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**STATEMENT OF VICE ADMIRAL WALTER E. CARTER JR, USN,  
SUPERINTENDENT OF THE UNITED STATES NAVAL ACADEMY  
BEFORE THE HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY  
PERSONNEL, MAY 2, 2017**

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## **Summary**

As directed by Congress, DoD assessed the Military Service Academies (MSA) to determine the effectiveness of policies, training, and procedures with respect to Sexual Harassment (SH) and Sexual Assault (SA) involving Academy personnel. DoD accomplished this assessment by reviewing Academy self-assessments and through the administration of the 2016 Service Academy Gender Relations (SAGR) Survey (June 1, 2015 - May 31, 2016), which focused on four specific areas: SA prevention, SA response, efforts to address retaliatory behavior, and SH prevention and response. Results of this survey are informing modifications to our current prevention efforts. Specifically, our future focus will concentrate more on the appropriate use of alcohol and the effects that misuse and binge drinking have on the ability of midshipmen (MIDN) to make sound decisions. The second change in emphasis will address the importance of healthy relationships as MIDN and as they transition from college students to commissioned officers in the Navy and Marine Corps. The final focus will be to more effectively convey what consent entails between two adults and its importance in treating each other with dignity and respect. The Naval Academy will continue to be forthright and honest about our Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) program. Although we have invested significant time and effort in educating the Brigade of Midshipmen, faculty, and staff, results of the Survey indicate that we still have much work to do. Our program uses evidence-based training and we continually evaluate feedback from our MIDN, faculty and staff on ways to improve the program to eliminate SA and SH; behavior which is toxic to military readiness in our Navy and Marine Corps.

## **Introduction**

Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of this committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today on behalf of the United States Naval Academy (USNA). Our mission is to develop midshipmen morally, mentally and physically and to imbue them with the highest ideals of duty, honor and loyalty in order to graduate leaders who are dedicated to a career of naval service. A central theme to the moral development aspect of this mission is treating others with dignity and respect. Despite dedicated efforts by USNA leadership and the Brigade of Midshipmen, we continue to experience incidents of unwanted sexual contact (USC) within our ranks. The 2016 SAGR survey, taken by the Brigade in April of 2016 and released earlier this year, showed that USC increased compared to rates measured in 2014. While the prevalence of USC in 2016 was below that in 2010 and 2012, and despite our continued investment in activities expected to prevent SA, we did not sustain the noticeable decrease we experienced in 2014. Specifically, the percentage of the Brigade experiencing USC increased from 2.8% to 5.2%. For females, the increase went from 8.1 to 14.5%, while male prevalence increased from 1.3% to 2.1%. *We can and must do better.* We are responsible to not only ensure that every member of the Brigade of Midshipmen is afforded an opportunity to develop in an environment of dignity and respect, but to prepare them to better lead Sailors and Marines in the Fleet.

## **Our Program Must Holistically Address all Influences on Midshipmen**

USNA remains committed to maintaining a consistent and effective SAPR program which seeks to sustain a professional environment of trust and mutual respect free of retaliation to victims and those who report sexual assault. Our approach addresses the diverse cultural and

societal influences on our midshipmen by executing DoD, Navy, and USNA directives and by collaborating with national, state, and local resources. Leadership engagement at all levels, combined with a focus on individual accountability, are the keys to successfully achieving our goal of significantly reducing incidences of USC. Our MIDN are not immune to societal influences and we must continue to address the risks of engaging in activities involving the internet, including online dating apps. These technologies risk negatively distorting norms on healthy relationships, privacy, and consent. We must continue teaching midshipmen that they are accountable 24/7—whether in uniform or not—as ambassadors of the Naval Academy, the Navy, and the United States writ large. Inculcating that culture now better prepares them for success in the Fleet.

A successful prevention effort requires a comprehensive approach. Our current sexual harassment and assault prevention program was initially developed in 2006 with assistance of experts in the field, and has continued to evolve based on current research and student feedback. Our current efforts start on day one – Induction Day – and continue through a senior year capstone event. In all, more than 30 hours of education and training are dedicated to every midshipman. Our multi-faceted prevention program includes:

- Plebe Summer SAPR Indoctrination Program. SAPR Staff representatives personally welcome each new candidate of the incoming class of almost 1200 students, and identify the resources available to them while at USNA. Within two weeks, each midshipman is administered a baseline survey on attitudes and beliefs and receives initial training on SAPR program specific procedures such as filing Restricted and Unrestricted Reports. The final summer training session includes an interactive discussion with their Company Officer and Senior Enlisted Leader

where case studies are reviewed and leadership lays out clear expectations of acceptable behavior and actions.

