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Army addresses sexual harassment issues

Secretary of the Army Togo D. West Jr. in November directed the formation of the Senior Review Panel on Sexual Harassment and the Army Inspector General's "Special Inspection of Initial Entry Training Equal Opportunity/Sexual Harassment Policies and Procedures."

West took the actions shortly after alleged sexual harassment and misconduct incidents at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md., were made public by the Army Nov. 7.

The Army Human Relations Action Plan addresses the findings and recommendations of both reports, ongoing actions and actions to be taken, with dates for completion, to make the Army a better place for soldiers. Accompanied by Army Chief of Staff Gen. Dennis J. Reimer, West announced Sept. 11 key findings of the reports and ongoing and planned actions to address the issues raised during the eight-month-long study.

In the report from the four-man, three-women panel, Army leaders were criticized for passive leadership in allowing sexual harassment to persist.

"The panel concludes that the human relations environment of the Army is not conducive to engendering dignity and respect among us."

Reimer said at the Sept. 11 press conference, "The leadership has been away from their soldiers a little bit too much in terms of training. Our focus has got to be down on soldiers, and we're doing that. I think that has contributed."

The reports were originally due out two months ago, but were delayed to have concrete recommendations on how to better address sexual discrimination and harassment issues added to them.

Key findings are:

1. Sexual harassment exists throughout the Army, crossing gender, rank and racial lines; gender discrimination is more common than is sexual harassment.
2. Army leaders are the critical factor in creating, maintaining and enforcing an environment of respect and dignity in the Army; too many leaders have failed to gain the trust of their soldiers.
3. The Army lacks institutional commitment to the Equal Opportunity (EO) program and soldiers distrust the EO complaint system.
4. The overwhelming majority of drill sergeants and instructors perform competently and well, but respect as an Army core value is not well institutionalized in the Initial Entry Training process.

"We can solve the challenges of sexual harassment and sexual mistrust," said West. "The first thing we must do is respect the contributions and patriotism of every one of our soldiers and inspire in them a similar consideration for one another."

The "consideration of others" theme was originally developed in the Military District of Washington to address sexual, religious, ethnic and racial discrimination issues in that command. Additionally, Reimer and West testified this winter and spring before both the House National Security Committee and Senate Armed Services Committee how the Army was looking at implementing the MDW program servicewide. The September announcement complements that testimony.

The action plan will establish an Army environment where soldiers treat one another with dignity and respect and combine individual talents for team success. A successful human relations climate is one that:

1. Maximizes the soldiers' awareness of how their individual actions affect others;
2. Emphasizes respect between and for soldiers of all races, creeds, gender, or national/ethnic heritage;
3. Enables soldiers to clearly understand the linkage between their actions toward others, and their unit's ability to accomplish the mission.

"Plain and simple," said Gen. Dennis Reimer, "this is a leadership issue and it will be addressed as such. Our leaders understand that our soldiers are our most precious assets and each soldier in the Army must be treated with dignity and respect so that they can make the greatest possible contribution to the entire Army team."

Both the IG and senior review teams said the Army's soldiers are trained and ready to perform any assigned mission, effectively and efficiently, anywhere in the world, Secretary Togo West said during the Pentagon press conference. He noted, however, that leaders need to do more "to create and maintain an environment wherein America's young men and women can achieve their own highest potential ... to be all they can be."

The Army is taking initiatives designed to combat sexual harassment and gender discrimination, West said. The initiatives, according to West, are "designed to again, put the Army out front in promoting and building a team consistent with our core values."

The secretary and chief of staff will receive periodic updates on the status of implementing the changes. The assistant secretary of the Army for manpower and reserve affairs will have an updated study for review in about 12 to 18 months.

West formed the seven-member review panel and named retired Maj. Gen. Richard S. Siegfried, the former deputy inspector general of the Army as chairman. From January through May 1997, the panel members visited 59 stateside and overseas installations and locations to conduct an in-depth, comprehensive review of the Army's policies on

sexual harassment and current processes. Thirty-thousand respondents participated. The Army said this is its largest and most comprehensive review of its kind.

West also directed Army Inspector General Lt. Gen. Jared L. Bates to assess current sexual harassment policies and procedures at all basic and advanced individual training installations, and throughout the Army's training base. IG teams visited training installations across the Army, including Aberdeen, from December 1996 through March 1997.

Both reports stressed proactive leadership is key in preventing sexual harassment, gender discrimination and other inappropriate behavior. Reimer is active in refocusing all leaders on their personal leadership responsibilities to promote an Army environment where all soldiers are provided due respect and proper treatment.

Reimer has introduced a 'Living Army Values' video, called "Character Development XXI," and Ethical Climate Assessment Survey to senior Army leaders, reinforced Character Development and Consideration of Others programs, published a "Leadership and Change in a Values-Based Army" pamphlet and distributed a four-page memorandum to all Army leaders highlighting their responsibility in leading the Army through change. In January, a Sexual Harassment Chain Teaching program was conducted in units worldwide.

Field Manual 22-100, Army Leadership, is being revised to emphasize professional values. In addition, Army values and ethics are specifically addressed in the new Officer Evaluation Report due out Oct. 1 for the active component. The Noncommissioned Officer Evaluation Report will also undergo a review to align its values with those in the leadership doctrine.

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Congress reacts favorably to Army initiatives.

Initial reaction to the Army's initiatives in dealing with sexual harassment drew a favorable response from key members. But the actions taken by the Army concerning revamped recruit training do not end mixed gender basic training, which remain a concern of many in Congress.

The House National Security Committee is expected to hold hearings on mixed gender training next year. A key subcommittee chairman indicated that he wanted to give the Army time to develop an action plan to address a host of personnel questions dealing with sexual harassment, discrimination and training.

