



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS  
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IN REPLY REFER TO:  
CMC  
3 May 2012

WHITE LETTER NO. 2-12

From: Commandant of the Marine Corps  
To: All Marines  
Subj: SEXUAL ASSAULT

1. Marines...we have a significant issue with Sexual Assault inside our Corps - let me be clear on how I view this and where I stand. Sexual assault is an ugly mark on our proud reputation; it goes against everything we claim to be as United States Marines...it is a crime. This crime is not only completely incompatible with our core values of honor, courage, and commitment, it is an affront to the basic American principles we so bravely defend. It undermines readiness, unit cohesion, and morale. While it is predominately a male-on-female crime, our records indicate a number of male-on-male attacks as well. Pure and simple...it is an aberration that has no place in the Marine Corps.

2. I want there to be no ambiguity in the mind of any Marine. Sexual assault is a crime. It's characterized by the use of force, physical threat, abuse of authority, or when a victim does not or cannot consent. It is an attack by or against a fellow Marine. Last year, 2011, there were 333 reports of sexual assault. These numbers represent only an initial glimpse of reality, as this crime is universally believed to be significantly underreported.

3. Many Marines refuse to acknowledge the magnitude of the problem that these staggering statistics portray. Even the prevailing understanding of how sexual assaults occur is often misunderstood. Sexual assaults within the Marine Corps aren't the result of a stereotypical shadowy figure in a ski mask. They are mostly occurring in situations where the victims know their attacker. Sexual assaults are happening in our barracks, in the work place, on dates, and at parties. Marines are not just being victimized by peers, this behavior crosses all ranks.

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4. **Accordingly, the awakening within the Marine Corps on this issue starts immediately...with receipt of this White Letter.** I intend to shine a bright light on the crime of sexual assault. It is no longer acceptable to say "we will do better." I want Marines of all ranks thinking and talking about this issue. We must reinforce the message that it's every Marine's inherent duty to step up and step in to prevent sexual assault.

5. Our greatest weapon in the battle against sexual assault has been and will continue to be decisive and engaged leadership. There is no substitute for the direct involvement of Commanding Officers and senior leaders at all levels. I expect Commanding Officers, Officers-in-Charge, and senior enlisted to spare no effort in changing the prevailing conditions and attitudes that are allowing this crime to happen among our ranks. Leaders at every level are responsible to create an environment and command climate in which every Marine is treated with dignity and respect; one which enables Marines to trust their command to listen respectfully, respond confidentially, investigate immediately, and to take appropriate action.

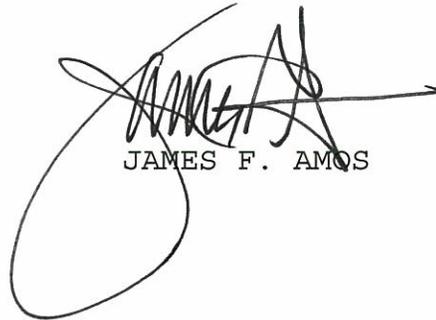
6. To pull our efforts together and to give our Corps a clear azimuth on the issue of sexual assault, I convened a Service-level Operational Planning Team (OPT) last month headed up by a senior General Officer who had formerly served as one of our Division Commanders. The OPT was composed of senior officers and enlisted personally selected by me based on their strong fleet reputations and operational credibility. I charged the OPT to look at the issue of sexual assault in its entirety throughout the Marine Corps, to make recommendations to me on what needed to be done to fix this problem, and to develop a Service-level Campaign Plan to address this issue head-on. **As a Marine Corps, we will take the same approach we have taken to combat the threat of improvised explosive devices over the last eight years and "get to the left of the event."**

7. **This White Letter represents a shot across the bow for all Marines on the issue of sexual assault** - it is my intent to publish our Corps-wide Campaign Plan within the next 30 days. Additionally, I am bringing every General Officer back to Washington in early July for two days to ensure that our senior leaders are well-grounded in truth; each will depart D.C. on a clear heading of true north regarding this matter. All Force-

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Level Sergeants Major, Master Gunnery Sergeants, and Command Master Chiefs will receive one and one half days of training in conjunction with the July Sergeants Major/Master Gunnery Sergeant/Command Master Chief's Symposium. I need your help in building and maintaining the conviction to fight sexual assault, and to stamp out harassment and indifference. It is time to remember "who we are" and "what we stand for."

"The Marine Corps has not spent the last ten years defending our nation's high principles abroad, only to permit this type of behavior within our own ranks!"



JAMES F. AMOS

*Marines... leaders... I need  
you immediate attention to this matter!*