

Congresswoman Louise Slaughter (NY-28) introduced new measures to deal with the epidemic of rape and sexual assault in the military.

“For far too long the problem of sexual assault in our military services has been a problem that is under-reported, acknowledged only reluctantly and hardly ever spoken about in public,” Slaughter said. “That must change. I have been working for over a decade to make some sensible changes to the military’s culture and reporting so that we can bring this problem under control. We must change the culture and attitudes and these provisions will help make sure that sexual assault victims in the military who come forward and report assaults receive treatment, assistance and justice – not the cold shoulder.”

Four of these provisions, based on the Defense Task Force on Sexual Assault in the Military Services report released in December 2009, have been included in the House National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2011, which was reported out by the House Armed Services Committee last night and is set to be voted on by the full House as early as next week.

Slaughter introduced The Force Protection and Readiness Act with Congresswoman Jane Harman (CA-36).

The Force Protection and Readiness Act will:

- Create confidentiality protocols to protect victim rights and raise the propensity for a soldier to report their case by ensuring they receive adequate legal assistance and appropriate privileged communications with victim advocates.
- Ensure ease of base or organization transfer for victims or the offender thereby decreasing fear of retaliation and bolstering victim reports.
- Require that each service branch employ highly qualified experts to train and advise JAGs to handle and try sexual assault cases effectively.
- Ensure more complete sexual assault data reporting to better track DoD-wide reports and case disposition.
- Establish a universal hotline to facilitate victim reporting and provide victims an immediate connection with sexual assault response coordinators.
- Sets a DoD wide standard for victim advocate training to ensure that those charged with helping victims of sexual assault are held to the highest standard.

## **BACKGROUND:**

Sexual assault is a serious problem throughout all branches of the military. In March 2010, the Department of Defense (DoD) released their seventh annual sexual assault report, which stated that there were 3,230 allegations of sexual assaults reported in 2009; an 11 percent increase from 2008. A 2005 Sexual Harassment and Assault Survey of the Service Academies found 6 percent of females and 1 percent of males said they were sexually assaulted in 2004-2005, and less than half the females who experienced sexual assault reported it. In this same survey, 60 percent of female cadets indicated the prevalence of sexual harassment was about the same as when they first enrolled at their academy.

In recent years, Slaughter and the Women's Caucus have made significant progress in drawing national attention to the problem of sexual assault of women in the armed services, which was a primary focus of the caucus during the 108th Congress. In March 2004, Slaughter led the first hearing on sexual assault in the military and presented a report containing the transcript of the hearing to U.S. Department of Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld.

Following the hearing, in May 2004, the U.S. House of Representatives unanimously passed an amendment championed by Slaughter that would require the Pentagon to develop a comprehensive and uniform policy to prevent and respond to sexual assault of women in the military.