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USNA LAUNCH OF THE THREE SERVICE ACADEMIES SEXUAL ASSAULT AND LEADERSHIP SURVEY: “SETTING THE BAR FOR A ‘HIGHER STANDARD’”

Remarks as Delivered by Inspector General Joseph E. Schmitz of the Department of Defense, U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, MD, Monday, April 5, 2004.

Thank you for that introduction, Admiral Rempt.

As we conduct this Sexual Assault survey, I would ask that you not think of it as an additional burden caused by a few “bad eggs.” This survey is about an exemplary conduct leadership standard first codified by Congress in the 1775 Navy Regulations.

Allow me to read verbatim Article I from the 1775 Navy Regulations, drafted by John Adams and enacted by our Continental Congress:

[quote] “The Commanders of all ships and vessels belonging to the THIRTEEN UNITED COLONIES, are strictly required to shew in themselves a good example of honor and virtue to their officers and men, and to be very vigilant in inspecting the behaviour of all such as are under them, and to discountenance and suppress all dissolute, immoral and disorderly practices; and also, such as are contrary to the rules of discipline and obedience, and to correct those who are guilty of the same according to the usage of the sea.”¹ [unquote]

During the 1990s, as the Army was dealing with a major sexual assault scandal at Aberdeen Proving Grounds, the U.S. Congress reenacted this exact same leadership standard for the Army and the Air Force -- and for the Navy, although Article I of the Navy Regulations had been continuously on the books since 1775.

When Congress reenacted this long-standing Navy leadership standard in 1997, the accompanying committee report explained its significance:

[quote] “This provision will not prevent an officer from shunning responsibility or accountability for an action or event. It does, however, establish a very clear standard by which Congress and the nation can measure officers of our military services. The [Senate Armed Services] committee holds military officers to a

¹ Rules for the Regulation of the Navy of the United Colonies of North America,” November 28, 1775 (<http://www.history.navy.mil>).

higher standard than other members of society. The nation entrusts its greatest resource, our young men and women, to our military officers. In return, the nation deserves complete integrity, moral courage, and the highest moral and ethical conduct.”² [unquote]

Always remember this “higher standard.” You are not just students at any college or university.

Chairman Warner of the Senate Armed Services Committee (who, by the way, used to be Secretary of the Navy), told me that the challenges facing the service academies associated with sexual assault “go to the heart and soul of our Armed Forces. Please get it right.”

We have been working closely with Admiral Rempt and the other two Academy Superintendents to get it right.

You may have read press accounts of what we have been doing at the U.S. Air Force Academy. This survey is your opportunity to help your senior leaders with straightforward feedback in an anonymous forum.

The survey is both voluntary and completely anonymous. I would encourage you to be as honest and detailed as you can be in answering the survey questions. If you would like to speak with someone, you can also meet one-on-one with any of my staff members of the next few days.

Again, please remember that this survey is not just about a few bad eggs. It is about an exemplary leadership standard that the Congress and the nation expects of you.

Our goal is to provide Vice Admiral Rempt and the other two Superintendents with the most accurate information we can so that he can make important decisions about how best to train you to understand and to conform you to that “higher standard.”

Thank you very much.

² Senate Armed Services Committee, “National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1988” (Report to Accompany S. 924), p. 277, quoted in the Introduction, “The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States of America” (www.defenselink.mil/pubs/liberty.pdf).