On Capitol Hill, Reps. Steve Buyer, R-Ind., Tillie Fowler, R-Fla. and Jane Harman, D-Calif., issued a joint statement which said, in part, "We are impressed with the seriousness with which the Army has addressed this very important problem."

The three, all members of the National Security Committee, earlier conducted their own investigation into sexual misconduct and harassment problems in the armed forces.

Basic training will increase by one week. The revamping of initial recruit training to include character development instruction will add one week to basic. This summer, a week-longer basic training was tested. Results are now being studied. Key questions will be at what point values training will be introduced, how it will be emphasized and then summarized as recruits head to their next assignment.

The Marine Corps extended boot camp a year ago to add values, ethics and history instruction into the curriculum.

Shelton confirmed as JCS chairman. The Senate has confirmed Gen. Henry H. Shelton as the next chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. During his September confirmation hearing, senators asked Shelton about plans for U.S. forces to leave Bosnia by June 30.

The Congress and the administration are divided over the firmness of that date for U.S. forces leaving. President Clinton has threatened to veto the Defense Authorization bill if wording to that effect is contained in the legislation.

Reimer promises open communications with reserve components.

Gen. Dennis J. Reimer said recently to the National Guard Association of the United States. "We have been hit with a very divisive debate on the way we have reached some of our decisions. This threatens the very fabric of our seamless force. It is not very helpful for the nation. It is important that we resolve these differences and get them right. The stakes are very high." He has pledged to work closely with reserve component leaders and rededicated himself to the fundamental principle of the Total Army.

The Quadrennial Defense Review recommended cuts of 38,000 in the Army National Guard's end strength in the near future. An off-site agreement between the active and reserve components looked at smaller cuts in the next two years.

At the same time, Defense Secretary William Cohen called for the civilian and military leaders in the department to work more actively to bring reserve components into the war-fighting fold. "By integration, I mean the conditions of readiness and trust needed for the leadership at all levels to have well justified confidence that the Reserve Components units are trained and equipped to serve as an effective part of the joint and combined force," he writes in a Sept. 4 directive.

QDR provides good framework for future. The Quadrennial Defense Review, the Pentagon's internal top-to-bottom examination of its needs, provides a good framework to examine force structure, the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff told a breakfast gathering of 200 defense and industry leaders in reviewing the year.

Gen. Joseph W. Ralston, USAF, the vice chairman, said 1997 was also a year in which there has been "a good agreement on the budget – not only in the Department of Defense, but with the Congress and the President." In the balanced budget agreement, the Defense Department would receive \$250 billion in real terms through Fiscal Year 2002.

"It gives you some stability and tries to get money in the right buckets in the department... I believe we will make reasonable progress in modernization." Ralston said the modernization accounts for all services to be about \$50 billion in Fiscal Year 1999.

Congress OKs defense appropriations, stalls on authorization

Congress approved a \$247.5 billion Defense Appropriations bill Sept. 25 that would effectively kill future production of the B-2 bomber and give President Clinton a way to extend the Bosnia troop deployment.

The situation with the Defense Authorization Bill is not as clear. Conferees are bogged down over depot maintenance. At the heart of that debate is the split between congressional delegations in Texas and California and those from Utah, Oklahoma and Georgia.

If a compromise cannot be reached on depot questions, Congress likely will return in January to work out a version of the bill to provide the needed authorities and reforms required by the Defense Department to function for the last two-thirds of the fiscal year.

Traditionally, the authorization bill precedes the appropriations bill.

Heading off a veto battle over the appropriations bill, House and Senate negotiators who crafted the bill gave way on Bosnia and the B-2, two of the most contentious issues.

Because of the budget balancing agreement, defense spending increases added to the bill by the Republican-controlled Congress are more modest than planned.

The bill has gone to President Clinton for his signature. The new fiscal year begins Oct. 1. Because the margins of passage were so large in both houses, a presidential veto is not expected.

The bill passed 356-65 in the House, and 93-5 in the Senate.

It still contains language cutting off funding for the Bosnia troop deployment by next June 30 and allowing the president to spend money expanding the B-2 bomber fleet, built in Southern California by Northrop-Grumman.

But companion provisions give Clinton an escape hatch on both issues.

Clinton can decide to spend the B-2 money repairing and modernizing the existing fleet of 21 B-2s. The House wanted to spend \$331 million as a down payment on nine more B-2s. Senators have agreed with the administration in opposing more new B-2s.

On Bosnia, Clinton could remove the funding cutoff merely by coming to Capitol Hill by next May 15 and explaining why and how the Bosnia mission must be extended.

The administration is weighing this provision.

The final version of the bill represents a major concession by the House. Earlier this year, the House voted to impose a strict funding cutoff that would prohibit Clinton from spending money on the troop deployment beyond June 30, 1998 — the date he had given for ending the peacekeeping mission.

The bill reflects the Senate version.

"I could understand a situation where it would be difficult for us to be out by July 1, 1998," Sen. Ted Stevens, R-Alaska, chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, told the Associated Press. "But we'd have to have a plan and we'd have to understand what we were going to do there."

The overall bill would add \$3.6 billion to Clinton's request for Defense spending in the fiscal year beginning Oct. 1. It represents a \$5.1 billion increase over this year's defense spending level. It also includes a 2.8 percent military pay raise.

Walker tapped for undersecretary post. President Clinton has nominated Robert Michael Walker, the Army's acquisition chief, as undersecretary of the Army. Walker will succeed Joe Reeder.

In addition to his duties as acquisition chief, Walker serves as assistant secretary of the Army for installations, logistics and environment. His nomination as undersecretary must be confirmed by the Senate.