

THE UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

PRESS RELEASE

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U.S. COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS ANNOUNCES 2013 STATUTORY ENFORCEMENT REPORT AND BRIEFING ON SEXUAL ASSAULT IN THE MILITARY

WASHINGTON, DC - The United States Commission on Civil Rights announces that the topic of its 2013 statutory enforcement report will be “Sexual Assault in the Military.” The Commission will hold a public briefing on the topic on Friday, January 11, 2013 at 9:30 AM ET, at Commission headquarters, 1331 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Suite 1150, Washington, DC 20425. Interested members of the public are invited to attend.

Recent events demonstrate the timeliness of the Commission’s investigation and report: In April 2012, the Pentagon announced new initiatives to combat what Defense Secretary Leon Panetta called a “silent epidemic” of sexual assault in the military. In September 2012, 20 current and former members of the U.S. military filed a lawsuit in federal court in San Francisco alleging that they were sexually assaulted while serving in military units and were harassed, raped or assaulted in retaliation for reporting the incidents. The lawsuit accuses the leadership of the U.S. Army and U.S. Air Force of failing to prosecute and properly investigate claims of sexual assault. Similar lawsuits were filed earlier this year.

In its investigation and report, the Commission will examine Department of Defense (DoD) policies and practices concerning sexual assault and efforts to reduce and address instances of sexual assault in the Armed Forces. The Commission plans to gather information on how the DoD:

- (1) Educates service members, generally, about the DoD’s sexual assault policies;
- (2) Educates officers on how to process reports of sexual assault;
- (3) Assists sexual assault victims to file reports and receive needed medical/social services;
- (4) Investigates sexual assault reports, including the gathering and retention of evidence; and
- (5) Disciplines perpetrators, with a special focus on the process by which officers decide what form(s) of discipline to impose.

Additionally, the Commission will collect data and seek expert testimony to compare sexual assault rates in the military to non-military groups with similar ages, sex ratios and other relevant demographic characteristics and settings.

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is an independent, bipartisan agency charged with monitoring federal civil rights enforcement. Members include Chairman Martin R. Castro and Commissioners Roberta Achtenberg, Todd Gaziano, Gail Heriot, Peter Kirsanow, David Kladney, Abigail Thernstrom, and Michael Yaki. Commission meetings and briefings are open to the general public. The Commission’s website is <http://www.usccr.gov>.

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The Commission has invited representatives from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the DoD's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, and Judge Advocate General's Offices of the Army, Navy, and Air Force to provide testimony. The Commission has also extended an invitation to the Service Women's Action Network (SWAN) to provide testimony, and will invite other experts to testify on the topic.

Deaf or hearing-impaired persons who will attend the meeting and require the services of a sign language interpreter should contact Pam Dunston at (202) 376-8105 at least seven business days prior to the briefing.

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