

CNO Announces Five Initiatives to Eliminate Sexual Assault

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Adm. John M. Richardson

WASHINGTON — A line of effort in the recently released "Design to Maintain Maritime Superiority" is to strengthen our [Navy](#) team—composed of active and reserve Sailors, Navy civilians, and families. On Jan 14 Chief of Naval Operations Admiral John Richardson announced a new set of [sexual assault](#) prevention and response initiatives to lower the obstacles to reporting, provide added support to survivors, and prevent re-victimization.

During the announcement Richardson told reporters an important element of this effort is to eliminate self-inflicted destructive behavior, sexual assault being among the most egregious. He went on to say [sexual harassment](#) and sexual assault have absolutely no place in our Navy and are contrary to our core values. "Eliminating sexual assault requires more than words, zero-tolerance requires an all-hands effort."

Here are the five initiatives CNO announced to help "end the scourge of sexual assault" in our Navy:

- 1) A Shipmate is not a "bystander." If you see something wrong, do something right. It is every Sailor's responsibility to "step up and step in" to help their shipmate when they observe or become aware of undesired and destructive behavior. In 2015, Navy adopted a new training approach, shifting from traditional lecture-style training to a more dynamic program called "Chart the Course." Chart the Course moves beyond the "bystander" approach and combines scenario-based videos with facilitator-led discussions to achieve an interactive learning experience. The training provides insight on what to do — how to act — when faced with challenging situations.

- 2) Establish Counselors within the Fleet and Family Support Centers as a resource for victim support. Building on the success we have experienced with deployed resiliency counselors on "big decks," there are potential gains if we are able to replicate the counseling and support

provided under the Navy Family Advocacy Program for Sailors impacted by sexual assault. In addition to enhanced care, we expect the availability of these counselors to provide an opportunity to go after the social and structural barriers to male victim reporting. These counselors will provide opportunities to collaborate with local civilian facilities and counselors to ensure we are using every available measure to support our survivors. We are currently determining how to pilot this concept to get a better assessment.

3) Improve our personnel management practices and procedures, following a sexual assault experience, to ensure our Sailors are put in the best position possible to succeed. This includes examining our present detailing practices so to preclude administrative or management decisions and actions that unintentionally result in the Sailor reliving the sexual assault experience. In addition to the expedited transfer program, this could also include honoring a survivor's request for an expedited discharge, should they desire to leave the Navy.

4) Continue our efforts to educate our Sailors and reduce alcohol abuse in the Navy, particularly binge drinking. The data clearly reflects that alcohol abuse is a factor in most of the Navy's sexual assault cases. We need to ensure that our accountability processes and options, administrative and otherwise, provide the tools we need to effectively deal with incidents where alcohol abuse has been established.

5) Better utilize technology to remove cultural barriers and stigma associated with reporting a sexual assault or seeking advice and counsel. We are currently exploring a number of computer applications piloted at universities—we expect to be able to begin introducing a "Navy version" within the year.

CNO concluded his discussion by thanking Congress for the focus, attention, and assistance they have provided on this issue and the commitment to eliminate sexual assault. "I want to continue to confront this scourge in our workforce. Until we go to zero we can never be satisfied."