

Office of the Inspector General of the Department of Defense

Project No. 2003C004

September 11, 2003

Interim Report on the United States Air Force Academy Sexual Assault Survey¹

Executive Summary

The data in this executive summary was released to the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of the Air Force, The Panel to Review Sexual Misconduct Allegations at United States Air Force Academy², the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, the General Counsel for the Department of Defense, and the Air Force Inspector General on August 22, 2003.

A. The Survey

In May 2003, the Inspector General of the Department of Defense authorized and administered a survey of female cadets at the U.S. Air Force Academy (USAFA) as part of the "Evaluation of Policies and Practices at the Military Service Academies Regarding Response to Sexual Assaults." The purpose of the survey was to determine the scope of recent sexual assault incidents and to assess the perceptions of female cadets concerning the Academy's response to sexual assault (including factors such as reasons for not reporting, likelihood of reprisal/ostracism for reporting assault, personal safety on campus, cadet perceptions of the command's handling of sexual assault, and cadet perceptions of sexual assault support and training programs).

Two definitions were employed in the survey:

- **Sexual assault** (adapted from USAFA Instruction 51-201, "Cadet Victim/Witness Assistance and Notification Procedures," April 18, 2000):

the touching of another without their consent in a sexual manner, including attempts, in order to arouse, appeal to, or gratify the lust or sexual desires of the accused, the victim, or both. Sexual assault includes, but is not limited to, rape, sodomy, fondling, unwanted touching of a sexual nature, and indecent sexual acts that the victim does not consent to, or is explicitly or implicitly forced into. It is immaterial

¹ We intend to subsequently include this report as an appendix to an Inspection Report on Project No. 2003C004 that is scheduled to be completed by December 2003. This later report will address the root causes of sexual assault and issues of accountability at the Academy.

² The information in the executive summary was released to "The Panel to Review Sexual Misconduct Allegations at United States Air Force Academy" to comply with their request for our survey results by August 22, 2003 to enable the Panel to achieve their statutory publishing deadline of September 22, 2003.

whether the touching is directly upon the body of another or is committed through the person's clothing.³

- **Rape** (adapted from the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), Article 120, Rape):

an act of sexual intercourse with a female, by force and/or without her consent (conscious or unconscious). Penetration, however slight, is sufficient to complete the offense.⁴

(**Note:** The definition of sexual assault includes rape and attempted rape; consequently, the results for claimed sexual assault and the results for rape [and its attempt] are *not* additive.)

B. The Data

Survey Population

Of the total female population of 659 cadets, 66 were unavailable. Of all available cadets (593), 12 had unexcused absences. The remaining 581 cadets took the survey. Of their responses, 2 were eliminated entirely—one was blank except for class year and a general comment, and the other had so many inconsistencies that it could not be used. This left usable responses from 579 female cadets (87.9% of the total female cadet population, and 97.6% of all available female cadets).

Scope of Recent Incidents

The 579 survey responses indicated the following:

- 43 cadets (7.4% of all respondents)—including 15 members of the Class of 2003 (11.7% of that class)—indicated they had been victims of at least one actual or attempted rape in their time at the Academy.
- 109 cadets (18.8% of all respondents) indicated they had been victims of at least one instance of sexual assault in their time at the Academy. Many cadets indicated they experienced multiple incidents of sexual assault, for a total of at least 177 incidents recorded. (This figure includes the 43 cadets who indicated actual or attempted rape.)

³ The definition of sexual assault employed presents a certain amount of difficulty. It is adapted from the definition in USAFA Instruction 51-201, "Cadet Victim/Witness Assistance and Notification Procedures," a definition that the Air Force considers too broad and may result in a higher count of sexual assault incidents than is actually warranted. The OIG (DoD) acknowledges that there is a certain amount of difficulty present in the definition employed—however, two important things must be considered; first, the OIG (DoD) survey definition lacked one important clause found in the USAFA Instruction 51-201, which states that consent is not given when "the person is alcohol impaired"; second, the definition supplied is not so broad as to suggest that the majority of incidents claimed were in fact improperly classified by the respondents as sexual assaults.