- **SHAPE Program.** The strength of our prevention program lies in the MIDN-led Sexual Harassment and Assault Prevention Education (SHAPE) program (see Figure 1). We believe, and research shows, that peer-to-peer mentorship with sufficient leadership oversight is the most effective way to instill MIDN ownership in sustaining an environment of dignity and respect throughout the Brigade. This 14 hour program is conducted across each midshipman’s 47-month experience at USNA.

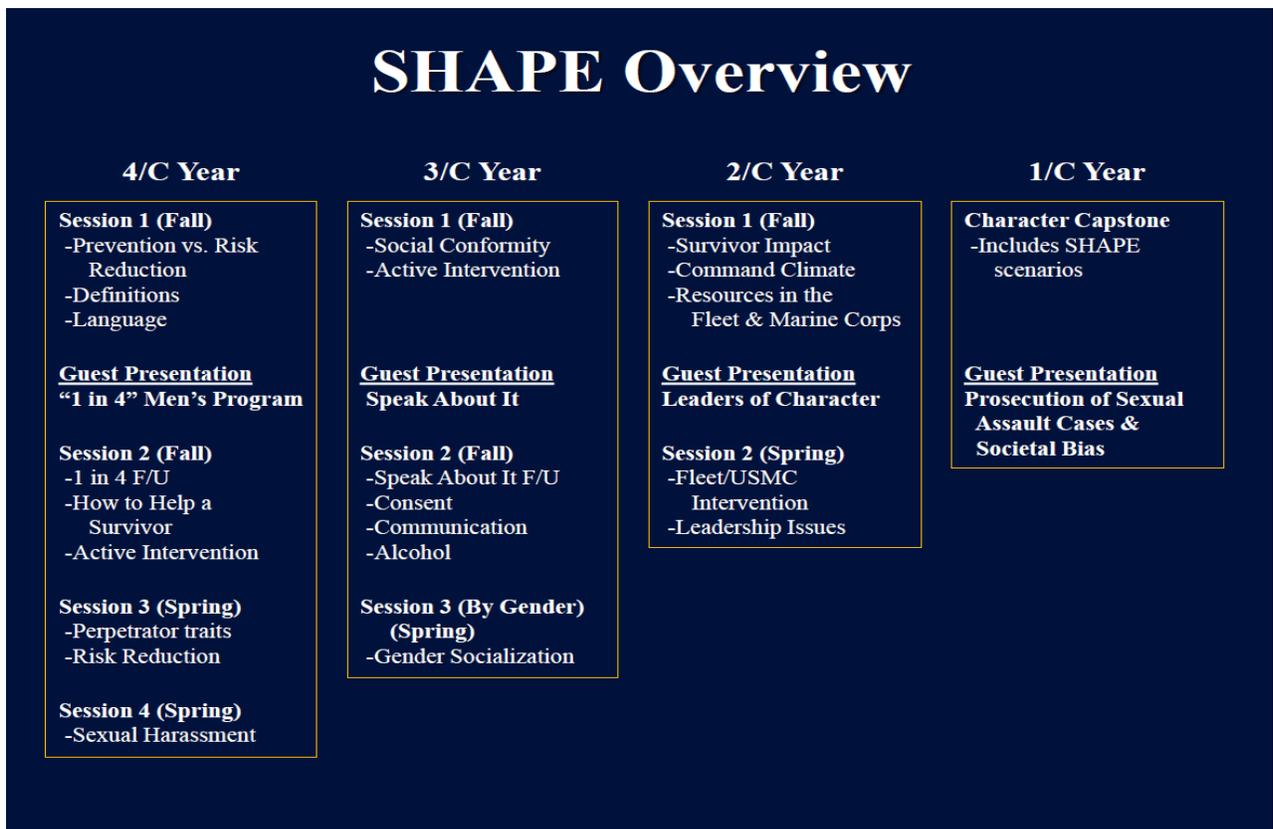


Figure (1)

- Incorporation into Formal Education Curriculum. In addition to the First Class Capstone Course, other formal curricula that address SAPR topics are the Second Class Advanced Leadership Theory and Application, Third Class Moral Reasoning for the Naval Officer, and Fourth Class Intro to Naval Leadership.

USNA's prevention program continues to evolve as we update lessons to include increased emphasis on male victims and move to incorporate more scenario-driven case studies dealing with the impacts of social media and other relevant topics that emerge. Midshipmen are challenged to make decisions that promote healthy relationships, recognize professional and responsible behavior, and be inspired to work and live in accordance with the Navy Core Values and Navy Ethos.

Strong guidance starts with me, the Superintendent. I am fully dedicated to serving as a positive example, building and maintaining a team whose core values include promoting dignity and respect. I expect the same from all of the leaders at the Naval Academy - to be visible and positive leaders of action. Fleet Mentors, academic faculty, staff, company officers, and company senior enlisted leadership all play key roles in shaping MIDN into the leaders of the future. All levels remain critical to ensuring that SAPR program efforts resonate and translate to producing the best junior officers for the Navy and Marine Corps.

