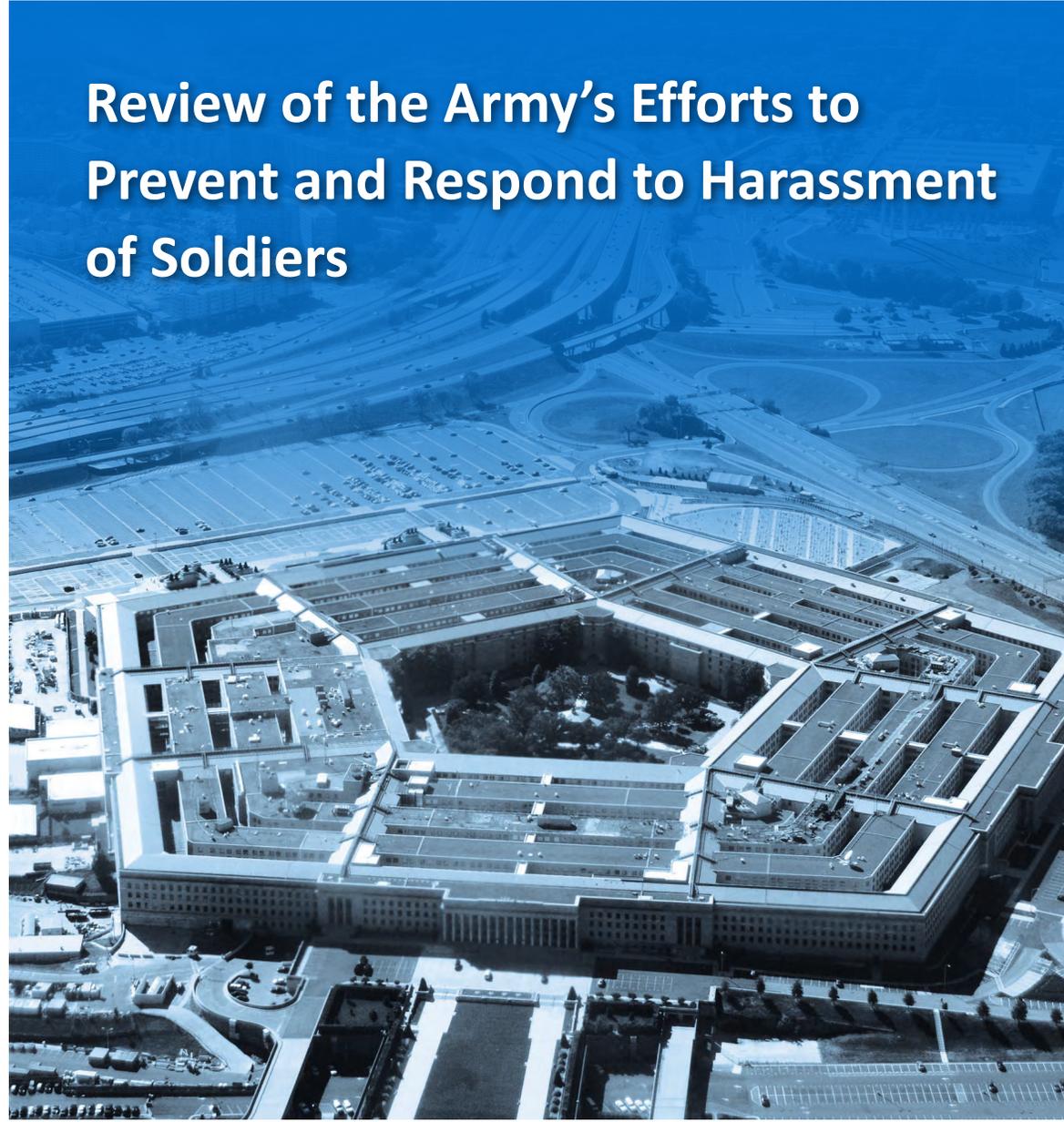




INSPECTOR GENERAL

U.S. Department of Defense

APRIL 17, 2024



Review of the Army's Efforts to Prevent and Respond to Harassment of Soldiers

INDEPENDENCE ★ INTEGRITY ★ EXCELLENCE ★ TRANSPARENCY





OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
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ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA 22350-1500

April 17, 2024

MEMORANDUM FOR UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PERSONNEL AND READINESS
AUDITOR GENERAL, DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

SUBJECT: Review of the Army's Efforts to Prevent and Respond to Harassment of Soldiers
(Report No. DODIG-2024-074)

This final report provides the results of the DoD Office of Inspector General's review. We previously provided copies of the draft report and requested written comments on the recommendations. We considered management's comments on the draft report when preparing the final report. These comments are included in the report.

The Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) agreed to address all the recommendations presented in the report; therefore, we consider the recommendations resolved and open. We will close the recommendations when you provide us documentation showing that all agreed-upon actions to implement the recommendations are completed. Therefore, please provide us within 90 days your response concerning specific actions in process or completed on the recommendations. Send your response to either followup@dodig.mil if unclassified or rfunet@dodig.smil.mil if classified SECRET.

If you have any questions, please contact me at [REDACTED].

FOR THE INSPECTOR GENERAL:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sean McDonald".

Sean McDonald
Acting Deputy Inspector General for Diversity
and Inclusion and Extremism in the Military



Introduction

Executive Summary

We concluded that while Army brigade commanders generally used Defense Organizational Climate Surveys (DEOCS) results and command climate assessments (CCAs) action plans to identify and respond to harassment concerns within their respective units, brigade commanders and their command teams can make improvements to better address and respond to harassment. Additionally, we concluded that sexual harassment complaints from the eight brigades we reviewed do not correlate with the reported risk of sexually harassing behaviors in those brigades' DEOCS responses.

Objective

The objective of this review was to determine the effectiveness of the Army's actions to prevent and respond to harassment of Soldiers, including sexual harassment, bullying, and hazing. We focused this review on how Army brigade commanders used DEOCS and CCAs to identify and respond to harassment within their respective units.¹

Background

Harassment, Bullying, and Hazing

In February 2018, the DoD established a comprehensive DoD-wide military harassment prevention and response program.² DoD policy states that the DoD does not tolerate harassment, and that harassment jeopardizes readiness, weakens trust, and erodes unit cohesion. In addition, the policy defines the different types of harassment.³

¹ See Appendix A for the Scope and Methodology.

