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Contact: Ed Barker

850.452.9110

(DSN) 922.4858

(FAX) 850.452.4900

Fleet training brings Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) message to deckplate Sailors

As Fire Control Technician 3rd Class Walsh checked onboard the USS Rupert Wheeling, she appeared confident and on-track to achieve her ultimate goal of becoming a command master chief, following in her family's Navy tradition. A solid performance in the Wheeling's Combat Systems Department would help her make rank and earn the qualifications she needed.

Unfortunately, Walsh's plans were derailed by her new leading petty officer (LPO), a sexual predator who was laser-focused on having sex with her by any means necessary, including alcohol and deception. Her LPO's actions derailed Walsh's career, and ended his own.

Although Walsh, her LPO and the Wheeling are fictional characters portrayed in the new Sexual Assault Prevention and Response-Fleet (SAPR-F) training video, the reality is that sexual assaults happen in the Navy multiple times every day.

The problem of sexual assault has visibility at the highest levels and Chief of Naval Operations, Adm. Jonathan Greenert does not mince words on how he feels about the problem. Both the CNO and Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Mike Stevens introduce the SAPR-F training video, making sure that Sailors know the gravity of the problem.

“Sexual assaults affect the readiness of our entire Navy,” said Greenert in the video. We need to get to the left of this problem, and prevent sexual assaults. Every Sailor should be our first line of defense.”

“The majority of these assaults are blue-on-blue,” added Stevens. “Think about it – our shipmates are committing crimes against other shipmates and that goes against everything we stand for as Sailors. Sexual assault is a crime and it causes terrible personal pain. It lowers team morale, and undermines the very unit cohesion for which we all strive.”

SAPR-F training is the latest event in the Navy's aggressive efforts to prevent sexual assaults and bring about essential cultural changes within the force. Twenty SAPR-F Master Mobile Training Teams (MMTTs) are deployed around the globe providing SAPR-F preparation training to designated mid-level leadership command training teams in fleet concentration areas and locations with significant Navy presence. These teams, comprised of a mid-grade officer (O3 or O4) and a senior enlisted (E7 or E8), will then deliver the SAPR-F training to their E-6 and below personnel, which must be completed at each command by the March 31 deadline.

The fleet training is meant to educate Sailors on the magnitude of the problem of sexual violence in the Navy and to emphasize the role that each Sailor's actions and decisions have on sexual assault prevention. SAPR-F also aims to help members understand the reporting options available to victims of sexual assault, as well as where to go for help.

Video vignettes are used in the SAPR-F training coupled with facilitated discussion to educate Sailors on their responsibility to intervene in situations that could lead to sexual assault. They have a duty as bystanders who can and must intervene with other Sailors when they encounter risky situations.

Rear Adm. Martha Herb, director of Personnel Readiness and Community Support,

emphasized the important role that bystander intervention plays in preventing sexual assault.

"Sexual assault prevention and response is about courage: for victims to report, for shipmates to intervene, and for leaders to do what needs to be done. We all must have the courage to do what's right," said Herb. "Bystanders have the power - and responsibility - to intervene in a potentially harmful situation, regardless of rank."

SAPR-F is the follow-on to SAPR-Leadership training, which was designed to raise leaders' awareness about the reality of sexual assault in the Navy and to emphasize key prevention and response roles. SAPR-L and SAPR-F complement the Navy's training continuum for sexual assault prevention and response, which begins when each Sailor enters the Navy. The wide-sweeping reach of this initiative ensures that all Sailors are empowered to intervene to stop this crime.

Capt. William Marvel, chief of staff for the SAPR Task Force, explained that the Master Mobile Training Teams will enable the command training teams to provide valuable SAPR-F training to Sailors at every command throughout the Navy.

"These MMTTs are modeled after the very successful MMTTs that deployed globally in support of SAPR-Leadership training," said Marvel. "They will provide individual command training teams with the tools necessary to stimulate an open conversation to reinforce Sailor commitment and encourage them to intervene with other Sailors to reduce sexual assaults and promote a culture of respect, trust and professionalism in our force. SAPR-F continues the storyline from SAPR-L, but is reoriented to focus on Bystander Intervention, emphasizing the importance of disrupting the continuum of harm and recognizing misplaced loyalties."

The MMTT training was coordinated and hosted by the Center for Personal and Professional Development (CPPD) and helps ensure a consistent message reaches the force -- sexual assault is a crime and will not be tolerated in the Navy,

explained Capt. John Newcomer, CPPD commanding officer.

"The SAPR-F training program provides command leaders the tools to develop and promote a culture of change," said Newcomer. "We put considerable time and effort into working with our contractor to ensure that the training is innovative, effective and relevant with today's Sailors, making sure they can relate to the scenarios in the SAPR-F video."

Rear Adm. (select) Cynthia Thebaud, the SAPR-F Task Force Deputy Commander, explained that in addition to having mid-level leadership facilitate the training, another key element of the program is the requirement for a member of the command triad to introduce their SARP-F training.

"This introduction is crucial to reinforce for every member of the command that sexual assault is a crime that will not be tolerated," said Thebaud. It's the responsibility of every member of the command, from the top down, to take a stand; and that command leadership will be engaged."

More than 1,000 face-to-face SAPR-F Preparation Training sessions are scheduled to run through mid-January, providing training for active and reserve component command training teams. Commands that are deployed and whose teams are unable to attend a face-to-face training session can receive the training via Defense Connect Online. After command training teams provide the SAPR-F training to their E-6 and below, each command is responsible for documenting completion via the Fleet Training Management Planning System (FLTMPS).

Lt. Cmdr. Bert Rice is assigned as team leader for the Southeast region MMTT presenting SAPR-F sessions at Naval Air Station Pensacola.

"The training sessions have gone great and we're getting into a rhythm," said Rice. "My team has an aggressive schedule of 115 sessions in 45 days, ranging from

Panama City, Fla. to Millington Tenn. to New Orleans; allowing us to see a significant portion of the fleet. This is time exceptionally-well spent and we are looking forward to delivering the CNO's message on sexual assault prevention to the Southeast region. Our goal is to prepare the command teams to effectively deliver training to the deckplate Sailor."

Sexual assault prevention is an important element of the readiness area of the 21st Century Sailor and Marine initiative, which builds resiliency to hone the most combat-effective force in the history of the Department of the Navy.

Additional information on the MMTT and SAPR-F training efforts can be found in Naval Administration Message (NAVADMIN) 336-12 and also at the SAPR L/F training Web pages, including command registration for SAPR-F training: <http://www.public.navy.mil/bupers-npc/support/sapr/Pages/training.aspx>.

For more information about Navy SAPR, visit www.sapr.navy.mil.

For additional information on the Naval Education and Training Command, visit the NETC website: <https://www.netc.navy.mil>.

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Story by Ed Barker, Naval Education and Training Command Public Affairs