

## March 17, 2009 - Rep. Slaughter Responds to Pentagon Report on Military Sexual Assault

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Rep. Slaughter  
Responds to Pentagon Report on Military Sexual Assault

Report Finds  
Sexual Assault Increased 8% Overall, 17% in Combat Zones

Washington, DC - Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY-28),  
Chairwoman of the House Committee on Rules, today reacted to the Pentagon's fifth  
annual report on sexual assault in the military during the year 2008. The report found that the number of sexual assaults  
in the military has  
increased by 8% overall and 17% in combat zones within the last year alone.

"The Pentagon's alarming statistics prove that sexual assault in the military not only persists, but has gotten worse," Rep. Slaughter said. "Enough is enough. How many more of our brave women and men in uniform must experience sexual assault before we truly address this issue?"

In January 2009, Rep. Slaughter re-introduced the Military Domestic and Sexual Violence Response Act, a bill designed to ensure greater protections for service men and women who are victims of violence. This comprehensive bill addresses domestic and sexual violence in the military by establishing an office of Victims Advocate within the Department of Defense while creating confidentiality protocols to protect the rights of victims within military law. Additionally, the legislation codifies policies for preventing, responding, treating, and prosecuting cases of family violence, domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking in the military and among military families.

"It is unconscionable that our soldiers are too often victimized twice -- first by their perpetrator, then again by the military's lack of an appropriate and compassionate response," added Slaughter. "It's one thing to serve your country and another thing to be assaulted by a fellow soldier, especially in circumstances where it's someone of a higher rank. My bill helps ensure that sexual assault or domestic violence victims in the military receive the treatment and justice he or she deserves."

While the DoD has made efforts to improve its prevention and response to domestic and sexual violence, services remain incomplete and inconsistent among the various branches. There have been reports that victims advocates have been denied resources to do their job, and in some instances been forced off bases all together. DoD policies are not codified and do not offer the same protections afforded to civilian victims. And, perhaps most importantly, victims are unable to seek confidential counseling and treatment without fear that their records might become public if they press charges against their assailant.

## BACKGROUND

Congresswoman  
Louise M. Slaughter was the driving force to require the Pentagon's annual

report on sexual assault in the military.

- In March, 2004, as Co-chair of the Congressional Caucus on Women's Issues, Rep. Slaughter led a hearing on this issue which prompted the U.S. House of Representatives to unanimously pass her amendment which required the Pentagon to provide an annual report on sexual assault in the military to Congress and to develop a comprehensive and uniform policy to prevent and respond to sexual assault of women in the military.

- Since enactment of this policy four years ago, Rep. Slaughter has hosted annual briefings whereby DoD officials have presented the reports' findings and progress on this issue to Congress.

- In 2006, Rep. Slaughter amended the Pentagon's report to require DoD to include the results of disciplinary action - number of convictions, including Article 15s and court-martial convictions - as part of the annual report on sexual assault in the military. This amendment was included in the Fiscal Year 2007 National Defense Authorization bill (H.R. 5122).

- In the 110th Congress and again at the start of the 111th Congress, Rep. Slaughter introduced the Military Domestic and Sexual Violence Response Act, a bill designed to ensure greater protections for service men and women who are victims of violence.

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