to combat sexual assault in our formations. Your efforts ensure that each and every one of our people is a valued member of our team, ready to conduct his or her mission. Remember, you make history by just doing your duty each and every day. Thank you for making history.

///---ORIGINAL SIGNED---///

VINCENT K. BROOKS
General, U.S. Army
Commander