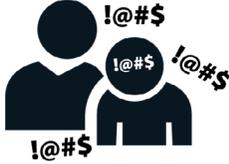
² DoD Instruction 1020.03, "Harassment Prevention and Response in the Armed Forces," February 8, 2018 (Incorporating Change 2, December 20, 2022).

³ When referring to instructions and regulations that apply to all Services, the term "Service members" is used. However, when referring to members serving in the Army, the term "Soldiers" is used.

Figure 1. DoD Definitions of Harassment Types



Sexual harassment: Conduct that involves unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and deliberate or repeated offensive comments or gestures of a sexual nature. Sexual harassment can occur through electronic communications, including social media, other forms of communication, and in person.



Bullying: A form of harassment that includes acts of aggression by Service members or DoD civilian employees, with the intent of harming a Service member either physically or psychologically, without a proper military or other governmental purpose. Bullying may involve the singling out of an individual from his or her coworkers, or unit, for ridicule because he or she is considered different or weak. It often involves an imbalance of power between the aggressor and the victim. Bullying can occur by electronic devices or communications, by social media or in person.



Hazing: a form of harassment that includes conduct through which Service members or DoD employees, without a proper military or other governmental purpose, physically or psychologically injures or creates a risk of physical or psychological injury to Service members for the initiation, admission, or a condition for continued membership in any military or DoD civilian organization. Hazing can be conducted using electronic devices or communications, and by other means including social media, as well as in person.

Source: DoD Instruction 1020.03.

The DoD Priority on Ending Harassment

The 2022 National Defense Strategy, issued by the Secretary of Defense in October 2022, noted that the DoD must pursue several top-level defense priorities to strengthen deterrence, including building a resilient Joint Force to ensure a future military advantage. The strategy states that the DoD must recruit and retain a workforce with the skills, abilities, and diversity needed to creatively solve national security challenges in a complex global environment. The strategy declares that to recruit and retain the most talented Americans, the DoD must change its institutional culture and reform how it does business.

During a June 17, 2021 Senate Appropriations Committee hearing, the Secretary of Defense testified that they would be intensely focused on ending sexual assault and harassment as well as identifying and addressing extremist behavior in the DoD, two of their top priorities. Similarly, the Secretary of the Army noted in a March 2022 policy memorandum that they are committed to providing a workplace that is free from all forms of harassment and where individuals are treated with dignity and respect.

Army Harassment Policies

Army Regulation 600-20 describes the policies and responsibilities for the Army's Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP) program and the harassment prevention and response program, among other Army command programs.⁴ The regulation states that the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1, executes the Army's SHARP program, under the supervision of the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs). Additionally, the regulation states that the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), develops and executes the Army's harassment prevention and response policies.

The Army's SHARP program assists commanders in implementing their responsibilities to prevent and respond to sexual harassment, sexual assault, and associated retaliatory behaviors.⁵ Within the SHARP program, personnel such as Sexual Assault Response Coordinators (SARCs) support the commander with training and tracking requirements, program management, associated retaliatory behavior response, and case coordination. The Army's harassment prevention and response program addresses the other forms of harassment, to include bullying and hazing.⁶

Army Regulation 600-20 requires commanders at all levels to enforce the Army's policy on harassment, to include the SHARP Program, and to foster a command climate free from harassment. Specifically, commanders are responsible for the execution of the Army's harassment prevention and response program and the climate in their organizations. Army commander responsibilities include annual training activities, compliance with required response actions when victims report acts of harassment, victim support, and annual assessments of command climate. Additionally, Army Military Equal Opportunity (MEO) officials provide commanders with information and guidance on the harassment prevention and response program and processes and serve as the command's subject matter expert for policies and procedures relating to that program.⁷

⁴ Army Regulation 600-20, "Army Command Policy," July 24, 2020.

⁵ Retaliatory behaviors are illegal, impermissible, or hostile actions taken by Service member's chain of command, peers, or coworkers as a result of making or being suspected of making a protected communication.

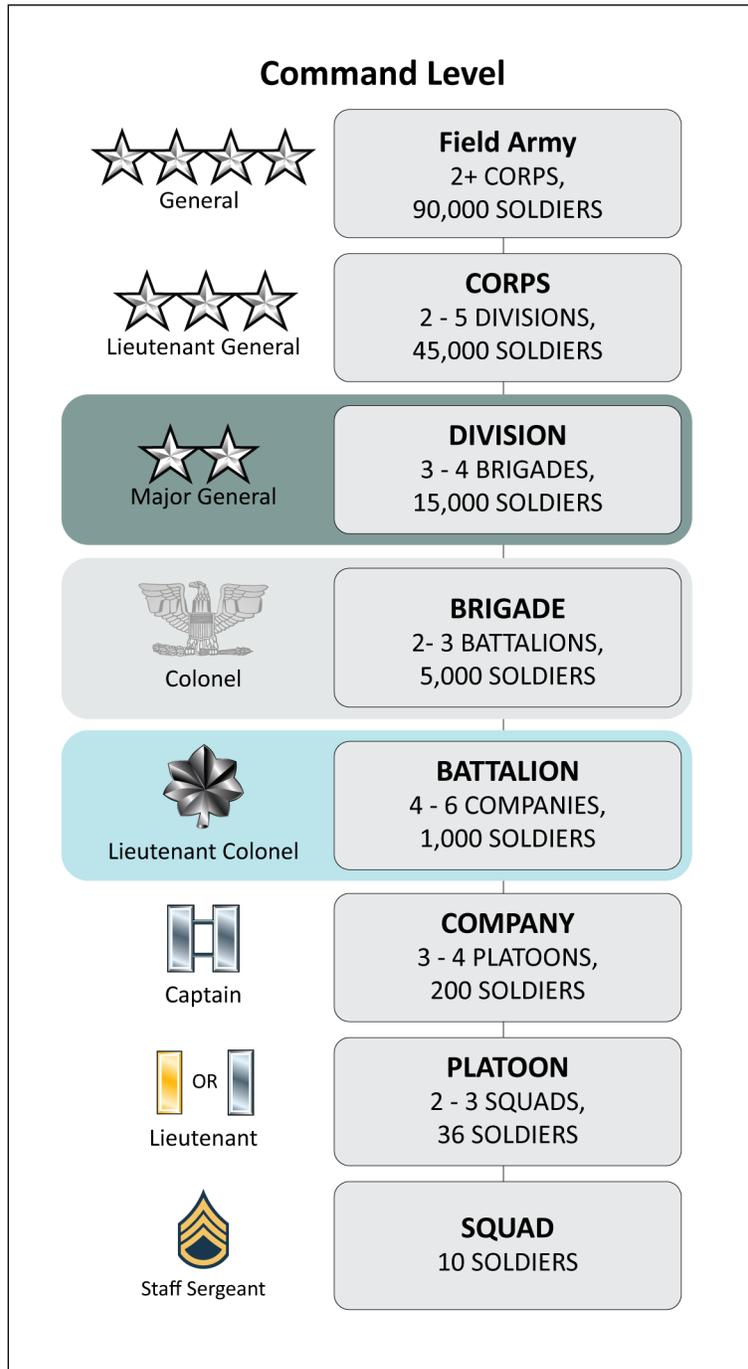
⁶ Other forms of harassment include discriminatory harassment and online misconduct.

