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Army Updates Sexual Assault Policy

http://www4.army.mil/ocpa/read.php?story_id_key=6589

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WASHINGTON (Army News Service, Nov. 23, 2004) – New Army guidance on sexual assault prevention and response was released Nov. 12, and will be included in the upcoming revision of AR 600-20, Army Command Policy, in 2005.

The new guidance is one of several steps the Army has recently taken to re-emphasize that any offense of sexual assault is inconsistent with Army Values and Warrior Ethos, officials said.

In addition to the new policy guidance for commanders, the Army has launched a Web site at www.sexualassault.army.mil, to promote steps leaders and Soldiers at all levels can take to prevent and respond to instances of potential sexual assault. Included in this Web site are links to training materials developed by Training and Doctrine Command.

Sexual assault prevention training will be part of initial entry training, semi-annual training, installation in-processing and pre-deployment training for all Soldiers. The website also includes links to additional resources for victims of sexual assault, and a checklist for commanders to help the recovery of sexual assault victims.

The newly launched Sexual Assault Web site and incorporation of the new Army guidance into AR 600-20 reinforces Army leadership's ongoing commitment to ensuring that adequate prevention programs and policies are in place, said Col. Paris Mack, chief, Human Factors Division, Human Resources & Policy Directorate, G-1.

It will also ensure that soldiers who are victims of sexual assault receive proper treatment, medical and psychological care; that the chain of command will provide full support, dignity and confidentiality to victims; and that any reported incidents of sexual assault will be, "fully investigated and acted upon through the military criminal justice system," Mack said.

These efforts are the first steps at incorporating the recommendations of an Army task force that conducted a 90-day detailed review of the Army's policies and programs on sexual assault. That task force issued an 80-page report with 24 recommendations to improve the system.

When looking for ways to improve the Army's policies and programs, the task force sought advice from outside agencies to include the Department of Veteran Affairs; National

Organization of Victim Assistance; Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (RAINN); The Miles Foundation; Navy; Coast Guard; the University of Arizona and Purdue University in Indiana.

Both universities were given grants from the Department of Justice for their prevention programs, and the age category for Soldiers who report assaults and their assailants are in the same age category as the university students. Nearly 84 percent of alleged perpetrators were identified as junior Soldiers, and 95 percent of the victims were Soldiers in the rank of staff sergeant and below.