



## Commanding Officer, Headquarters and Support Battalion Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) Statement



*"Semper Fidelis: Always faithful to God, Country, Corps, and our fellow Marines."*

*"First to fight for right and freedom, and to keep our honor clean."*

- 1. Sexual assault defined:** Intentional sexual contact characterized by the use of force, physical threat of force or abuse of authority, or when the victim does not or cannot consent. Sexual assault is an unthinkable crime that victimizes irrespective of gender, race, or age; it represents the antithesis of all that is Marine. Sexual assault not only undermines unit trust and confidence vital to mission accomplishment, it also threatens to irreparably tarnish the honor of our great Corps, honor we have all pledged upon sacred oath to fight for and to defend. Few threats pose greater risk to our combat readiness and mission effectiveness than attacks from within by a disgraceful few who have chosen to break faith and to prey upon their own. Proactive leadership by every member of this command is required to defeat this threat.
- 2. Zero Tolerance:** I will tolerate neither sexual assault nor negligent leadership that fails to properly mitigate the risk of sexual assault. All members of this command are responsible, and will be held fully accountable, for eliminating conditions that enable sexual assault. Every Marine is charged with proactively and appropriately intervening when situations or behavior may potentially result in a sexual assault. I will reemphasize: It is every Marine's inherent duty to prevent sexual assault. No Marine stands idly by in the face of a threat. Ensuring both due process for alleged offenders and victim protection, appropriate legal and/or administrative action will be taken where cause exists against both those who commit the crime of sexual assault and against those who are found negligent in their responsibilities to prevent sexual assault.
- 3. Prevention:** Our SAPR program will place a heavy emphasis on prevention, recognizing that the vast majority of sexual assaults that have occurred could easily have been avoided through proper leadership and force protection measures. Our culture of prevention will be strengthened through engaged leadership, education and training, open and effective communication, heightened command awareness, proactive risk reduction, and the active support of highly competent and committed Uniform Victim Advocates (UVA). Additionally, our preventative efforts will be fully integrated into all other command force preservation programs.
- 4. Response:** Our sexual assault response procedures will focus on providing appropriate and sensitive care for victims, avoiding re-victimization, and reducing the negative effect sexual assault has on the health and readiness of members of this command. Critical to our success is trust. Victims must have complete confidence that they will be treated fairly, sensitively, with dignity, and without prejudice. They must also trust that appropriate confidentiality will be maintained at all times. Every member of this command will protect the dignity of victims and will only discuss sexual assault with law enforcement personnel and with members within the chain of command who have a need to know.
- 5. Reporting:** Reporting will be immediate. Neither I nor anyone else in this command will conduct an independent inquiry or investigation of an alleged sexual assault. Members of this command that become aware of a potential sexual assault **MUST** immediately report the incident to PMO/law enforcement and the chain of command. I will ensure all unrestricted reports of sexual assault are immediately forwarded to Naval Criminal Investigative Service as well as to Headquarters Marine Corps and to the Commanding General, Marine Corps Installations West. Victims are encouraged to make Unrestricted Reports, but victims also have the option of making Restricted Reports to the installation Sexual Assault Response Coordinator, the command UVAs, healthcare personnel, or via the DoD SAFE Helpline at 1-877-995-5247 ([www.safehelpline.org](http://www.safehelpline.org)).
- 6. Immediate Victim Support:** Contact Master Sergeant Pugh (UVA) at 760-815-7593.

Semper Fidelis,

Joseph A. Craft

Colonel, United States Marine Corps

Commanding Officer, Headquarters and Support Battalion