



The Department of Defense Task Force on Domestic Violence Recommendations: *How They Relate to Sexual Violence*

Attitudes (attachment 1)

Attitudes of violence against women exist on a continuum. When disrespect of women is tolerated, other forms of aggression develop and get progressively worse. Domestic and sexual violence against women will not end until this disrespect toward women ends. Addressing disrespectful behavior early on is preventative – less sexual assault and violence will be the result.

Cultural shift (attachment 2)

Cultural changes in large institutions like the military happen from the top down. The #1 recommendation of the Department of Defense Task Force On Domestic Violence (DTFDV) was to “create a culture shift that: does not tolerate domestic violence; moves from victims holding offenders accountable to the system holding offenders accountable; and punishes criminal behavior.” We suggested in our third-year report that many of the recommendations we made could also be applied to sexual violence; we discuss in the report the connections between these two violent crimes.

Core principles of intervention (attachment 3)

The core principles of domestic violence intervention recommended by the DTFDV also apply to sexual violence in the military.

Leadership (attachment 4)

The success of the domestic violence intervention model depends upon command. Command is responsible for victims’ safety, getting assistance and access to support services, and responsible for ensuring offender accountability. In a 2001 letter to military command, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz asserted that: “Domestic violence is an offense against the institutional values of the Military Services of the United States of America. Commanders at every level have a duty to take appropriate steps to prevent domestic violence, protect victims, and hold those who commit it accountable.” Sexual assault, like battering, is criminal behavior and must be addressed by command as such.

Focus on the perpetrator, not the victim (attachment 5)

Focusing on the victim as an explanation for a sexual assault misdirects the military’s efforts. This approach does not work. The issue is the perpetrator’s behavior – what the victim was wearing, drinking, doing, etc., does not change the fact that a crime has been committed. The perpetrator is responsible for his behavior; focusing on the victim only serves to lessen the accountability for the offender.

How many strikes?

Is the military going to devote resources to attempting to treat sex offenders who have offended once or multiple times, or is it going to direct its efforts at changing the **American** culture? How many troops are currently serving that have offended sexually once or twice or three times? Why do we allow them to continue serving?

Women and work

Women in the military are simply doing their jobs and pursuing a career and a living. They should not be subjected to sexual assault and intimidation by the environment of their workplace. This compromises the efficacy of our military, its cohesion and readiness.

Our sons and daughters

The troops currently serving in Iraq are our sons and daughters. They belong to us – we're responsible for them and we owe them a good example. None of us would want to find out that our son has raped or that our daughter has been violated. We must believe and support victims while confronting offenders and demanding that the violence stop.

Confidentiality

Victims need access to information and support and they need someone to assist them in the reporting process who will advocate for them. Victims need someone who is clear about the process and who understands the very natural emotional reaction a victim has to sexual assault, someone who does not mistake this reaction for a mental health condition.

Vigilance (attachment 6)

The military took on racism issues and diversity a long time ago, and although the problems have not been entirely solved, a lot of progress has been made. Advocates have recognized that the strategies and techniques that apply to ending racism, homophobia, and classism are the same as those we need to use to end violence against women. I believe the military can address the underlying sexism that fosters violence against women by using the same strategies employed to end racism in the services.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah D. Tucker
Executive Director

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Senate Armed Services Committee

Attachments

- 1 - *Continuum of Sexual Aggression*
- 2 - "Sexual violence and trafficking in women" excerpt from 3rd-year report of the Department of Defense Task Force On Domestic Violence (DTFDV)
- 3 - Principle Elements of the DTFDV's Strategic Plan
- 4 - Letter from Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz to military command
- 5 - *Military Power and Control Wheel*
- 6 - "Multi-culturalism and cross-culturalism" excerpt from 3rd-year report of the DTFDV

For more information on these and related issues, please visit the National Center's web site at www.ncdsv.org