⁷ Army MEO professionals include Equal Opportunity Program Managers, Equal Opportunity Sergeants Major, Equal Opportunity advisors and Equal Opportunity specialists.

Army Command Organizational Structure

Army command structure includes a corps, followed by division, and within each division are at least three brigades. Figure 2 shows the Army command structure, and the relationship between battalions, brigades, and divisions.

Figure 2. Army Command Structure



Source: U.S. Army.

During this project, we reviewed eight brigades under two commands located at two installations. Specifically, the brigades fell under the U.S. Army Forces Command (FORSCOM) and the U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC), located at Fort Cavazos, Texas, and Fort Liberty, North Carolina.⁸ A colonel commands a brigade that consists of three or more battalions. See Table 1 for the brigades selected for review and their authorized number of Soldiers. Additionally, see Appendix B for the eight brigades' missions.

Table 1. Brigades Selected for Review

Installation	Command	Brigade	Number of Authorized Soldiers*
Fort Cavazos	FORSCOM	1st Cavalry Division Sustainment Brigade	1,424
		1st Armored Brigade Combat Team (1st Cavalry Division)	3,613
		3rd Security Force Assistance Brigade	816
		166th Aviation Brigade	218
Fort Liberty	FORSCOM	82nd Airborne Division Sustainment Brigade	2,715
		20th Engineer Brigade (Combat/Airborne)	3,126
	USASOC	95th Civil Affairs Brigade	1,594
		4th Psychological Operations Group	1,529

* The authorized number of Soldiers per brigade is shown in Table 1. The team did not use the actual or assigned number of Soldiers since the brigades' formations fluctuate monthly due to permanent change of station movements, transitions, and retirements.

Source: U.S. Army.

Command Climate Assessments and DEOCS

The DoD uses CCAs as a tool to help commanders identify areas of improvement and to take action to address command climate challenges, including harassment. CCAs serve as organizational tools to help commanders build positive organizational climates. CCAs also allow unit commanders to identify areas for improvement and take appropriate actions to address challenges within their organization that may impact organizational effectiveness and mission readiness. CCAs include surveys, interviews, focus groups, observations, and staff visits. As part of the annual CCA, commanders use DEOCS, which is a congressionally mandated unit-level survey that is available to all military commanders. The DoD Office of People Analytics conducts the DEOCS to collect information on unit climate and harassment. The DEOCS is typically administered

⁸ Fort Hood was re-designated as Fort Cavazos in May 2023 and Fort Bragg was re-designated as Fort Liberty in June 2023.

after a change in command and annually thereafter. The results of the survey are reported directly to each commander and their supervisor, providing leaders with unit-specific survey data.

The DEOCS questions are grouped into two categories: protective factors and risk factors. Protective factors are attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors associated with positive outcomes for units. Protective factors are linked to higher retention and lower likelihood of negative outcomes, such as sexual harassment. Risk factors are attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors associated with negative outcomes for units. Risk factors are linked to a higher likelihood of negative outcomes, such as sexual harassment, and a lower likelihood of mission readiness and retention. The DEOCS results inform the commanders on indications of poor climate and areas of concerns where actions may be needed to improve the climate. Specifically, the report ranks the factors within the two categories and alerts commanders of protective factors with low-favorable ratings and any risk factors with high-unfavorable ratings relative to all other units and organizations that completed a DEOCS in the previous year. See Table 2 for the DEOCS question categories for protective factors and risk factors.

Table 2. DEOCS Question Categories

Protective Factors	Risk Factors
Lethal Means Usually Safely Stored	Presence of Sexually Harassing Behaviors
Fair Treatment	Presence of Racially Harassing Behaviors
Work-Life Balance	Presence of Racially Harassing Behaviors
High Morale	Moderate/High Stress
High Connectedness	Frequent Workplace Hostility
Transformational Leadership-Ratings for Senior Officials	Passive Leadership-Ratings for Unit Leader
Transformational Leadership-Ratings for Unit Leader	Passive Leadership-Ratings for Senior Officials
Inclusive Organization	Toxic Leadership-Ratings for Senior Officials
Supportive Leadership-Ratings for All Immediate Supervisors	Toxic Leadership-Ratings for All Immediate Supervisors
Cohesive Organization	Frequent Alcohol Memory Loss
Engaged & Committed	Frequent Binge Drinking

Source: U.S. Army Defense Organizational Climate Survey.

