

# ***AIR FORCE PRINT NEWS***

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## **Sexual Assault Prevention, Response Report Released**

**By Tech. Sgt. David A. Jablonski**

[WASHINGTON] – The Air Force has released a study that assessed the service’s sexual assault prevention and response capabilities.

The 96-page document titled, Report Concerning the Assessment of USAF Sexual Assault Prevention and Response, was released Aug. 30. In February 2004, the secretary of the Air Force and the Air Force chief of staff requested an assessment of sexual assault prevention and response capabilities, including areas needing improvement. The Air Force performed a qualitative assessment that generated findings to inform senior leaders of potential program improvements.

Michael L. Dominguez, assistant secretary of the Air Force for manpower and reserve affairs, and Lt. Gen. Roger A. Brady, deputy chief of staff for personnel, supervised the assessment.

The assessment’s findings and recommendations were briefed to Air Force senior leaders May 18 at CORONA Top. They approved a campaign plan to address the findings and to further develop the recommended solutions. Air Force three-star leaders met at a summit Aug. 16 to discuss proposed solutions.

“The most important thing we learned is that sexual assault is a very complex subject,” General Brady said. “And it’s a subject that we probably didn’t understand very well. So this report helps us educate our commanders, our supervisors, our people and ourselves so that we know what we’re dealing with, and we can attack the problem aggressively.

“We want to do something about it because it obviously affects the quality of life for our people; it affects our readiness; it affects our ability to conduct our mission,” he said.

Air Force Vice Chief of Staff Gen. T. Michael Moseley, in a February tasking memorandum to all major command commanders, established five goals for the assessment:

- Strive to eliminate sexual assault and any environment that fosters it.

- Ensure an environment where victims have the confidence to report sexual assault.
- Conduct appropriate investigation and prosecution.
- Address victims’ well-being and health as effectively as possible.
- Ensure commanders and senior leaders oversee program effectiveness.

“We want to send a very clear message,” General Brady said. “It is that sexual assault, or any behavior anywhere approaching this, is absolutely inconsistent with our core values and everything that we believe. It is unacceptable.

“When we find people who are involved in this kind of activity, these are not people we need in our Air Force,” he said. “We also need to make sure that anyone who is a victim of such a crime knows that we’re going to handle it discreetly, we’re going to be aggressive in not only pursuing justice for the individual and the system, but we’re also going to show all of the compassion and show all the support we can (to individuals) as they proceed through what for them is a very traumatic event.”

Twenty significant findings are listed in the report, as well as 14 recommendations. Findings and recommendations focused on six topic areas: sexual assault realities; policy and leadership; education and training; reporting; response; and air and space expeditionary forces and deployment. Each topic area except sexual assault realities contains a series of recommendations.

“We’re already using what we have found,” General Brady said.

“We did not wait until we got ready to publish the report,” he said. “As soon as we started having consistent findings from across our Air Force, we put out guidance to our commanders, for example, to establish victim-support liaisons. We are using this report to educate ourselves about the nature of this crime, about the environment we currently have in the Air Force and to build the programs we need to create the environment where we build greater trust. I think it will help us move toward eradicating a behavior that is totally unacceptable.

“We already have Air Education and Training Command building most of our education programs for this,” the general said. “We’re developing programs that begin with Airmen coming to Lackland, officers coming in to various accession forces, noncommissioned officer academies, commander’s schools, etc. We want to have consistent messages, appropriate to the audience, across the ranks. And we are educating our leaders to deal with these problems wherever they’re faced.”

The cornerstone of this effort was a series of self-assessments conducted by major commands focusing on each one’s sexual assault prevention and response capabilities. A headquarters integrated planning team undertook a parallel effort to review established policies, conduct corporate and university benchmarking, and engage in sexual assault subject-matter experts external to the Air Force. Representatives from the MAJCOMs

and the headquarters teams worked together to capture findings and develop recommendations.

This assessment is the next step of a journey that began in January 2003, when allegations of sexual assault at the U.S. Air Force Academy came to light. In March 2003, after multiple investigations into these allegations, the secretary and chief of staff implemented Agenda for Change. The Agenda for Change was a map for complete cultural change within the academy.

Over the course of 2003, two studies focusing on the sexual assault crisis at the academy were conducted. The Report of the Working Group Concerning Deterrence of and Response to Incidents of Sexual Assault at the U.S. Air Force Academy (Working Group Report) was delivered in June 2003. In a second study, former Rep. Tillie Fowler led a panel chartered by the U.S. Congress to review the actions of the academy and Air Force in response to allegations of sexual misconduct. The Report of the Panel to Review Sexual Misconduct Allegations at the U.S. Air Force Academy (Fowler Report) was released in September 2003.

The Air Force learned a great deal about sexual assault from its experiences with the academy. Consequently, during a four-star summit in the fall of 2003, Air Force senior leaders decided to look beyond the academy to determine whether the academy experience was an anomaly or existed Air Force-wide.

The Pacific Air Forces commander volunteered to do an assessment within the command. This assessment was limited to allegations of rape within the command and findings were presented to the next four-star summit in February. Based on the PACAF findings, Air Force leaders agreed on the necessity of an Air Force-wide assessment.

This assessment represents the culmination of an 18-month process. Although the learning process continues, the Air Force is comfortable drawing three overarching observations:

- The sexual assault problem is much more complex than it seemed initially.
- Sexual assault is a societal problem. Consequently, it is also an Air Force problem. There are no quick solutions to address sexual assault. It will require positive, ongoing efforts to foster and instill institutional change.
- Commanders and leaders at all levels are key to the process of institutional change. Recognizing and understanding the sexual assault problem is challenging. Air Force commanders have been working this issue on a case-by-case basis rather than attacking it as a cultural and societal issue. The Air Force must do a better job of defining and understanding the crime of sexual assault and the behavior that spawns it. Ultimately, the Air Force must work through its commanders to create an institutional environment that refuses to accept or facilitate such behavior.

“Finally, let me say that this is an issue that has to do with who we are as Airmen,” General Brady said.

“It has to do with our core values. And just as we talk about integrity first, service before self and excellence in all we do, there is an important, vital component in each of those that has to do with respect,” he said. “When we have sexual assault, we have a clear lack of respect. As Airmen we must respect ourselves, we must respect the institution and its values, and we must respect each other.

“Airmen come into the Air Force because they want to be part of a winning team,” the general said. “And to be a winning team every one of us -- every man, every woman -- has to be a full-up round. We cannot have a situation in which one Airman, for whatever reason, lives in fear of another. Winning teams do not operate that way. We’re a team: men, women, civilians, military, officer, enlisted, Guard, Reserve and active. One team, one total force, one standard.”

The complete Report Concerning the Assessment of USAF Sexual Assault Prevention and Response, is available at [www.af.mil/library/posture/SA\\_Assessment\\_Report.pdf](http://www.af.mil/library/posture/SA_Assessment_Report.pdf).