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Department of Defense Releases Fiscal Year 2020 Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military

WASHINGTON - Today, the Department of Defense (DOD) released the Fiscal Year 2020 Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military. This recurring annual report is published by DOD's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office.

This year's Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military, which is required by Congress annually, provides FY 2020 reporting data, case dispositions, and updates to initiatives the Department executed throughout the year – including during the pandemic. Of note, the reporting data is separate from estimated prevalence. The report does not contain sexual assault prevalence survey results, which DOD uses to scientifically estimate the number of military personnel impacted by the crime. The national pandemic forced the Department to postpone its biennial survey to FY21.

“Sexual assault is an abhorrent violation of an individual's basic dignity. Over the last 15 years, the Department has enacted new policies and built new infrastructure to address sexual violence, including an integrated violence prevention approach developed in consultation with subject matter experts,” said Dr. Elizabeth Van Winkle, Executive Director of the Office of Force Resiliency. “However, the programs and policies we put into place will not be effective unless every military member and leader – at all levels – comply with our policies and embody the values we espouse. As directed by Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, the Department is taking immediate actions to not only counter these corrosive behaviors, but also provide better visibility on the ground to ensure all members are doing their part to eliminate these behaviors.”

DOD authorities receive reports of sexual assault involving service members as victims and/or alleged perpetrators. This year, of the total 7,816 reports received by DOD in FY20, 6,290 involved allegations from Service members for incidents that occurred during military service. This is up by 1 percent from the 6,236 Service member reports received in FY19. Reports from civilian victims and service members reporting a pre-service incident decreased this year. The Department encourages greater reporting to connect victims with restorative care and to hold offenders appropriately accountable.

The pandemic did not deter the Department from providing support to Service members seeking help. Sexual Assault Response Coordinators, Victim Advocates and other response team members quickly pivoted to virtual encounters and other such means to render assistance and connect victims with supportive care. In addition, the Department's Safe Helpline experienced a

35 percent increase in users seeking to connect with needed resources, information, and support.

The Department continues to address sexual assault holistically by advancing prevention, addressing problematic culture, improving the skills of leaders at all levels, and evaluating ways to make reporting of sexual assault easier and safer for victims.

“DOD leadership is committed to providing the men and women who defend this country with workplaces where dignity and respect, and inclusion are the norm,” said Maj. Gen. Clement Coward, director of the DOD’s Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office. “While some progress has been made to achieve that goal, we must do more to prevent this crime. We look forward to the recommendations forthcoming from the Secretary’s Independent Review Commission. We will take decisive action to implement every recommendation accepted by the President and the Secretary.”

The Fiscal Year 2020 Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military and a fact sheet with the topline results can be found on the DoD Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office website at www.sapr.mil.

This report is separate from ongoing work of the [Independent Review Commission](#).

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