Army Regulation 600-20 provides overall Army guidance and policy on CCAs and DEOCS.⁹ The regulation requires that commanders assess subordinate commanders' organizational climate, also known as a CCA. The regulation describes the requirements of the CCAs by command level, for example, the brigade-level. Specifically, the regulation requires brigade commanders to conduct CCAs within 60 days of assuming command, and annually thereafter. Additionally, the regulation requires that CCAs include:

- DEOCS survey results for brigade staff element and subordinate command teams one level below;
- roll-ups of battalion and company-level survey responses, including a comparison of historical data; and
- the CCA summary and action plan.

The CCA summary includes significant findings, organizational strengths, and areas of concern. The CCA action plan describes the commander's planned corrective actions, based on the results of the CCA and DEOCS. The brigade command briefs the division commander on the CCA action plan and DEOCS results no later than 30 days after receipt of the results. Additionally, the Army regulation explains that the DEOCS is only one component of a CCA, and that commanders will consider the use of other tools to provide depth and clarification on concerns raised in the survey results. For example, those other tools include interviews, focus groups, and trend analyses.

In November 2023, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, G-9 officials explained that the Army is in the process of updating Army Regulation 600-20. The Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, G-9 (Army G-9) advises the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) on Soldier and family readiness support. Army G-9 officials stated that the Army is removing the SHARP element from the current Army Regulation 600-20 on overall command policy to provide greater clarity and emphasis on commanders' responsibilities on the SHARP program. Army G-9 officials explained that there will be three separate Army regulations in the future: one Army regulation will detail Army SHARP policies; one Army regulation will detail Army command policy regulations; and the third Army regulation will discuss MEO policies, including the CCA process. Specifically, the MEO policy will include recently updated DoD Instruction 6400.11 guidance for the CCA process.¹⁰ Army G-9 officials stated that all three new Army regulations should be issued by the end of FY 2024.

⁹ Army Regulation 600-20, "Army Command Policy," July 24, 2020.

¹⁰ DoD Instruction 6400.11, "DoD Integrated Primary Prevention Policy for Prevention Workforce and Leaders," December 20, 2022 (Incorporating Change 1, April 4, 2023).

Brigade Processes for Conducting CCAs and DEOCS

The eight brigades used similar processes to conduct DEOCS and develop CCAs and CCA action plans. Specifically, brigade command team officials explained that the brigade commander and MEO officials typically send the DEOCS out to the brigade for completion, which includes multiple-choice questions and written comment questions.¹¹ Once the results and comments are received, the brigade command teams review the DEOCS results and comments to get an overall picture of the command climate. The command teams explained that they develop initiatives to include in the CCA action plans based on:

- highlighted areas of concern from the DEOCS results and comments;
- MEO and SARC official observations from interactions with the units; and
- brigade commanders' interactions with battalion and company commanders, to identify possible command climate issues.

The brigade command teams stated that the brigade commander finalizes the initiatives in a CCA action plan and then briefs to the Division commander for review and approval. Examples of steps included in CCA action plans to address command climate concerns include sensing sessions, focus groups, and town halls. Additionally, brigade command teams explained that based on DEOCS results and comments, they can also initiate investigations into alleged behaviors and actions. The brigade command teams explained that sensing sessions, focus groups, and town halls are key to communicating to Soldiers that the opinions and concerns expressed in the DEOCS are important and that their voices matter.

Brigade command teams explained that an informal follow up or oversight process to verify CCA action plan initiatives is conducted by continued interactions with unit Soldiers, additional focus groups and sensing sessions, and brigade commanders' interactions and discussions with battalion and company commanders.

¹¹ Brigade command teams include the Brigade Commander, Brigade Executive Officer, the Brigade MEO official, and the Brigade SARC.

Results

Army Brigade Commanders and Command Teams Can Improve Their Ability to Address and Respond to Harassment

Army brigade commanders generally used DEOCS results and CCA action plans to identify and respond to harassment concerns within their respective units, however, brigade commanders and their command teams can make improvements by using available data and information to better address and respond to harassment. Specifically, Army brigade command teams did not:

- perform historical comparisons in any of the 16 DEOCS and CCA action plans we reviewed to identify year-to-year trends with harassment risk factors, which could provide further insight into potential command climate issues and identify systemic issues with harassment within certain units;¹²
- develop actionable initiatives that address issues identified within the DEOCS results with specific periods for follow-up into CCA action plans in 14 of 16 CCA action plans we reviewed, to ensure that command teams are addressing harassment concerns identified by Soldiers within their units;
- include subordinate commanders' DEOCS results in the brigade-level CCA action plans in 7 of 16 DEOCS and associated CCA action plans we reviewed, to ensure that harassment risk factors identified in subordinate commands are addressed; and
- address bullying and hazing in any of the 16 DEOCS we reviewed. By not including these forms of harassment within the DEOCS, command teams have no formalized method for measuring the presence of these activities within their respective units, except for reported complaints.

As a result, Army brigade command teams may not be fully identifying Soldiers' harassment concerns within their units, which can negatively impact mission readiness, recruiting and retention, and the overall health and welfare of Soldiers.

¹² For this review, harassment risk factors included presence of sexually harassing behaviors and presence of sexist behaviors.

Actions Commanders Used to Identify Harassment Within Units

Brigade command teams generally used DEOCS results and CCA action plans to identify and respond to harassment concerns within their respective units. Officials from the eight brigades we reviewed stated that they use sensing sessions, focus groups, town halls, and other face-to-face meetings to help address issues identified by the DEOCS. Brigade command officials stated that the focus groups and sensing sessions provide more insights into DEOCS results. Additionally, brigade command teams stated that they reinforce existing policies on harassment and provide leadership mentoring sessions to help address DEOCS results. For example:

- One brigade conducted four focus groups to discuss the results of a DEOCS. The focus groups encouraged leaders in the brigade to use monthly training as a discussion forum where advisors can talk through controversial topics in a controlled environment. Additionally, the focus groups encouraged leaders to conduct quarterly leadership professional development sessions focused on goal setting, prioritization, and time management.
- Another brigade developed a briefing to identify the top protective and risk factors from the DEOCS, along with the brigade's overall strengths and weaknesses, threats, and a planned way forward to address command climate issues.
- A third brigade developed policy letters addressing trust, teamwork, cohesion, and health. The brigade command teams also hosted quarterly advisory sensing sessions for feedback on harassment and trends within the unit.

