



SECRETARY OF THE ARMY
WASHINGTON

OCT 29 2013

Ms. Barbara Jones
Chair
Response Systems to Adult Sexual Assault Crimes Panel
One Liberty Center
875 North Randolph Street, Suite 150
Arlington, Virginia 22203-1995

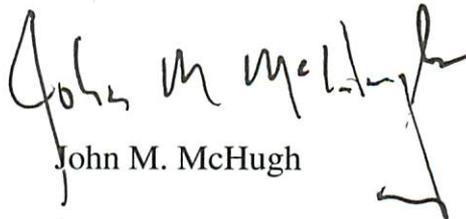
Dear Ms. Jones:

Thank you for your October 23, 2013 letter requesting the Army's comments on both the issues raised in the Panel's terms of reference and the request for information you furnished.

I have asked The Judge Advocate General, who has responsibility for this area, to review the materials you provided and respond on my behalf.

Thank you for your Panel's work on this incredibly important issue and your support of our Army.

Sincerely,


John M. McHugh



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Dear Ms. Jones:

I am writing to follow up on your October 23, 2013 letter seeking comments from the Army to inform your panel's important work. I understand that The Judge Advocate General has now provided you the Army's final set of comments, as I directed, and is standing by to provide any other assistance you may need. However, I wanted to also provide you some of my insights, as the Secretary of the Army, into the Army's sexual assault prevention and response program.

Preventing sexual assault is the top priority for both General Odierno and me, which we have made clear to the entire force. We believe that preventing sexual assault requires a long-term commitment to changing our Army culture. We will only be successful in eliminating sexual assault if we create a culture where no one – from the most senior leader to the most junior Soldier – tolerates sexual assault or the conditions or behaviors that can lead to it.

To set the conditions for this culture change and to demonstrate our seriousness about combating sexual assault, we have enacted an extraordinary number of policy changes, including many over the past fiscal year alone – steps to ensure that we are improving victim care, meeting victim needs and building on the success of our Special Victim Capability for the investigation and prosecution of sexual assault and related crimes. All of these changes reflect our institutional focus on the problem, our holistic approach to culture change and our willingness to change or adapt long-standing practices and procedures. Ultimately, though, culture change will not result merely from disseminating new policies – it must be led by commanders. Accordingly, in addition to the measures described above, we are also taking steps to ensure that commanders are properly held accountable for achieving this culture change.

How we respond to a sexual assault when one does occur sets the stage for preventing the next sexual assault from occurring. Responding appropriately to an incident is not only our obligation to the victim; it demonstrates that we are serious about eliminating sexual assault. Strong responses help to create an environment where other victims feel comfortable coming forward. This is a key part of the culture change we

want to achieve. Accordingly, we must ensure that our responses to sexual assault incidents meet the highest standards.

The linchpin in our efforts to respond to sexual assaults and care for victims is our people – specifically, our professional sexual assault response coordinators and victim advocates. We have enacted policies and procedures to ensure that we select only the best people for these positions and that they are well-trained. For instance, pursuant to guidance I issued in May 2013, we have enhanced background screening and are exploring ways to define a career progression model to better attract and retain high quality individuals. And, although the Army's current SHARP Certification Course is nearly twice as long as what the Department of Defense requires, we are implementing even more training. Beginning in January 2014, brigade-level and higher full-time SHARP personnel will augment their current training with an 8-week course that will provide a comprehensive curriculum, including enhanced human relations, interpersonal communication and leadership training.

A strong response also requires us to fully investigate and appropriately prosecute allegations of sexual assault. To do this, we are building upon the success of our Special Victim Capability. The core of this team now includes Special Victims Prosecutors, Sexual Assault Investigators and Special Victim paralegals at 19 installations across the globe. These professionals are trained in the unique aspects of investigating and prosecuting sexual assault cases. Since the program's inception in 2009, these specially-trained and selected personnel have overseen an increase of over 100% of the number of special victim case prosecutions, convictions and sentences that include a punitive discharge. Army commanders, advised by these experts, continue to take the most challenging cases to trial.

Likewise, in addition to ensuring that the Army has experts in prosecuting sexual assault cases, we have also taken steps – consistent with the guidance from the Secretary of Defense – to implement a Special Victim Counsel program that will offer legal counsel to military and dependent victims of sexual assault throughout the investigative and judicial process. These specially-trained Judge Advocates are already in place, representing victims' privacy interests and rights at courts-martial across the Army.

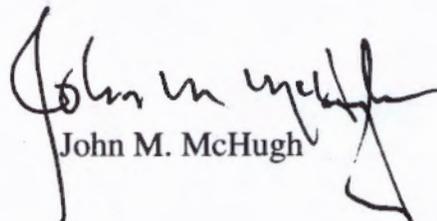
Most importantly, though, we are significantly improving accountability for commanders and other leaders, because they must drive the needed cultural change. One way that we are doing this is through the officer and non-commissioned officer evaluation process. Last September, I signed an Army Directive that requires all officers and non-commissioned officers to be assessed on their efforts to foster a climate of dignity and respect within their organizations and on their adherence to the Army

SHARP program. By making this a part of the evaluation process, on par with all of the other factors that go into evaluating and rating our leaders, I expect that culture change will become a point of emphasis for everyone. Both General Odierno and I firmly believe that enhancing accountability of commanders and other leaders, while continuing to maintain their authorities to effect change, is absolutely fundamental to preventing sexual assault.

Although there is much work still to be done, we are making progress. In Fiscal Year 2013, the Army saw a 50% increase in reports of sexual assault compared to Fiscal Year 2012. I view this as a sign that victims are becoming more confident in the strength of our response capabilities, and thus are coming forward at greater rates. But, despite what I view as a positive increase in reporting, I will not be satisfied until we have eliminated sexual assault in the Army. To that end, I can assure you that our work is not done. The Army's senior leadership understands that we must not merely change our culture, but that we must make this culture change permanent and enduring.

Thank you for giving the Army the opportunity to comment on this vitally important issue, and for undertaking this significant effort on behalf of our Soldiers and their Families.

Sincerely,



John M. McHugh