

RECORD VERSION

STATEMENT BY

**GENERAL GEORGE W. CASEY JR.
VICE CHIEF OF STAFF
UNITED STATES ARMY**

BEFORE THE

**COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON PERSONNEL
UNITED STATES SENATE**

SECOND SESSION, 108TH CONGRESS

VICTIM SUPPORT AND SEXUAL ASSAULT

FEBRUARY 25, 2004

**NOT FOR PUBLICATION
UNTIL RELEASED BY THE
SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE**

STATEMENT BY
GENERAL GEORGE W. CASEY JR.
VICE CHIEF OF STAFF, ARMY

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, on behalf of the men and women of the United States Army, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to provide an overview of the Army's commitment and to the care and support for victims of sexual assault. As I testify before you today, we have more than 297,000 Soldiers deployed in more than 47 countries around the Globe; let me assure you the Army—and its leaders—are committed to taking care of every one of those Soldiers. Sexual assault is a criminal offense that has no place in our Army. Such actions are incompatible with the values we demand of our Soldiers and demand of our leaders. Additionally, these actions degrade mission readiness by undermining unit cohesion and our ability to work effectively as a team. Commanders and leaders at every level have a duty to take appropriate steps to prevent sexual assault, protect and support victims, and hold those who commit offenses accountable. The Army takes seriously every allegation of sexual misconduct and thoroughly investigates all such allegations.

Respecting and protecting the dignity of every Soldier are cornerstones of this great institution. Throughout its 229 years of service to the Nation, the Army has stressed to our Soldiers and leaders that demonstrating respect for one another is an integral part of leadership and of Soldiering—in fact, it is the foundation of our ability to work as a team. Recently, despite our commitment to that basic principle of Soldier relationships and leadership, allegations of sexual misconduct in the ranks have caused us concern and prompted us to take a very focused and thorough review of this matter. We take those reports seriously and are

currently undergoing an extensive review of the issues related to those reports.

The discipline of our Army, especially our deployed Army, is the bedrock of today's superb fighting force. The Army has always been, and remains committed, to taking care of Soldiers and dealing expeditiously with any complaint or allegation. It is incumbent on leaders at every level to ensure that a climate exists where a Soldier who is a victim of a sexual assault or any other crime feels free to report that crime to their chain of command and that leaders understand their responsibilities to support the victims and investigate allegations. When a Soldier reports a criminal act such as this, the Army is resolved to take immediate and proper action. We ensure that we focus on both support to the victim with medical attention, if appropriate, as well as verifying that there is chain of command knowledge of any alleged incident. This allows the leadership to maintain a dual focus on support to the victim and supervision of a proper and complete investigation of the possible criminal conduct.

The U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command is actively investigating or has completed investigations in 86 sexual assault crimes reported in the CENTCOM area of operations. The Army takes a tough and aggressive stance on investigating and, when the evidence warrants, prosecuting sexual assault cases. The Army is committed to providing strong support to victims of all crimes whether in a deployed environment or in garrison. As with all criminal allegations, there is a presumption of innocence until a case is fully investigated and, if appropriate, tried in a court of law. As you are well aware, the Uniform Code of Military Justice provides Commanders with the necessary process to ensure good order and discipline in our force. By protecting the rights of the accused and victims alike, the UCMJ provides the tools necessary to ensure the integrity of our investigatory and military justice system. The Army is

committed to ensuring that the victims of sexual assault are properly cared for and treated and that their medical and psychological needs are properly met. Victim support is a chain of command responsibility and we have many great programs that focus on victims of sexual assault. Law protects the rights of victims and the Army operates a comprehensive victim/witness assistance and liaison program, consistent with federal law and Department of Defense (DOD) Instruction, at every installation and in support of deployed forces. DOD and Army regulations require victim/witness services available in theater, normally at the division level, providing support to victims of crimes, including sexual assault. The Combat Support Hospital in Iraq is equipped with an emergency room to provide medical support to victims. In addition to the general medical support, the Combat Support Hospital is equipped with rape protocol kits and standard operating procedures on the proper collection of evidence. Finally, the Combat Support Hospital has protocols in place for victim assistance aside from medical treatment. Kuwait also has extensive medical facilities, including psychiatric support. We are reviewing our programs and policies to ensure they effectively meet the needs of our Soldiers who are victims of sexual assault.

We are assessing the Army's policies and programs to determine whether they properly provide appropriate support services to victims both in garrison and in a deployed environment. To ensure that our current policies and programs are effective, the Acting Secretary of the Army has directed the establishment of a task force to conduct a detailed review of the effectiveness of the Army's policies on reporting and properly addressing allegations of sexual assault. The task force will further review the processes in place to ensure a climate exists where victims feel free to report allegations and leaders at every level understand their responsibilities to support those victims. This task force will render its report by the end of May 2004. However, if the task force identifies

problem areas sooner, the Army will implement new procedures as they are approved. The Acting Secretary of the Army communicated an Army-wide message on the work to be done by the task force and to ensure leaders at all levels are focused how we support victims of sexual assault. The specific charter of the task force is to:

- Conduct a systems review of the Army's policy on sexual assault and the processes currently in place.
- Review the processes currently in place to ensure a climate in which victims feel free to report allegations and ensure commands understand their responsibilities to support the victims and investigate the allegations.
- Recommend changes or additions to current policies, programs, and procedures to provide clear guidance for reporting and addressing sexual assault allegations and protocols for the support of victims.

This effort is a total systems review of policy, programs, procedures, and training with regard to how the Army both works towards the prevention of and the resolution of sexual assault once it occurs. Good leadership is critical to the creation and maintenance of a positive human relations environment where Soldiers are willing to report any act of sexual misconduct, without fear of retribution, reprisal, or impact on their careers. The Army will simply not tolerate sexual misconduct within our ranks, and the key to correcting this problem is effective leadership.

I have unwavering confidence in the talent, integrity, and professionalism of the individuals who make up our Army. Every American can be proud of the job our Soldiers do every day in leading the defense of America. In the past, the U.S. Army has faced and overcome daunting challenges in its human dimension. We have the people, the will, and the tradition to achieve and maintain an environment of mutual dignity and respect—for all our Soldiers. The leadership of this great

Army wants the very best for all of our Soldiers. When the unthinkable happens to one of our Soldiers, we are committed to provide them the very best in victim support and services.

Once again, thank you for allowing me to speak before you today and I look forward to answering your questions.