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Posted at 05:08 PM ET, 12/27/2011

Military academies report more sexual assaults

By Jason Ukman

For years, the U.S. military has tried to confront allegations of pervasive sexual harassment within its ranks, and for years, it has sought to make it easier for victims to report such incidents and get support.

But that effort, according to some veterans' groups and others, has been halting. A report from the Government Accountability Office this fall determined that, despite longstanding policy aimed at fostering a culture free from sexual harassment, the Defense Department had "exercised little oversight of its policies and programs."

Fifteen percent of female veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan reported suffering psychological trauma from sexual assault or harassment, according to a paper published in the American Journal of Public Health last year.

On Tuesday, the Defense Department said the nation's military service academies had received 65 reports of sexual assault during the 2010-2011 academic year, the highest total since the Pentagon began maintaining data in 2004.

The academies reported 41 such assaults in the 2009-2010 academic year.

It's unclear whether those figures represent a step in the wrong direction, with assaults actually on the rise, or a step in the right direction, with more victims willing to come forward to report assaults. The Defense Department said it "does not have the ability to conclusively identify the reasons for this increase in reporting behavior."

In a statement, the head of the Pentagon's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office said that "military academies are similar to college campuses around the country in that sexual harassment and assault are challenges that all faculty, staff and students need to work to prevent."

When assaults do occur, said Maj. Gen. Mary Kay Hertog, "we owe it to those who have been victimized, and to every cadet and midshipman, to do everything possible to provide needed support and to hold those who commit sexual assault appropriately accountable."

U.S. military academies have applied considerable resources to raising awareness about sexual harassment, according to Tuesday's report, and a statement from the Defense Department noted that "most academy programs fulfilled, and in some cases, surpassed the requirements of



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existing DoD policies and directives.”

Hertog was named director of the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office in August, the first time a military officer was placed in charge of the department’s efforts to end sexual assault.

Meanwhile, under a new policy, service members who have been the victims of sexual assault can request an expedited transfer from their units.

On Tuesday, the Service Women’s Action Network, a nonprofit that advocates on behalf of women in the military as well as veterans, said it was shocked by the increase in reported sexual assaults and the reported failures to implement and enforce policy in some cases.

“Ending the widespread issue of sexual harassment and sexual assault in the military starts by ending it at the service academies,” the group’s policy director, Greg Jacob, said in a statement.

In fiscal year 2010, the [military received 3,158 reports of sexual assault](#) involving service members, a 2 percent decline from the previous fiscal year.

By [Jason Ukman](#) | 05:08 PM ET, 12/27/2011

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FloridaChick wrote:

1/4/2012 11:11 PM EST

The current system of reporting assaults internally, and having them investigated by commanders and/or MPs is the problem. It's asking the fox to guard the henhouse, and to further report and document each and every chicken he eats.

Nonsense. Insulting to the many women taxpayers whose hard-earned money pays these knuckle-draggers.

The commanders might not be foxes but none stands to gain by making a plausible finding for assault. They'd be writing negatives into their own fit... [See More](#)

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ernelson428 wrote:

12/30/2011 7:53 AM EST

Quote: When assaults do occur, said Maj. Gen. Mary Kay Hertog, “we owe it to those who have been victimized, and to every cadet and midshipman, to do everything possible to provide needed support and to hold those who commit sexual assault appropriately accountable.”

I am not sure which is the more despicable, the military protecting rapists or the catholic church protecting pedophiles?

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