Not in My Ranks

Author Name

[Institutional Affiliation(s)]

Not in My Ranks

Despite extensive training and education, the cases of sexual harassment and assault continue to occur. Not only women, but men too are victims of sexual harassment by the members serving in the military. This essay discusses the reasons why sexual harassment in military continues despite the rigorous training and education, and the proposed remedies to end this unfortunate culture.

According to the Army Regulations, it is the responsibility of the commander to prevent sexual misconduct. The army regulations also specify the way in which a victim can deal with such situations. The victim can use the direct approach i.e. to confront the perpetrator or send a letter making it clear that this misconduct is not tolerable. Secondly, the victim can ask someone for assistance. Thirdly, such misconduct can be reported to the immediate superior or someone in the chain of command. Lastly, a formal or informal complaint can be filed against the perpetrator. AR 600-20 chapter 7 states that the charges of sexual harassment or assault are dealt by the law enforcement channels (Headquarters, 2006). Now the question arises that in spite of strict regulations and extreme and aggressive training, why is sexual misconduct not prevented?

The main reason is that these crimes are not reported and the perpetrator goes unpunished. Unfortunately, only less than one third of the sexual assault and harassment incidents are reported. Th victim can make a choice of ‘Restricted’ or ‘Unrestricted’ reporting. In restricted reporting, confidentiality is maintained as opposed to unrestricted reporting. The reason of non-reporting by the military member victim is the same as that of any civilian victim. They too, out of fear and embarrassment, withdraw or don’t report at all. This culture of acceptance gives the perpetrator courage to commit such a crime again. The victims are also afraid of the legal or disciplinary actions taken against them. Moreover, sexual crime survivors are parted for disciplinary or emotional health reasons. The victims comprehend these actions as the retribution for reporting. In this way, the acceptance of sexual harassment and assault develops a hostile environment where it is assumed that sexual misconduct is tolerable.

The current training for reducing sexual misconduct seems insufficient. According to recent reports and issues by the Department of Defense, it is revealed that the number of sexual harassment and assault cases has increased in the last two years (Department of Defense, 2019).In these cases, the perpetrator was either of the same rank or higher. The victims at that time suffered due to abuse of authority by the hierarchical structure. But this hierarchical structure also has the authority to improve Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) programs (Stander & Thomsen, 2016). Through these reforms, a convenient atmosphere can be created for the victims where they can report and the offender is punished.

To summarize, the current training and after-complaint procedure is not adequate and needs rectification. The U.S. military has fought and won wars at numerous fronts, yet it fails to battle against sexual harassment and assault.

References

Department of Defense. (2019). *Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military- Fiscal Year 2018*. https://int.nyt.com/data/documenthelper/800-dod-annual-report-on-sexual-as/d659d6d0126ad2b19c18/optimized/full.pdf#page=1

Headquarters, Department of the Army, & Washington, DC. (2006). *Army Regulation 600–20*. https://www.nrc.gov/docs/ML0807/ML080790409.pdf

Stander, V. A., & Thomsen, C. J. (2016). Sexual Harassment and Assault in the U.S. Military: A Review of Policy and Research Trends. *Military Medicine*, *181*(suppl\_1), 20–27. https://doi.org/10.7205/MILMED-D-15-00336