

SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

STATEMENT OF
GENERAL MARTIN E. DEMPSEY, USA
CHAIRMAN
JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
BEFORE THE SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
PENDING LEGISLATION REGARDING SEXUAL ASSAULTS IN THE MILITARY
JUNE 4, 2013

SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

Chairman Levin, Ranking Member Inhofe, members of the committee, thank you for giving us this opportunity to discuss our commitment to eliminating sexual assault from the Armed Forces of the United States.

The risks inherent to military service should never include the risk of sexual assault. Sexual assault is a crime that demands accountability and consequences. It betrays the very trust on which our profession is founded.

The Joint Chiefs and our Senior Enlisted Leaders are committed to correcting this crisis. We are acting swiftly and deliberately to change a culture that has become too complacent. We know that lasting change begins by changing the behaviors that lead to sexual assault.

The Joint Chiefs have spent the last year leading a campaign focused on prevention, investigation, accountability, advocacy, and assessment – all as part of our enduring commitment to the health of the force. The additional actions recently directed by Secretary of Defense Hagel serve to strengthen our efforts.

We can and must do more. We must protect victims while preserving the rights of the accused. We must prevent and respond to predatory and high-risk behaviors. We must ensure a professional work environment predicated on dignity and respect.

And, we must be open to every idea and option to accelerate meaningful, institutional change.

Legal reform has been and should continue to be part of this campaign. Previously, we elevated initial disposition authority in certain cases to O-6 commanders with Special Court-Martial Convening Authority. More recently, I

endorsed Secretary Hagel's proposed amendments to Article 60 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

Should further reform be needed, I urge that military commanders remain central to the legal process. The commander's ability to preserve good order and discipline remains essential to accomplishing any change within our profession. Reducing command responsibility could adversely affect the ability of the commander to enforce professional standards and ultimately, to accomplish the mission.

Of course, commanders and leaders of every rank must earn trust to engender trust in their units. Most do. Most do not allow unit cohesion to mask an undercurrent of betrayal. Most rise to the challenge of leadership even under the most demanding physical and moral circumstances.

Our men and women in uniform have within them the moral courage needed to change course and reaffirm our professional ethos. Working together, we can and will restore trust within our Force and with the American people. Thank you.