

As commissioner for the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and adjutant general for the Alaska National Guard, it is my responsibility to ensure all persons in our organization root out any harassment, hostile work environment, sexual assault, or trading of sexual favors. Unequivocally, these actions have no place in America's work environment; I consider this responsibility to our military family nonnegotiable.

Since 2009 there have been 29 cases of alleged sexual assault reported to our sexual assault response coordinator by the Air and Army National Guard. Our leadership and investigating officers are trained to coordinate with the Criminal Investigation Command and local law enforcement immediately upon becoming aware that a crime may have been committed.

In 11 of the 29 cases, the victims chose to restrict¹ reporting. Also of note, 18 of those 29 cases had civilian perpetrators; 11 were military. Local law enforcement, such as Anchorage Police Department (APD) or the Alaska State Troopers (AST) was contacted in 21 cases.

As both a State of Alaska and federal entity, we treat such complaints with the utmost sensitivity and follow the clearly established procedures in initiating the appropriate action. As the Department of Defense gained an understanding of the magnitude and impact of this problem, the National Guard Bureau provided resources to every state, territory, and District of Columbia. The Alaska National Guard now has a trained sexual assault investigator on staff. Previously, we relied on our senior officers to conduct military investigations.

During the course of military investigations, if our investigators become aware of possible criminal behavior, immediate contact and consultation begins with local law enforcement and/or Criminal Investigation Command. Those that do not rise to the level of criminal activity are addressed by command in accordance with established military policies and regulations.

I cannot confirm or deny the names of any individuals under investigation, according to Defense Department personnel policy. Any person under investigation has rights to privacy and due process. I also cannot comment on the status of any ongoing investigation. However, in the interest of good order and discipline, we take appropriate action to investigate all allegations, while ensuring the safety and security of possible victims, as well as the rights of anyone suspected of inappropriate behavior.

The Alaska National Guard is committed to protecting our men and women from sexual assault, and ensuring justice is served. We are focusing efforts on prevention, victim support, investigations, and accountability. Sexual assault and harassment are inconsistent with our values and erode trust and confidence. When an allegation is substantiated, we deal with it within the full measure of applicable policy, regulation, and law.

¹ Restricted case: Victim reports incident to SARC but there is no suspect or victim information provided to the command other than to note an incident occurrence. Victim may independently report to local law enforcement.