

# No Tolerance For Sexual Assault

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Ho'okele Staff

MASTER CHIEF PETTY OFFICER OF THE NAVY RICK D. WEST(MCPON)(SS/SW)

*Editor's Note: MCPON West's letter was written in December.*

"Shipmates, As this year comes to an end and we start to focus on priorities for 2011, I'd like to address a subject that is impacting our great Navy, and that is sexual assault.

It is incomprehensible that a shipmate would commit such a horrible crime to another shipmate. Sexual assault in our Navy undermines teamwork, morale, unit cohesion and operational readiness. Also, the long-term effects of sexual assault dramatically impact the victim for years to come.

For these reasons, sexual assault does not belong in our Navy. We have a zero tolerance policy for this criminal offense, and it is each and every sailor's responsibility to adhere to this policy and do your part to alleviate this crime within our ranks

At the close of this year, reports of sexual assault have increased from last year, which could be attributed to victims' increased willingness to report the crime, but data also shows that sexual assaults are still occurring in our Navy. The highest risk group for victims over the past several fiscal years remains E-1 to E-4, ages 20 to 24, with most incidents occurring during the weekends. In most sexual assault incidents alcohol was a major factor impairing the judgment of predators, victims and bystanders.

Additionally, the most common sexual assault scenarios include off-base parties, hotel rooms, barracks, night clubs and bars during liberty. Simply put, sexual assault knows no boundaries and the majority of victims know their offender.

Sexual assault is a personal crime, and we should all take it personally and think 'what if it was my sister/brother, my son/daughter or my wife/husband?' Wouldn't you do everything in your power to protect them? That's how we should think about our shipmates – we are a Navy family, we rely on each other every day. Shipmates should be looking out for shipmates and getting involved when you see someone starting to steer into danger.

In order to remove sexual assault from our Navy, we need to ensure commands have a strong partnership with Sexual Assault Response Coordinators (SARC) and a robust Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) Program which fosters an environment where shipmates help shipmates by not allowing destructive behavior to occur.

One of the ways to encourage the idea of shipmates helping shipmates is through the Coalition of Sailors Against Destructive Decisions (CSADD) peer mentoring program. The Navy launched the CSADD program June 24, 2010, with the focus on helping junior sailors make better decisions.

CSADD's mission is: to provide sailors with the best prevention and intervention tools possible to deal with the issues of drinking, reckless driving and other destructive decisions while maintaining good order and discipline; to assist sailors in making life decisions that will maintain positive lifestyles in keeping with the Navy's core values; to guide sailors away from making poor and destructive decisions by providing them with positive and dynamic training; and to show sailors how to make quick positive decisions and put their

training to use in moments of high stress and peer pressure.

Every command is encouraged to start a CSADD chapter with sailors in the age group of 18-25 and enable them to take on a leadership role within their CSADD chapter. For more information on starting a CSADD chapter, see OPNAVINST 1500.80 Coalition of Sailors Against Destructive Decisions Peer Mentoring Program, or the CSADD Facebook page at: <http://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/Coalition-of-Sailors-Against-Destructive-Decisions-CSADD/299642495316>.

We must continue to promote a positive command climate based on our Navy core values and ethos in order to defend against sexual assault and continue to promote responsible personal behavior. Eliminating sexual assault from our Navy is an all hands effort, and I am confident that each of you will step up and take on this charge for the betterment of our Navy. Everyday you're making a difference and working hard in all corners of the world. You can put a stop to this crime!

HOOYAH!"

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