

DACOWITS RFI #9

The Impacts of Social Media and Online Sexual Harassment on Service Members

In 2015, DACOWITS began a new line of study, the impact of social media on Service Members. The study was prompted by the Committee's 2014 installation visits and from concerns surrounding social media use and online bullying and harassment.

Statement: The Services should revise their definition of sexual harassment and any regulations pertaining to the use of social media to clarify that conduct or speech that takes place wholly online can itself constitute sexual harassment.

Response: Currently, the following Army directives/guidance address sexual harassment: AD 2015-40, Implementing Procedures for Anti-Harassment Policy (30 Oct 15); AD 2014-20, Prohibition of Retaliation Against Soldiers for Reporting a Criminal Offense (19 Jun 14); and ALARACT 122/2015, Professionalization of Online Conduct (Updated 23 Feb 17). The Army is in the process of publishing an Army Directive with the latest sexual harassment definitions. Additionally, the revision of AR 600-20 contains guidance regarding sexual harassment and online conduct as does the new SHARP regulation that's scheduled for publication in FY18.

Additionally, the Army now includes the following information concerning On-Line Conduct and the Use of Social Media during Annual SHARP Training that is mandatory for all Soldiers and DA Civilians:

- a. Discussion of ALARACT 122/2015 (dtd July 2015) and ALARACT 014/2017 (dtd February 2017) which defines On-line misconduct as follows: "The use of electronic media to inflict harm." This message goes on to state that examples include (but are not limited to): harassment, bullying, hazing, stalking, discrimination, retaliation, or any other types of misconduct that undermine dignity and respect. Soldiers or Civilian employees who participate in or condone misconduct, whether offline or online, may be subject to criminal, disciplinary, and/or administrative action.
- b. Clarification that Soldiers are responsible for standards of conduct 24/7, during working hours and after working hours, and when online or using social media.

Statement: The Services should revise and implement sexual harassment training that addresses online harassment, anonymity, and the consequences of online behavior on- and off-duty.

Response: The Army has revised its Annual SHARP Training, Initial Entry Training and Professional Military Education lessons to include instruction and discussions on Social Media standards of conduct and On-line Misconduct.

During these training sessions, all Soldiers and Civilians are provided the definition of On-Line Misconduct, which is defined as "The use of electronic communication to inflict

harm. They are also provided the following examples: harassment (e.g. sexual harassment), bullying, hazing, stalking, discrimination, retaliation, or any other types of misconduct.

All Soldiers and Civilians attending the training are also advised that any employee (Soldier or Civilian) who participates in or condones misconduct, whether offline or online, may be subject to criminal, disciplinary, and/or administrative action.

The Army has provided guidance to all Soldiers and Civilians that when using communications devices, members of the Army team should apply the following - **Think, Type, Post:**

- **"Think"** about the message being communicated and who could potentially view it;
- **"Type"** a communication that is consistent with Army values; and
- **"Post"** only those messages that demonstrate dignity and respect for self and others.

The training also states that "Personnel experiencing or witnessing online misconduct should promptly report matters to the chain of command/supervision" and provides alternate avenues that can be used to report, such as: Family Support Services, Equal Opportunity, Equal Employment Opportunity, SHARP, The Inspector General, and Army Law Enforcement.

Statement: The Service Secretaries and Joint Chiefs of Staff should communicate a united, passionate, and powerful message to the Armed Forces that sexual harassment and sexual assault are not part of our military culture.

Response: In March 2017, the Acting Secretary of the Army, Chief of Staff of the Army, and the Sergeant Major of the Army penned a tri-signed message entitled, "Online Conduct of the Army Team". This message outlined the Army's stance on its prohibition against misconduct through electronic media, including social media. The tri-signed message was followed by a Sergeant Major of the Army Sends (SMA Sends) reiterating the importance of Army Team members upholding the Army values whether on duty, off duty or while engaging on social media. The SMA also filmed a public service announcement that was distributed Army-wide.

Statement: The Service Chiefs should send verbal and written communications to Service Members emphasizing that sexual harassment and sexual assault are unacceptable and will not be tolerated. The message should embrace aggressive accountability of sexual harassment and sexual assault offenders, and those who were knowledgeable of the attacks and did nothing.

Response: The Army Senior Leadership's quotes emphasizing their stance against sexual assault, sexual harassment and retaliation are featured in the new SHARP marketing campaign, "Not in Our Army." The Acting Secretary of the Army, Chief of Staff of the Army and Sergeant Major of the Army published a tri-signed message in

April declaring that sexual assault and sexual harassment are unacceptable and extolling the importance of the Army Team upholding the Army values. Additionally, the Chief of Staff of the Army and the Sergeant Major of the Army were featured in Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month marketing materials, putting voice to values by embodying the concept of “Leadership accountability for execution of the SHARP Program”. Army Senior Leaders also have been vocal in Congressional testimony, during Senior Leader Summits, and SHARP Professional Forums. Their message is unified, strong and consistent: “Sexual harassment, sexual assault, and retaliation have no place in our Army.”

Statement: The Services should provide the same attention to preventing and responding to sexual harassment as they do to preventing and responding to sexual assault.

Response: The Army whole heartedly agrees with this statement. The Army SHARP Program is based on the belief that it is imperative to address inappropriate attitudes and behaviors that may lead to misconduct such as sexual harassment, sexual assault, and retaliation. By doing so, we may interrupt behaviors early in the sexual violence continuum of harm and prevent more egregious acts from occurring. The Army is the only Service that includes sexual harassment prevention as a formal part of its sexual assault prevention and response program. The Army made this prescient decision in 2008, based on civilian research that indicated that approximately 30% of sexual assaults are preceded by some form of sexual harassment. Recently, DOD research/surveys have similarly concluded that a correlation exists between these two behaviors. Currently, an Army Directive with updated sexual harassment definitions is in coordination and is scheduled to be signed by the Secretary of the Army. Sexual harassment, as a formal component of the Army SHARP Program, is now being codified into AR 600-20. Additionally, the Army SHARP Program is in the process of developing a new standalone regulation, which incorporates preventing and responding to sexual harassment. The Army has developed marketing and training materials, both print and video, that focus on sexual harassment and its nexus to sexual assault. Additionally, the SHARP Academy created a sexual violence continuum of harm slide that addresses the impact sexual harassment and sexual assault have on the readiness of the Force. This product is now incorporated into most of the Army SHARP presentations delivered to internal and external audiences.