

### GETTING TO THE LEFT OF SHARP: LESSONS LEARNED FROM WEST POINT'S EFFORTS TO COMBAT SEXUAL HARRASSMENT AND ASSAULT

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On July 26, 1948, President Harry Truman signed Executive Order 9981, which ended the practice of segregating the military services by race. That same year, the Army allowed women to join the services on an equal basis with men. Both of these steps preceded (and perhaps helped precipitate) the larger societal changes that allowed fully equal treatment of all types of American citizens in military service. And just over 2 years ago, Congress repealed the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy, allowing for gays and lesbians to take their place openly in the military.

West Point fully integrated women nearly 40 years ago, with the class of 1980. Since that time, our procedures and policies for successful gender integration have grown and evolved. Of course, we have a long way to go, but one of the hallmarks of a profession is its continued efforts to improve. To that end, this monograph shares a few of the lessons West Point has learned on the prevention of sexual harassment and assault. We share five "Principles" for leaders and commanders, as well as associated "Tips" for implementation.

Principle 1: Leaders identify and break chains of circumstance. In this principle, we lay out the concept of "chain of circumstance" and argue that leaders must be alert to them as they develop. By doing so, they can break those chains before they culminate in a sexual harassment or assault incident.

Principle 2: Education is preferable to litigation. In this principle, we argue that most soldiers and cadets are basically good people and that the proper ap-

proach to most issues of SHARP is to promote dialogue and learning rather than rush to punishment. Ironically, severe punishment can drive bad behaviors underground rather than prevent them.

Principle 3: What is electronic is public. As leaders assess the culture of their units, they ought to pay attention to social networks and other behaviors conducted on line. Unfortunately, much bullying and inappropriate behavior takes place on line, and these networks can serve as an invaluable window into unit cultures.

Principle 4: Do not ignore pornography. Rampant use of pornography has been linked (controversially) to all kinds of negative behaviors and attitudes. Here, we argue that leaders should research the impact of pornography on behavior and attitudes, and alert their subordinates of these findings.

Principle 5: Unit climate is the commander's responsibility. We argue that senior commanders should hold junior commanders responsible for their unit climates when evidence exists that bad unit climates have led to sexual assault or harassment incidents. To that end, commanders should personally lead some of this training and not be afraid to treat all unit functions as opportunities to promote positive cultures.

These principles and their associated tips are not panaceas. Much room exists for improvement in the Army's programs on this topic, and we humbly submit our recommendations for discussion and feedback.

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