**WRITTEN MESSAGE TO THE FORCE**

**SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS AND PREVENTION MONTH**

**WEDNESDAY, APRIL 3, 2013**

**[198 WORDS]**

 This month, the Department of Defense observes Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month with the theme “We own it…we’ll solve it…together.”

Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month is an opportunity for the entire DoD community – service members, civilians, members of our families and leaders at every level – to underscore our commitment to eliminating the crime of sexual assault, supporting victims, and intervening when appropriate to help stop unsafe behavior.

Together, we must work every day to instill a climate that does not tolerate or ignore sexist behavior, sexual harassment, or sexual assault. These have no place in the United States military and violate everything we stand for and the values we defend. Creating a culture free of the scourge of sexual assault requires establishing an environment where dignity and respect is afforded to all, and where diversity is celebrated as one of our greatest assets as a force.

We are strong because of our values of service, sacrifice and loyalty – and doing what is right. We watch out for each other and respect each other. By drawing on these strengths, we can and we must stop sexual assault within our ranks.

Remember, we own it…we’ll solve it…together.