



Commanding Officer, Marine Aircraft Group 24 Sexual Assault Prevention Policy Statement



I want it to be clear in the mind of every Marine & Sailor in this MAG that sexual assault is a crime! Criminal behavior, particularly sexual assault, will not be tolerated within MAG-24. Sexual assault impedes the morale of the Group and of our individual Sailors and Marines and impairs our effectiveness and efficiency. Offenders will face prosecution and victims will be given the compassionate support and care they require and deserve. We will support our victims by listening, believing and helping. The overarching intent of everything we do at MAG-24 is Mission first, Marines and Sailors always—sexual assault violates every bit of this intent.

Sexual assault is a crime that is prejudicial to good order and discipline, and it undermines readiness, unit cohesion, and morale. This crime is completely incompatible with our core values of Honor, Courage, and Commitment and erodes the very spirit of our Group and the Marine Corps. Plain and simple, it is an aberration that has no place in the Marine Corps or in MAG-24. I want Marines and Sailors of all ranks thinking and talking about this issue—it is every Marine's inherent duty to step up and step in to prevent sexual assault. I fully expect and demand an active and effective "Take a Stand" Bystander Intervention Training program to help us in this effort and make the entire MAG better at recognizing and interpreting signals of sexual assault and taking action to stop sexual assault. **This is a priority!**

Sexual assault is a crime defined as intentional sexual contact, characterized by the use of force, physical threat, abuse of authority or when the victim does not or cannot consent. Consent cannot be given or withheld when one is drunk or drugged. To help put it in perspective, consent must be mutual, desirable and welcome. Sexual assault includes rape, non-consensual sodomy, indecent assault (unwanted, inappropriate sexual contact or fondling), or attempts to commit these acts. Sexual assault can occur without regard to gender, spousal relationship, or ages of the victim.

As Marines, we take care of our own. We do not allow Marines to take advantage of others and do not allow Marines to become victims—we look out for one another. Just as we would look out for our fellow Marines and Sailors on the battlefield or a bar fight, we must display the same sort of protective behavior in order to prevent sexual assaults. They are not only our fellow Marines and Sailors, but also America's daughters & sisters or sons & brothers—our most precious assets—we must absolutely protect them! It takes strength and courage to step up and remove a fellow Marine or Sailor from a situation that could lead to a sexual assault, and it takes even more moral courage to step up and protect a fellow Marine or Sailor who is vulnerable to sexual assault. It is our sacred duty to protect each other from all harm, including this heinous crime. It takes incredible strength and courage to report a fellow Marine or Sailor who has committed a sexual assault. If you know of a sexual assault, it's your duty to report it immediately—it's the right thing to do. We will not re-victimize or cross-examine the victim or threaten witnesses. Our point of departure will always be that of believing the victim and taking action. Don't just be a bystander—step up and step in to take action.

Sexual assault is a significantly underreported crime, and many refuse to acknowledge the magnitude of this issue. Sexual assault happens in the barracks, at parties, on dates, in the workplace, and in the homes of friends. Alcohol is frequently involved and used as a tool against reluctance. Though predominantly a crime against females, the Marine Corps has had male-on-male attacks. Marines and Sailors are not just being victimized by peers—this criminal behavior crosses all ranks. It does take tremendous courage to report this crime, but you may be preventing another Marine or Sailor from becoming a victim later. If you are a victim of sexual assault contact the MAG's or your unit's Uniformed Victim Advocate (UVA). Help is also available from the MCBH Sexual Assault 24/7 Helpline at 808-216-7175 or the DoD Safe Helpline at 877-995-5247.

I need your help in building and maintaining the conviction to fight sexual assault, and stamp out harassment and indifference. I need leaders at all levels to take immediate action to prevent sexual assaults. I believe the complete elimination of sexual assaults can only be achieved with the help and moral courage of the individual Marine and Sailor. With decisive and engaged anticipatory leadership we can prevent sexual assaults in MAG-24 and ensure we are keeping faith with our Sailors and Marines. Together, as a Team, we can accomplish any mission and ensure the continued success of MAG-24 to our Corps. Mission first, Marines & Sailors always.

Semper Fidelis,

Paul A. Fortunato
Colonel, United States Marine Corps
Commanding Officer, Marine Aircraft Group 24