

**TESTIMONY OF ADMIRAL ROBERT J. PAPP, JR.
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**BEFORE THE
SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE**

June 4, 2013

Good morning Chairman Levin, Ranking Member Inhofe, and distinguished members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify this morning.

Sexual assault is a violent crime that devastates its victim. It also destroys unit discipline, erodes cohesiveness, and degrades our readiness. I am personally committed to eliminating it from the Coast Guard.

And we are making progress. New policies, enhanced training, improved access to victim support services, and greater reporting opportunities – including those outside the chain of command – provide us with important tools to achieve our goal of eliminating sexual assault from the Coast Guard.

However, we must...and will...do more.

In a message last year to all Coast Guard men and women, I told the Service: “We will intervene to prevent or halt these acts when they are occurring. We will investigate and discipline those who have violated law and service policy. We will insist that all of our Shipmates live by our Core Values. There are no bystanders in the Coast Guard.”

Recently I followed this with a Commander’s Intent message that initiates our Service-wide campaign plan for the elimination of sexual assault.

Yesterday I briefed Secretary Napolitano on our efforts. She directed me to ensure that every member of the Coast Guard is clear regarding their responsibility – and to take whatever action is required to eradicate sexual assault from our Service and to ensure that victims receive immediate, compassionate and complete support.

The Coast Guard system of reporting, investigation and prosecution of sexual assault cases is largely similar to the Army. Details are contained in my written statement.

This is first and foremost a leadership responsibility. Every commander must create a culture that is intolerant of any unwelcome sexual contact or the behaviors that enable it. We have enhanced our training so that all hands recognize indicators of this behavior and are prepared to intervene. We must also demand command climates that allow victims to come forward knowing they will be protected and cared for without fear of reprisal, or stigma.

Prevention is the first, best option. However, when a response is necessary – when this crime does occur – we will hold those predators accountable.

The military justice system is a critical tool for doing this. We give commanders great responsibility to act independently in demanding and dangerous situations, and we hold them accountable for the results. I recognize the military justice system is not perfect, and I welcome considered, well-reasoned improvements where they are needed. However, I have serious concerns about legislation that would fundamentally alter the role of commanders without full consideration of the second and third order effects on command authority and the ability to maintain unit discipline.

Stopping sexual assault is also the duty of each individual. As I said before, there can be no bystanders. *Every* Coast Guardsman must take ownership of this problem and be intolerant of any action that minimizes the significance of this crime. If they see it occurring they must take action to intervene, prevent or halt it, and then report it. Failure to help a shipmate in those circumstances demonstrates a lack of courage that is contrary to our core values. I expect every Coast Guardsman will display the same courage in those circumstances as they would in rescuing someone in peril at sea.

I look forward to working with this committee to eradicate this crime from our midst – and I look forward to your questions.