

U.S. Military Response to Interpersonal Violence: The Times They are a Changin' (Still)

The United States Department of Defense (DOD) is comprised of over a million dedicated professionals who work tirelessly to defend our freedom and way of life. Most service members and civilians who work within DOD are ethical, devoted, and loyal as they go about their day-to-day service to our Country. DOD draws its human capital from our society and our culture. No matter what DOD does to screen out morally and ethically challenged personnel, some bad actors still slip through and commit horrendous acts of violence and trauma including sexual assault, domestic violence, and child abuse.

Over the past four decades, shameful acts such as Tailhook, Aberdeen Proving Ground, Fort Bragg, Lackland Air Force Base, crimes against Maria Lauterbach and Vanessa Guillen, etc. have rightfully seized the headlines, highlighted deficiencies in the system, identified the challenges, and in many ways have improved the systems and the US military. What all these references have in common is a failing of military personnel to keep their promise – their oath – to protect and defend the United States of America.

This presentation will review decades of harmful acts of interpersonal violence committed within the military, and the DOD's response. Congressional, civilian, and military actions and improvements will be discussed, not for the purpose of denigrating our military but to highlight what has been learned and improved upon. There is always room and necessity for improvement. Recommendations for continued improvement and needed change will also be identified and addressed.

Military and civilian prosecutors, law enforcement personnel, victim advocates, and other allied and helping professionals will benefit from this review, discussion, and recommendations. We are all in this together and must learn from each other as the challenges we face are human in nature and require human solutions.

Objectives:
-Discuss the historical challenges facing the US Military in responding to and prevention of interpersonal violence
-Identify some of the challenges and improvements DOD have identified and improved upon
-Offer thoughtful recommendations for continued systems improvements in the military and civilian professional response to interpersonal violence
-Challenge participants to continue to be part of the solution in our ongoing challenges to make the world inside and outside of the US military