



DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE  
**SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION  
AND RESPONSE OFFICE**



## **DOD RETALIATION PREVENTION AND RESPONSE STRATEGY**

*APRIL 28, 2016*

This overview summarizes the Department of Defense's *Retaliation Prevention and Response Strategy: Regarding Sexual Assault and Harassment Reports (RPRS)*. The development of a Department-wide strategy to address retaliation was directed by Secretary Carter in May 2015 and later by Congress in the Fiscal Year 2016 National Defense Authorization Act. The RPRS addresses retaliation related to reports of sexual assault and complaints of sexual harassment.

Too often, military victims of sexual assault and complainants of sexual harassment disclose they were subjected to abusive behavior by their co-workers, exclusion by their peers, or disruption of their career. National experts indicate this is a challenge experienced by many organizations that encourage greater employee reporting of misconduct. As victims make the difficult choice to report sexual assault or sexual harassment, the Department is committed to eliminating retaliatory behavior, improving resources for reporters, and providing tools for commanders, supervisors, first responders, and peers to prevent and respond to retaliation against those who report violations. Ending retaliation is crucial to effectively addressing sexual assault and sexual harassment in the military.

### **Summary**

- The *RPRS* provides support to individuals who experience retaliation after reporting sexual assault or sexual harassment. Acts of retaliation pose a serious threat to the continued reporting of crimes or misconduct, legitimacy of the military justice system, and the ability of victims to obtain needed assistance.
- The *RPRS* addresses retaliation against Active Duty, Reserve, or National Guard Service members who allege they were sexually assaulted or harassed while performing Active Service or Inactive Duty training and report sexual assault or sexual harassment. It also applies to Service member bystanders/witnesses and first responders.
- The *RPRS* aligns Departmental efforts in combatting retaliation and targets five issues:
  - Standardizing Definitions
  - Closing the Gap in Knowledge: Data Collection and Analysis
  - Building Strong and Supportive Systems of Investigation and Accountability
  - Providing Comprehensive Support to Reporters
  - Creating a Culture Intolerant of Retaliation
- The Department will develop action plans for each of the five issue areas, specifically by addressing policy, implementing a data-driven approach, building strong and supportive systems for those that seek assistance with or report allegations of retaliation, providing resources and protections to reporters, and equipping leaders with the tools to reinforce climates where retaliation is not tolerated.
- Implementation of *RPRS* actions will occur over the course of the next 12 months; full implementation expected by early FY17.