However, brigade commanders and their teams can make improvements to their processes by using available data and information to better address and respond to harassment within their units, which can improve command climate culture and improve the environment in which Soldiers serve.

Brigade Command Teams Did Not Perform Historical Comparisons of DEOCS and CCA Action Plans

Army brigade command teams did not perform historical comparisons of DEOCS results and CCA action plans to identify year-to-year trends with harassment risk factors. Specifically, Army brigade command teams did not perform a historical or trend analysis in any of the 16 DEOCS results and associated CCA action plans we reviewed. Army Regulation 600-20 requires Army brigade command teams to compare historical data including trend analysis as needed, to help commanders recognize potential problems with organization effectiveness.

Army brigade command team officials from the eight brigades we reviewed explained that they typically do not compare the previous DEOCS results and CCA action plans to current survey results.¹³ In addition, they have not performed a detailed comparison or trend analysis of their 2021 DEOCS results and associated CCA action plans to either their 2022 or 2023 results. As a result, they have not identified continuing command harassment issues or year-to-year trends with the data.

Brigade command teams did not have readily available access to previous DEOCS results and CCA actions plans. Specifically, five of the eight brigade command team officials stated that they did not have access to previous DEOCS results and CCA action plans when they started their positions with the brigade. Army Regulation 600-20 requires personnel within the brigade command teams to maintain all DEOCS results and CCA action plans for 5 years.¹⁴ Officials from one brigade we reviewed stated that they could not locate any previous CCA action plans addressing those DEOCS results due to a data loss. Additionally, officials from another brigade we reviewed explained that they do not have access to any previous data before December 2022, including both DEOCS results and CCA actions plans, because the previous MEO was relieved of duty in 2022 and did not leave any files behind.

A commander from a brigade we reviewed explained that during command transitions, it is important for the incoming commander to be briefed on, and to understand, the climate of the unit. The commander stated that during the command transition, they discussed with the outgoing commander high-level observations, but added that they did not discuss specific DEOCS results. The DEOCS roles and process guide states that incoming commanders should review the previous DEOCS results and assess progress in implementing action items from the CCA action plan. However, if brigade command teams are not maintaining documentation showing DEOCS results and CCA action plan initiatives, incoming commanders will not be able to assess previous initiatives taken to address DEOCS risk factors and Soldiers concerns. As a result, the incoming commanders will not have the tools needed to understand the command climate and are at risk for duplicating efforts of the previous commander.

Furthermore, within the eight brigades we reviewed, three brigade commanders were relieved between January 1, 2021, and January 1, 2023. Specifically, two of the three commanders were relieved due to a loss of confidence in judgment

¹³ Some Army brigade command team officials did not specify the reason for not conducting a comparison; however, other brigades did not compare because of limited access to previous DEOCS results.

¹⁴ Within the brigade command team, the MEO professional is responsible for maintaining copies of the historical DEOCS and CCA action plans.

and ability to command. While they were relieved based on a loss of confidence and ability to command, specific allegations were investigated relating to the two relieved commanders. One of the investigations found that one of the commanders did engage in bullying and counterproductive leadership. Additionally, the other commander that was relieved was investigated and court-martialed for an allegation of sexually abusive contact. Although these investigations resulted in relieving the commanders, the impact of harassment culture may remain with the brigade. It would be beneficial for new brigade commanders and brigade command teams to review and analyze past DEOCS and CCA action plans to determine if their units have a history of elevated risk of harassment. This may encourage new commanders to be more vigilant in their training and prevention efforts, and be faster to respond to problems as they emerge.

Performing a trend analysis and historical comparison can provide brigade command teams further insight into potential command climate issues, and could help identify if CCA action plan initiatives are addressing command climate issues with harassment. Additionally, trend analysis and historical comparisons of survey results can help identify systemic issues with harassment within certain units and can help during brigade commander transitions. By not having access to the necessary historical data, or performing trend analysis or historical comparisons, brigade command teams are missing valuable insights into DEOCS results and CCA action plans and may be missing additional chances to identify and address harassment concerns within their units. Therefore, the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), in coordination with the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, G-9, should develop and implement a plan, including but not limited to updating guidance, to ensure compliance with the requirement that brigade commanders perform historical comparisons of DEOCS results and CCA action plans, to identify year-to-year trends with harassment risk factors. Additionally, the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), in coordination with the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, G-9, should develop and implement a plan, including but not limited to updating guidance, to ensure compliance with the requirement that MEO officials maintain all CCAs and CCA action plans for five years, and as a best practice, require those documents be maintained, in accordance with Federal and DoD records management requirements, in a location accessible to brigade command teams.

Brigade Command Teams Did Not Consistently Include Actionable Initiatives in CCA Action Plans

Army brigade command teams did not always develop CCA action plans with actionable initiatives to address DEOCS concerns with specific periods for follow up. DoD policy defines action plans as documents describing actions, timelines,

and responsibilities for responding to results of DEOCS.¹⁵ Additionally, the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI) lists training materials and aids describing best practices for developing CCA action plans.¹⁶ DEOMI training material states that CCA action plans should identify all steps leadership plans to take, clearly classify the specific goal for each step, and identify the specific metrics that will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of each action. After the plans are developed, leaders are encouraged to publicize the plan to keep Soldiers informed and help them understand exactly what steps the organization will take to improve climate.

DEOMI training materials on developing CCA action plans also states that CCA action plans should articulate the desired initiatives, establish a timeline for implementation, and clearly identify what resources are needed to reach each goal. Additionally, the training material states that the CCA action plan should identify each action and describe the specific tasks that need to be completed. Finally, once implementation of the CCA action plan occurs, the commander should develop a process to evaluate and monitor the implementation of the plan.