### **A Strong Response Program is Essential**

We've made significant progress with our response efforts over the years. We are prepared to respond 24 hours a day and 7 days a week should midshipmen need help and

support. The response efforts demand a coordinated effort across many departments influencing all aspects of midshipman life.

- Sexual Assault Response Coordinators (SARCs). USNA is unique in that we have two fully qualified SARCs. The lead SARC is responsible for overseeing the entire response program, including coordinating Restricted and Unrestricted Reports. The assistant SARC leads education and watch bill coordination. The response office is conveniently located in close proximity to, but not in, Bancroft Hall (USNA's dormitory complex) in order to afford privacy to victims as appropriate – a recent move that has garnered positive feedback.
- Victim Advocates (VA). In addition to the full-time civilian VA on the SAPR staff, the Naval Academy has a cadre of volunteer active duty officers and enlisted men and women who are fully certified, accredited and on call 24/7 via cell phone.
- Victim Legal Counsel (VLC). In 2013, USNA became the first naval installation in the country to have a VLC assigned. The VLC reports directly to the Navy Judge Advocate General's staff (vice any USNA leadership) and solely advocates for the victim of a sexual assault while working closely with the SARCs, VAs, NCIS, and chain-of-command in all investigations and legal proceedings.
- Brigade Medical Unit. Works closely with the rest of the response team for care of victims residing in Bancroft Hall. Rape kits are performed at Mercy Medical Center in Baltimore pursuant to a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Mercy is one of the top three facilities in the country in forensics capabilities.

- Chaplains. Fully trained SAPR responders who work closely with SARCs, Medical, VLC, and chain-of-command to provide support and guidance to the victim throughout the process. Chaplain services are always available to MIDN, whether they make a report of sexual assault or not.
- Midshipman Development Center (MDC). A full-time civilian sexual trauma specialist conducts individual counseling sessions as well as voluntary support groups for both female and male survivors of sexual assault. Like the chaplain services, MDC's services remain available to all midshipman regardless if they choose to report or not.
- Our new Leave of Absence policy now offers victims the chance to concentrate on healing and then return to the Brigade a year later to resume the curriculum where they left off. While this program is new, we have seen early success in its implementation.

We must continue to gain and maintain the trust of our Sailors, Marines, and midshipmen. Results from the 2016 SAGR Survey indicate that we are making positive strides in cultivating this trust. We will continue to refine our response efforts moving forward as we focus on preventing incidences of USC.

### **Holding Perpetrators Appropriately Accountable Contributes to Prevention**

USNA remains dedicated to promptly investigating reports of sexual harassment and sexual assault by utilizing all available resources to yield timely and accurate results. Early vigilance on incidents of sexual harassment helps prevent future sexual assaults. All complaints of sexual harassment are investigated and handled at the appropriate level including informal and

formal counseling, letters of instruction (LOI), developing and giving sexual harassment training, adjudication through the midshipman conduct system, and Dignity and Respect Remediation (a multi-month intensive one-on-one remediation with a Senior Officer).

Every Unrestricted Report of USC is referred to the Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS). NCIS provides exemplary support in sexual assault cases and is committed to completing all investigations within 90 days of initiation. Coordination between NCIS, legal staff, and SAPR VAs has been critical to ensuring prompt and just results in each case, and we remain committed to improving the process wherever possible. Investigative findings are reported to me, the convening authority, for determination of disposition. I remain committed to upholding the military justice process to ensure due process for the accused and judicial closure for the victim.

### **The Way Forward**

The results from the 2016 SAGR Survey indicated that the majority of USC incidents occurred between classmates of the opposite sex, off campus, and with alcohol involved. Informed by the results of this most recent survey, we are directing more attention in three areas: responsible use of alcohol, understanding what healthy relationships should look like, and a better understanding of consent. I have directed the Commandant of Midshipmen to form a task force consisting of officer, enlisted, and midshipmen leadership to address solutions to the epidemic problem of the misuse of alcohol and binge drinking among college students. The task force is considering efforts to promote the appropriate use of alcohol, the importance of moderation, and the understanding of the effects of misuse. In conjunction with the Commandant and the Academic Dean, I have also directed the establishment of a Life Skills

working group. Academic professors, military leaders, SAPR program experts, medical professionals, and midshipmen are seeking ways to better instill life skills in our midshipmen as they navigate tough waters like healthy relationships, online activity, and effective communication. Finally, our prevention training will continue to focus on better defining consent.

## **Conclusion**

Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of this committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. We have developed a very robust program over the years, but we still have a lot of work to do to further affect and sustain positive change. There is no finish line in this endeavor. I am prepared to address any questions you may have regarding my testimony.