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USAFA 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. Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, CO, Monday, April 19, 2004.*

Thank you General Rosa for that introduction, and congratulations to all you 4/C Cadets for earning your "prop & wings" over the weekend.

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

Allow me to read verbatim "Article I" from the 1775 Navy Regulations, drafted by John Adams and enacted by our Continental Congress on November 28, 1775:

[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 [close quote]

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 purpose and 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

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

services. The [Senate Armed Services] committee holds military officers to a 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
[close quote]

Always remember this "higher standard." You are not just students at any college or university: you are leaders of character in training -- members of the greatest military power in the history of mankind. One of our former Commander-in-Chief's had something to say about such power and greatness, which I commend to you today in the context of the survey you are about to take.

President Theodore Roosevelt admonished once that "the main source of national power and national greatness is found in the average citizenship of the nation. Therefore," he said, "it behooves us to do our best to see that the standard of the average citizen is kept high; and the average cannot be kept high unless the standard of the leaders is very much higher."³

Last year, Senator John Warner, Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee (who, by the way, has also served a 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."

Since then, we have been working closely with General Rosa and the other two Academy Superintendents to "get it right."

You may have read press accounts of what you and we have been doing here at the Air Force Academy, and what we have been doing back in Washington with Air Force and Congressional leaders. This survey is your opportunity now to tell it as it is — 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 anonymously, you can also meet one-on-one with any of my staff members who will be administering the survey over the next few days.

² Senate Armed Services Committee, "National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1998" (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).

³ T. Roosevelt, "Citizenship in a Republic" (delivered April 23, 1910), reprinted in AMERICAN IDEALS: THE STRENUOUS LIFE, REALIZABLE IDEALS 509 (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York 1926), quoted in the Introduction, "The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States of America" (www.defenselink.mil/pubs/liberty.pdf).

Again, please remember that this survey is not just about a few bad eggs. It is about an exemplary conduct leadership standard that the Congress and the nation expects of you. It is a standard that ought to be “very much higher” than that of the average citizen.

Our goal is to provide General Rosa and the other two Superintendents with the most accurate information we can so that he — and they — can make important decisions about how best to train you to understand better and to conform to that "higher standard."

Thank you very much.