

### *Slaughter Authored Legislation to Protect Victims, Train Military Personnel*

WASHINGTON – Congresswoman Louise Slaughter (NY-28), Ranking Member of the House Rules Committee, today said that provisions added last night to the National Defense Authorization Act would begin to directly address the underreported and under acknowledged problem of sexual assault in America’s armed forces.

Earlier this month, Slaughter wrote to the Chairman and Ranking Member of the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Military Personnel asking them to include language from legislation she drafted in the National Defense Authorization Act.

Slaughter’s [Force Protection and Readiness Act, H.R. 1709](#) , would create confidentiality to protect victims, allow an eased process for victims or their offender to be transferred from their current base, and expand training on sexual assault.

**“As America fights two wars, our women and men in battle can be worlds away and if they find themselves the victims of sexual assault, in theatre or at home, it must be recognized and the assailant must be brought to justice. Sadly this is almost never the reality,” said Slaughter, a legislative leader on preventing sexual assault in America’s military. “We have a duty to protect our men and women in uniform from the tragedy that is sexual assault in the military services.”**

According to the Veteran’s Administration, 48,106 female veterans and 43,693 male veterans reported experiencing military sexual trauma during health screenings performed in fiscal year 2008.

In the Department of Defense Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military for Fiscal Year 2009, the number of servicemen and women who have experienced some form of sexual assault or rape has increased 11 percent from 2002.

***Silence Must Be Stopped***

**“As many as 90 percent of sexual assaults go unreported and our women and men in uniform deserve better,” said Slaughter. “Women have told me they were forced to salute their assailant day after day with no recourse. But it’s not only women affected. According to the VA, more than 40,000 male veterans experienced military sexual trauma.”**

In 2008, nearly half of all sexual assault cases, the commander took no action, and only 13 percent of reported cases were prosecuted and referred to courts marshal. Among civilians 40 percent of those arrested for rape are prosecuted.

***Action is Needed***

The strain on our servicemen and women is already unforgivingly high. If a victim cannot access essential care for fear of stigma, public embarrassment, threats to their career, or because they just do not know what resources are available, the military will continue to lose valuable female and male soldiers.

***Coalition of Support***

"SWAN applauds Rep. Slaughter (D-NY) for introducing H.R.1709, *the Force Protection and Readiness Act*,” said Anu

Bhagwati, former Marine Corps Captain and executive director of the Service Women's Action Network (SWAN). "Provisions in this bill would protect servicemembers who experience sexual assault by providing for confidential communications between victims and their advocates, expedited humanitarian transfers and reassignments so victims aren't forced to work alongside or even share living quarters with their rapists, and a hotline for servicemembers to report rapes or suspected rapes. These are practical, common-sense policy proposals that would have an immediate impact on the well-being of survivors, as well as increase the morale, cohesion and overall readiness of the armed forces."

"Sexual predators that abuse their positions of authority – leaving victims to suffer the consequences silently or risk ending their careers – must be held accountable," said Shelby Quast, Policy Advisor at Equality Now. "Congresswoman Slaughter's Bill takes a bold step toward addressing the needs of victims; we must continue, unyielding, in our demands to end this culture of impunity once and for all– those honorably serving this country deserve no less."

### **Facts and Figures: Sexual Assault in America's Military**

- Since 2002 over 65, 000 servicemen and women have experienced some form of sexual assault, or rape. In the Department of Defense Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military for Fiscal Year 2009, there were a total of 3,230 reports of sexual assault involving military service members as either victims or subjects. This represents an 11% increase from FY 2008 reports.
- According to the Veteran's Administration, 48,106 female veterans and 43,693 male veterans reported experiencing military sexual trauma during health screenings performed in fiscal year 2008.
- In 2008, nearly half of all sexual assault cases, the commander took no action, and only 13% of reported cases were prosecuted and referred to courts marshal. These figures are far below civilian prosecution rates, where 40% of those arrested for rape are prosecuted.
- The Defense Task Force on Sexual Assault in the Military Services report released in December 2009 estimates that as many as 90% of sexual assaults go unreported. We hear too often that the reporting process is more traumatic for the victim than the attack itself.
- According to the 2010 Prevalence/Incidence Survey of Sexual Assault in the Air Force, approximately 3.4% of women and 0.5% of men were victims of sexual assault in the past year. That translates into 2,143 women and 1,355 men in the Air Force assaulted in the past year. According to the same survey, men are less likely to report their sexual assault, with 17% of women reporting and 6% of men reporting.

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**Summary of the Force Protection and Readiness Act, H.R. 1709**

- 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 effectively handle and try sexual assault cases.
- Ensure more complete sexual assault data reporting to better track DoD-wide reports and case disposition.