We concluded that 14 of 16 CCA action plans we reviewed did not include actionable initiatives with established timelines for implementation or specific periods to follow up on those actions. For example,

- One CCA action plan only contained overall statements related to actions that commanders planned on taking and did not contain any actionable, specific initiatives tied to DEOCS concerns, with specific periods for follow up. Specifically, the CCA action plan only contained a statement, “Instill a winning mentality, and sense of pride across the formation.”
- Another CCA action plan discussed the top three areas of concerns and areas of strengths in the brigade as a result of a DEOCS; however, the plan did not include initiatives tied to specific objectives and goals, specific milestones for completion, and specific periods for follow up.
- A third CCA action plan contained DEOCS climate risk factors, percentages, and summaries of concern, but did not include initiatives tied to specific objectives and goals, specific milestones for completion, and specific periods for follow up.

By developing CCA action plans with actionable initiatives to address DEOCS concerns with established timelines for implementation, Army brigade commanders will ensure that they are appropriately addressing command climate issues

¹⁵ DoD Instruction 6400.11, “DoD Integrated Primary Prevention Policy for Prevention Workforce and Leaders,” December 20, 2022 (Incorporating Change 1, April 4, 2023).

¹⁶ DEOMI is responsible for training and certifying MEO officials. Specifically, DEOMI’s MEO programs train personnel charged with preventing, intervening, and reporting instances of harassment and prohibited discrimination.

identified by Soldiers within their units, including sexual harassment, bullying, and hazing. Additionally, following up with specific initiatives within stated milestones helps the brigade command team understand if initiatives are truly addressing Soldiers' concerns. Therefore, the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), in coordination with the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, G-9, should develop and implement a plan to ensure that CCA action plans include initiatives tied to specific objectives, goals, and milestones for completion; and list the individuals responsible for implementing those initiatives; and outline a follow-up plan to determine whether those initiatives are addressing Soldier reported issues.

Brigade Command Teams Did Not Consistently Include Subordinate Commanders' DEOCS Results in Brigade Command Climate Assessments

Army brigade command teams did not always include subordinate commanders' DEOCS results in the brigade-level CCAs. Army Regulation 600-20 requires that brigade command climate assessments include a roll-up of subordinate organizations' survey responses. The regulation states that the roll-up of data provides the subordinate units' survey results without having to re-administer duplicate surveys to subordinate units. Specifically, 7 of 16 DEOCS and associated CCA action plans we reviewed did not include subordinate commanders' results. For example, one brigade commander sent a 2021 DEOCS to the entire brigade, approximately 2,600 Soldiers. However, after a change in command, the new brigade commander sent a 2023 DEOCS to only 181 Soldiers. Brigade command team officials stated that they only sent the survey to targeted staff to include the brigade staff, company commanders, and battalion commanders during the 2023 DEOCS because the brigade commander believed that they would receive more feedback from that population on command culture. However, by not including subordinate DEOCS results in the brigade commanders' CCAs, brigade commanders may not be aware of harassment risk factors identified by Soldiers throughout the subordinate commands. Additionally, because brigade commanders may not be aware of harassment risk factors, brigade command teams may not be developing initiatives in CCA action plans to address those concerns. Therefore, the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), in coordination with the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, G-9, should develop and implement a plan, including but not limited to updating guidance, to ensure compliance with the requirement that brigade commanders include DEOCS response results from company and battalion Soldiers in their command climate assessments and CCA action plans.

Brigade DEOCS Did Not Include Questions to Assess Bullying and Hazing

Army brigade command teams did not include questions to assess bullying and hazing within their respective DEOCS surveys. Instead, Army brigade command teams have been addressing bullying and hazing through focus groups and other discussions with Soldiers and subordinate commanders. Command team officials from the eight brigades we reviewed explained each DEOCS contain custom multiple-choice questions, selected by the brigade command team, known as the custom question bank. That custom question bank includes 5 questions related to bullying and hazing out of a total of 421 questions.¹⁷ However, none of the 16 DEOCS surveys we reviewed included the questions designed to assess bullying and hazing. Brigade command team officials stated that they have not selected the custom DEOCS questions for bullying and hazing for any of the 16 DEOCS surveys we reviewed. For example, a brigade command team official stated that the brigade commanders typically select custom questions related to operational tempo, including whether resources are available to accomplish the unit's mission.¹⁸

Instead of including a bullying and hazing question on the DEOCS, brigade command team officials stated that brigade, battalion, and company leadership engages subordinate commands level leaders and Soldiers to help develop and maintain cohesive teams. Brigade command team officials stated that they have engagement opportunities with the Soldiers, including counseling, physical training, unannounced visits with the Soldiers, and weekly training meetings, and that these initiatives help address any possible bullying and hazing concerns within the brigade units.

Army Regulation 600-20 states that bullying and hazing are prohibited behaviors and are included in the Army's harassment prevention and response program. The Army's harassment prevention and response program requires CCA's, which includes both the administration of a DEOCS and CCA action plans to address climate risk factors. By not including bullying and hazing questions in the DEOCS, brigade commanders have no formalized method for measuring the presence of each activity within their respective units, except for reported complaints. Additionally, by not including bullying and hazing questions on the DEOCS, brigade commanders may not be receiving valuable and confidential insight about the Soldiers' perceptions of these forms of harassment. Furthermore, brigade commanders are missing the opportunity to address organizational concerns

¹⁷ Of the 421 total custom questions available, the brigade command teams can select up to 10 closed-ended questions and 5 open-ended questions.

¹⁸ The term "operating tempo" means the rate at which units of the armed forces are involved in all military activities, including contingency operations, exercises, and training deployments.

warranting actions through CCA action plans. Therefore, the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), in coordination with the DoD Office of People Analytics, should take actions sufficient to ensure that bullying and hazing questions are included on all DEOCS.

Harassment Concerns May Effect Soldiers' Health and Mission Readiness

Army brigade command teams may not be fully addressing Soldiers' harassment concerns within their units, which can affect mission readiness, recruiting and retention, and the Soldiers' overall health and welfare. According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, research shows that experiencing military sexual trauma, including sexual harassment, is a significant risk factor for suicidal ideation, suicide attempt, and completed suicide.

