

*Administration of Barack Obama, 2013*

**Statement on the Prevention of Sexual Assault in the United States Armed Forces**

*December 20, 2013*

Earlier this year, I directed Secretary Hagel, Chairman Dempsey, and our entire defense leadership team to step up their game exponentially in preventing and responding to the serious crime of sexual assault in our military. As Commander in Chief, I've made it clear that these crimes have no place in the greatest military on Earth. Since then, our Armed Forces have moved ahead with a broad range of initiatives, including reforms to the military justice system, improving and expanding prevention programs, and enhancing support for victims. I commend the Pentagon leadership for their hard work on this critical issue of vital importance to our Nation.

Yet, so long as our women and men in uniform face the insider threat of sexual assault, we have an urgent obligation to do more to support victims and hold perpetrators accountable for their crimes, as appropriate under the military justice system. Members of Congress, especially Senators Gillibrand and McCaskill, have rightly called attention to the urgency of eradicating this scourge from our Armed Forces. As a result, there were a broad range of reforms proposed in this year's National Defense Authorization Act. The White House and the Department of Defense and other relevant agencies in my administration will continue to work with Congress to address this corrosive problem, which is a violation of the values our Armed Forces stand for, destroys trust among our troops, and undermines our readiness.

Today I instructed Secretary Hagel and Chairman Dempsey to continue their efforts to make substantial improvements with respect to sexual assault prevention and response, including to the military justice system. I have also directed that they report back to me, with a full-scale review of their progress by December 1, 2014. If I do not see the kind of progress I expect, then we will consider additional reforms that may be required to eliminate this crime from our military ranks and protect our brave servicemembers who stand guard for us every day at home and around the world.

*Categories:* Statements by the President : U.S. Armed Forces, prevention of sexual assault.

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