⁴ The definition of rape employed is essentially the same as Article 120 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ).

- 397 (68.6% of all respondents) indicated they had experienced sexual harassment (unwanted and uninvited sexual attention) in the form of sexual teasing, jokes, remarks, or questions while at the Academy. 262 (45.3%) indicated experiencing sexually suggestive looks, gestures, or body language, and 225 (38.9%) indicated receiving letters, telephone calls, emails, instant messaging or materials of a sexual nature. 204 (35.2%) indicated experiencing leaning over, cornering, pinching or brushing against, unwanted touching, and 129 (22.3%) indicated experiencing pressure for sexual favors.
- Cadets indicated that only 33 (18.6%) of the 177 sexual assault incidents were reported to the authorities.
- Cadets indicated that they experienced reprisal for reporting 14 (42.4%) of these incidents. (“Reprisal” was not defined in the survey.)
- 143 incidents were recorded as not being reported to any authority. When asked why they did not report these incidents, victims indicated that embarrassment was a factor in 77 incidents (53.8 % of all non-reported incidents), the fear of ostracism by peers in 66 (46.2 %), the fear of some form of reprisal in 61 (42.7%)⁵, and the belief that nothing would be done about the sexual assault in 58 (40.6 %).⁵ When all respondents (both sexual assault victims and cadets not indicating sexual assault) were asked “other than embarrassment or shame, what do you think is the number ONE reason why some victims at your academy do not report sexual assaults,” the top two reasons given were fear of ostracism by peers (32.8% of respondents), and fear of being punished for other infractions (26.8%).
- The respondents categorized offenders for 172 of the 177 incidents; the categories included cadets (both senior and non-senior to the respondents), civilians and military (both affiliated and not affiliated with the Academy), and unidentified persons. Fellow cadets were identified as the principal offender group (149 or 86.1%) of all identified offenders; 65 of these were cadets who were senior to the victims.
- The respondents also indicated locations for 174 of the 177 incidents of sexual assault; 114 incidents (64.4%) occurred on the installation—65 in the dormitories and 49 elsewhere. Another 11 (6.2%) occurred off the installation, but at Academy-sponsored events, and 49 (27.7%) occurred off the installation, not at Academy-sponsored events.

Perceptions of Academy’s Response to Sexual Assaults

The survey also requested cadet views on:

- **Previous command’s handling of sexual assault incidents:** A slight majority—310 (53.5% of all respondents)—believed that the previous leadership did not handle sexual assault incidents appropriately, while 86 (14.9%) believed they did, and 182 (31.4%) did not know.
- **Previous command’s efforts to curb sexual harassment:** Almost half—267 (46.1%)—believed that the previous command had made honest and reasonable

⁵ Because cadets were allowed to select multiple reasons for not reporting, these numbers total above 143, the total number of incidents not reported.

efforts to prevent or stop uninvited and unwanted sexual attention, while 310 (53.5%) believed it had not.

- **Current command's efforts to curb sexual harassment:** Almost all—556 (96.0%)—believed the current command was making honest and reasonable efforts to prevent or stop uninvited and unwanted sexual attention, while only 22 (3.8%) believed it was not.
- **Cadet Safety:** A majority—365 (63.0%)—expressed no fears about their personal safety, while 82 (14.2%) indicated their biggest fear was being hazed or unjustifiably harassed, 51 (8.8%) stated that it was that they would be sexually assaulted, and 27 (4.7%) stated that they would be non-sexually assaulted. Cadets also indicated overwhelmingly (over 90%) that they felt very safe or safe in every location on campus, except when alone on academy grounds during hours of darkness. (During hours of darkness, 68.9% felt very safe or safe; 20% felt somewhat safe; and 10.9% felt unsafe or very unsafe.)