

Why do the number  
of sexual assaults  
continue to increase  
throughout the army?



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The number of sexual assaults continue to grow in our Army. Alcohol is more often the cause of sexual assaults that occur. Seeing that it is an ongoing issue in the Army, there are many measures in place to avoid these situations from happening. These measures consist of online training, classroom training, and unit events conducted by the Sexual Harassment and Assault Response Program (SHARP) representatives. Some may take the training more serious than others but it is mandatory. Training doesn't seem to be helpful in many circumstances due to the increase in numbers on sexual assault throughout the Army. Statistics show the major increase within the past two years on sexual assault cases in the U. S. Army.

Sexual assaults occur due to individuals not being held accountable for their actions. In a lot of cases reported the defendants get away with the crime. As stated in From Fellow Soldier to ' Monster' in Uniform #MeToo in the Military, " Like the vast majority of military victims who report crimes of sexual violence, Reyes said she remains dissatisfied with the way she was treated by investigators who decided not to pursue charges against the alleged assailant" (Cohen, 2018). A lot of cases are usually swept under the rug, as one would say in military terminology. Why would crime rates decrease when cases are being handled in this manner? These findings may cause victims to stop reporting incidents, which can eventually turn into statistics rising because nothing is being done to prevent the occurrences. The different types of reporting choices can play a factor on why some aren't being fully held accountable for their actions. The level of investigation is dependent on the type of report submitted. In the military a lot of friends are made despite of rank. In some cases in our units, the investigating officer

may make a decision based off a relationship with the individual. Once it is reviewed by higher command they usually make their decision based off the investigators notes. This is where a lot of individuals mainly get away with their actions.

SHARP training is mandatory in the Army. But does it really reduce the rates of sexual assault or harassment? All units conduct their annual training differently. For instance, in my unit we are required to take the SHARP training online and have to sit through a brief in a classroom environment to learn more on the topic. Many Soldiers don't take the training seriously because the online training is more like a video game before the test portion. Soldiers take it as a joke and just choose different scenarios and laugh at the matter. Also, the classroom portion of the training in my unit is death by power point. Many individuals sit through the class forcefully attempting to stay awake through the end. These measures to avoid incidents from occurring are not helpful because some are not in-taking the knowledge or seriousness of the offenses. Units should focus more on spreading the knowledge by conducting team building events or cohesion and moral boosting events such as Brigade wide events where they have prizes and giveaways for Soldiers answering questions or participating in games with emphasis on the topic. For example, my unit once conducted an event where one of the games you could play was a wheel of fortune and the question the wheel landed on you had to answer. If you answered correctly you'd win a SHARP T-shirt. Also, due to alcohol being one of the main causes to these crimes, there was a game where you would put on goggles and spin five times and then attempt to walk in a straight line. The objective of the game

was to show individuals if you're unaware of whether you're even walking in a straight line, how could you be aware enough to consent to a sexual act. Role playing can also be a good learning instrument for SHARP training. This gives individuals the opportunity to react to a situation whether they are a bystander, victim, or assailant.

**Statistics on sexual assault in the military are gradually growing in short periods of time. As stated in DoD Releases Annual Report on Sexual Assault in Military, “ The Defense Department today released its Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military, which shows that service member reporting of sexual assault increased by about 10 percent in fiscal year 2017” (Ferdinando, 2018). The increase in numbers within a span of two fiscal years is unacceptable. Per DoD Releases Annual Report on Sexual Assault in Military, “ The report for fiscal 2017 says the department received 6, 769 reports of sexual assault involving service members as either victims or subjects of criminal investigation, a 9. 7 percent increase over the 6, 172 reports made in fiscal 2016” (Ferdinando, 2018). Approximately 7, 000 reported cases is an excessive amount compared to the approximate 6, 000 from the previous year.**

**There has to be different methods to end the violence within our ranks. As specified in DoD Releases Annual Report on Sexual Assault in Military, “ Self-discipline, alert noncommissioned officers and attuned chains of command are essential in setting standards to strengthen military readiness to fight well and increase the ability to recruit and retain the best people, he wrote” (Ferdinando, 2018). Trust within the chain of command can possibly be a factor in decreasing the violence. Commanders enforce service members to conduct the command climate surveys, but are the annotated issues ever addressed or corrected? Just because the Army makes something mandatory should not mean chains of command should just brush the issues off. When there is no trust within the Soldiers and Leaders that can cause victims to not speak up on incidents that occurred because they feel that they will not get the proper assistance. This is also where assailants being held accountable for their actions can play a big factor. Why would these incidents occur if no one is everyone is receiving the same consequences amongst the ranks regardless of personal relationships with investigators? There is a certain amount of time an incident can be reported in for a reason. If chains of command stop looking at the time it took for the report to be made on a case this may also reduce the violence. As it was said in From Fellow Soldier to ‘ Monster’ in Uniform #MeToo in the Military, “ The realization that something beyond her initial memory of the night had occurred did not fully set in until the next day, when her friends asked if she had consented to everything that happened during the encounter” (Cohen, 2018). Being that alcohol takes a part in most sexual assault cases, some don’t realize it at the moment due to be unconscious.**

**Alcohol is one of the main causes of sexual assaults. If productive training was being conducted the knowledge would be instilled in these Soldiers to know what to do and how to prevent an incident from occurring. Statistics will continue to rise if proper precautions are put into place to avoid these attacks. The U. S. Army's main focus is mission readiness. If chains of command and Leaders across the force all come together and begin to build that trust within their units the violence can be ended tremendously. Individuals need to be held accountable for their actions to instill that trust as well. Training needs to be altered to get Soldiers attuned to learning the topic.**

## **References**

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