According to DoD Instruction 1020.03, "Harassment Prevention and Response in the Army Forces," December 20, 2022, sexual harassment, bullying, and hazing can contribute to a hostile work environment and jeopardizes mission readiness and accomplishment, weakens trust within the ranks, and erodes unit cohesion. Harassment can lower morale of the DoD and Service members and can lower public opinion of the DoD and Services, which may contribute to the ongoing recruiting and retention challenges for the Services.

Specifically, in a 2021 report, the RAND Corporation found that sexual assault and harassment were uniquely associated with separation from the Military.¹⁹ The DoD contracted with the RAND Corporation to provide an independent evaluation of sexual assault, sexual harassment, and gender discrimination across the Services, and the subsequent effect on Service members' decisions to separate from the military. Specifically, the RAND Corporation found that Service members whose survey responses indicated that they were sexually harassed were 1.70 times more likely to leave the Service than those members who were not harassed. The observation highlights that sexual harassment is a serious threat to long-term mission readiness, and research has found that experiences with sexual harassment may undermine Service members' confidence that the military can provide a safe and supportive workplace. Additionally, during a September 2022 Senate subcommittee hearing on military recruiting and retention efforts, the Army reported that it had met only 70 percent of its FY 2022 active duty recruiting

¹⁹ RAND Report, "Effects of Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment on Separation from the U.S. Military." The DoD contracted with the RAND Corporation to provide an independent evaluation of sexual assault, sexual harassment, and gender discrimination across the Services.

goals and that is on track to miss its recruiting target by up to 30,000 Soldiers.²⁰ Further, in an October 2023 briefing, the Secretary of the Army stated that the Army missed its fiscal year 2023 recruiting goals by approximately 10,000 Soldiers.

DEOMI issued a report in December 2019 on hazing in the military, which concluded that hazing in the military remains a challenge in both human relations and policy.²¹ Additionally, DEOMI found that bullying behaviors, like hazing, have been correlated with absenteeism, sickness, stress, and employee turnover. According to the study, bullying is costly in time, causes lost productivity and health risks, and reduces mission readiness. Additionally, recommendations from the DoD Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military showed that responding to and supporting Service members who are the victims of demeaning language, sexual harassment, and sexual assault is a command responsibility.²² The DoD Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military report also stated that commanders must be held accountable for their unit climates and for their actions, or inaction, to protect their people. By making improvements in the process of analyzing brigade command climate, brigade commanders will ensure that they are using available data and better addressing and responding to harassment, including sexual harassment, bullying, and hazing within their respective units. Additionally, by better addressing harassment within their units, Brigade Commanders can improve the health and welfare of Soldiers, improve mission readiness, and improve recruiting and retention.

Possible Barriers in Sexual Harassment Reporting

We reviewed the eight brigades' sexual harassment complaints report for the past 2 years and compared them to the DEOCS sexual harassment results during the same period. The number of sexual harassment complaints from the eight brigades we reviewed do not correlate with the reported risk of sexually harassing behaviors in those brigades' DEOCS responses. As a result, the Army may be missing opportunities to identify possible barriers to the sexual harassment reporting process.

²⁰ "U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Personnel Committee on Armed Services Hearing to Receive Testimony on the Status of Military Recruiting and Retention Efforts Across the Department of Defense," September 21, 2022.

²¹ DEOMI Technical Report 01-14, "Hazing: A Military Study," December 2019.

²² DoD Independent Review Commission Report, "Hard Truths and the Duty to Change: Recommendations from the Independent Review Committee on Sexual Assault in the Military," June 2021.

Reporting a Complaint and Use of DEOCS to Measure Sexually Harassing Behavior

Soldiers have multiple options for making a complaint related to sexual harassment, including to their chain of command, to the Service's Inspector General, to a local Military Equal Opportunity (MEO) office, or to staff within their unit assigned to receive MEO complaints. Army Regulation 600-20 provides requirements for the Army harassment prevention and response program and states that when harassment occurs, victims may file complaints anonymously, informally, or formally. The command MEO program will process harassment complaints by tracking complaint information using a database to include, but not limited to, the reported date, incident date, harassment type, and location.

In addition to assessing the data on reported complaints, the DEOCS provides information on Soldiers' perceptions about the climate, including the risk of sexually harassing behaviors. Within the DEOCS questions, the risk of sexually harassing behavior is measured based on the Soldiers' self-reporting in the survey of unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and offensive comments and gestures of a sexual nature that occurred over the past three months. If participants selected experiencing any behavior rarely, sometimes, or often, the DEOCS response is included in the percent reporting a risk of behavior. If participants selected never experiencing behaviors, they are included in the percent reporting "no risk of behavior."

Inconsistency Between DEOCS Results and Sexual Harassment Complaints

We reviewed the total number of sexual harassment complaints from the eight brigades and the reported risk of sexually harassing behaviors in those brigades' DEOCS responses, and found that the behavior risk did not correlate with the number of complaints.²³ Specifically, from January 1, 2021, through January 1, 2023, 4,674 responses (17 percent) of the 27,223 total responses to the DEOCS sexually harassing behavior questions show a risk of sexually harassing behavior.²⁴ However, Soldiers in those brigades only reported 73 sexual harassment complaints during the same period. Table 3 shows the breakout of the sexually harassing behaviors DEOCS responses, administered between

²³ Army Regulation 600-20 states that attempts should be made to resolve harassment concerns at the lowest possible level within an organization. If low-level resolution fails, the situation escalates, or the situation is too malicious to resolve at a low level, Soldiers may report a complaint.

²⁴ For questions related to each factor, see Appendix C. The factors reviewed included multiple questions for Soldiers to indicate personal experiences with sexual harassment. As such, each member could answer multiple questions within each of the factors. The DEOCS questions are grouped into two categories: protective factors and risk factors. Sexual harassment is a risk factor and is not based on a response rate.

January 1, 2021, and January 1, 2023, for all 8 brigades. Table 4 shows the sexual harassment complaints reported between January 1, 2021, and January 1, 2023 for the 8 brigades reviewed.

