



JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS PANEL ON SEXUAL ASSAULT IN THE MILITARY

<http://jpp.whs.mil>

December 15, 2014

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Fifth Public Meeting of the Judicial Proceedings Panel on Sexual Assault in the Military was Held on December 12, 2014 in Arlington, VA.

Arlington, VA - The fifth meeting of the Judicial Proceedings Panel on Sexual Assault in the Military (“JPP” or “the Panel”) was held on Friday, December 12, 2014, at the Holiday Inn Arlington at Ballston. The meeting focused on the military Services’ Special Victims’ Counsel (SVC) programs with input from sexual assault advocacy and support personnel, survivors and their SVCs, as well as the leaders of the military Services’ JAG Corps.

The Panel first heard from Colonel (Retired) Don Christensen, a former Air Force prosecutor and current President of Protect Our Defenders, an advocacy organization for men and women in uniform who have been raped or sexually assaulted. Colonel (Ret.) Christensen discussed the military Service SVC programs, noting that he is a strong proponent for the support SVCs provide to sexual assault survivors. He also highlighted areas of concern about the SVC programs and suggested improvements to improve their effectiveness.

In the next session, sexual assault response coordinators (SARCs) from each of the military Services provided their perspectives on the implementation of the SVC programs. SARCs work closely with victims of sexual assault, SVCs, law enforcement, commanders, and other service providers. They offered positive feedback about the SVC programs, but they also described some communication and logistical challenges.

In the afternoon, an SVC from each military Services accompanied a client-survivor to provide the Panel with first-hand insights about the SVC program and the military justice process. Clients and their SVCs provided prepared statements and answered questions from the Panel. The client-survivors described their experiences with issues such as retaliation and expedited transfers, and they explained that having an SVC representing them provided important support and ensured they had a voice in the process.

During the meeting’s final session, senior military attorneys for each of the military Services addressed the Panel. They provided their perspectives regarding recent and proposed Article 120 amendments, judge advocate staffing and resources, victims’ access to information, and their respective SVC programs.

This meeting was held by the JPP as part of its congressionally mandated mission, to conduct an independent review and assessment of judicial proceedings conducted under the UCMJ involving adult sexual assault and related offenses for the purpose of developing recommendations to improve such proceedings. The Panel’s next meeting is scheduled for January 16, 2014. The January meeting will focus on deliberations among the Panel members regarding the JPP’s upcoming initial report to the Secretary of Defense and Congress in February 2015. The JPP will continue its work through September 2017, providing reports and assessments to the Secretary of Defense and Congress in compliance with its statutory mission.

For more information about the Judicial Proceedings Panel and future meetings visit the website, <http://jpp.whs.mil>. Requests to make public comment, submission of written comments or materials for the Panel’s consideration and any other inquiries may be directed to Ms. Julie Carson at whs.pentagon.em.mbx.judicial-panel@mail.mil or (703) 693-3849.