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## Task Force to Investigate Navy and Army Academies

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A new task force assigned to make recommendations about how military academies address sexual harassment issues met behind closed doors Wednesday and Thursday as they prepared to spend a year studying of the cultures of the Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., and the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md.

Six senior military and six civilian experts make up the task force, including three civilian members that served on the 2003 panel headed by former Rep. Tillie Fowler, R-Fla., that investigated sexual misconduct allegations at the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colo. The task force follows in the steps of the Fowler Commission, which considered similar issues at the Air Force Academy and is supposed to report back within a year.

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld appointed the task force after Congress ordered it following the 2003 report (<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0903/090503m1.htm>) from Fowler's panel that criticized oversight at the Air Force and the Pentagon. There have been no public allegations of sexual misconduct or violence at the Naval and Army academies, and the task force is expected to help the academies prevent incidents and make sure they have the right methods for dealing with sexual assault and violence if it does happen.

Vice Adm. Gerald L. Hoewing, chief of naval personnel, will head the task force with Delilah Rumburg, executive director of the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape.

William Harkey, a spokesman for the task force, said there will be at least two public meetings at the end of November, but the rest of the task force's work will be done confidentially. The task force's minutes and schedule will be posted on its Web site (<http://www.dtic.mil/dtfs/index.html>).

"There is a heck of a lot of expertise and background on those people," Harkey said. "I'm amazed at the stature of the committee."

According to the Miles Foundation, a private nonprofit organization that provides services to victims of violence associated with the military, a section in the House version of the fiscal 2005 Defense authorization bill would require the task force to look at the entire military and extend it another 18 months.