Table 3. Risk of Sexual Harassment DEOCS Questions between January 1, 2021, and January 1, 2023

No Risk of Sexual Harassment	Risk of Sexual Harassment			Total Sexual Harassment DEOCS Responses
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	
22,549 (83%)	2,512 (9%)	1,367 (5%)	795 (3%)	27,223

Source: U.S. Army.

Table 4. Sexual Harassment Complaints, Between January 1, 2021, and January 1, 2023, per Fiscal Year

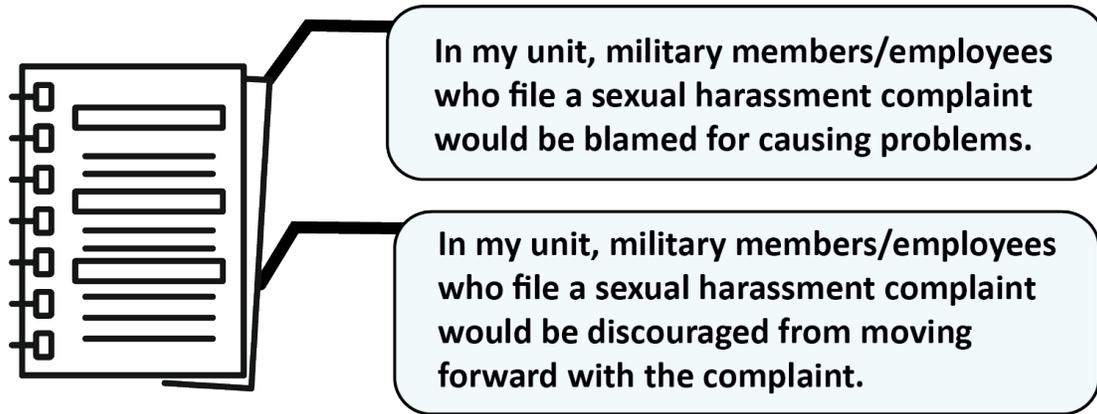
Type of Complaints	Number of Complaints Reported in FY 2021	Number of Complaints Reported in FY 2022	Number of Complaints Reported in FY 2023	Total Number of Complaints
Sexual Harassment Complaints Reported	34	34	5	73

Source: U.S. Army.

When reviewing the brigades' survey results compared to the number of complaints, we identified inconsistencies between the DEOCS results and complaints. For example, a July 2021 through November 2021 DEOCS, 2,145 responses (24 percent) of 9,060 total respondents noted that they experienced sexually harassing behaviors. However, that brigade received only two complaints during FY 2021. In a DEOCS conducted by another brigade in June 2022 through August 2022, 1,349 responses (22 percent) of 6,214 respondents noted that they experienced sexually harassing behaviors. However, that brigade received only 3 sexual harassment complaints during the corresponding fiscal year. For these two examples, the DEOCS noted over 3,400 responses for Soldiers that experienced sexually harassing behaviors and only five reported complaints.

Within the DEOCS administered, the surveys contain custom multiple-choice questions selected by the brigade command team. We identified two questions related to filing a sexual harassment complaint:

Figure 3. DEOCS Sexual Harassment Complaint Questions



Source: U.S. Army Defense Organizational Climate Survey.

Within the eight brigades' DEOCS administered between January 1, 2021, through January 1, 2023, 644 responses (9 percent) of the 4,466 total responses agreed that they would be discouraged from moving forward with the complaint or would be blamed for causing problems for filing a sexual harassment complaint. In addition, 2,233 (30 percent) selected that they neither agreed nor disagreed with the two questions. See Appendix D for the specific breakout of responses to each question.

The disparity in the DEOCS results, the lack of sexual harassment complaints, and the responses to the custom questions related to filing sexual harassment complaints suggests that Soldiers may be reluctant to file a complaint outside the anonymous DEOCS survey. Similarly, in 2021, the Office of People Analytics concluded that Service members continue to face retaliation related to reporting, and whether the retaliatory behaviors Service members experience are perceived or actual, they reflect a deep and abiding fear of the personal and professional consequences of reporting for victims of sexual harassment and sexual assault. The Office of People Analytics also found that, for the Army, 45 percent of women and 44 percent of men who made a sexual harassment complaint were encouraged to drop the issue. The report noted that unwanted sexual contact and sexual harassment remain serious causes for concern within the DoD.²⁵

²⁵ Office of People Analytics Report No. 2022-182, "2021 Workplace and Gender Relations Survey of Military Members," September 2022.

In May 2022, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) also concluded that the Army did not systematically evaluate the SHARP program for effectiveness. The report notes that Army SHARP program office officials identified several possible barriers to reporting sexual harassment and assault through feedback from SHARP personnel about their experiences with victims.²⁶ These barriers included fear of retaliation, concerns about confidentiality, fear of not being believed, belief that the incident is not important enough to report, and belief that the offender will not be held accountable. GAO made a recommendation to the Secretary of the Army to ensure that the Director of the Army SHARP program conduct a systemic assessment to identify barriers to sexual harassment and assault reporting and develop a plan to reduce any barriers.

In November 2023, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, G-9 officials stated that Army officials contracted with the RAND Corporation to conduct an assessment to help identify barriers to sexual harassment and sexual assault reporting. Army G-9 officials stated that the assessment is ongoing and will use focus groups to understand the Soldiers' experiences of sexual harassment, including the use of barriers, to use of existing prevention services and sexual harassment reporting. According to Army G-9 officials, the RAND findings will help the Army develop more effective prevention efforts and enable senior Army leaders make informed decisions related to sexual harassment prevention policies and procedures. Army G-9 officials stated that the RAND project will have a final report available to the public in the fall or winter of 2024. They also stated that a mitigation plan will then be developed and published by December 2024 to address the GAO recommendation and RAND assessment findings.

If the Army does not review and analyze inconsistencies between the DEOCS results on sexually harassing behaviors and the number of sexual harassment complaints, then it may miss opportunities to identify possible barriers to reporting, including confusion with the sexual harassment reporting process. The barriers could lead to Soldiers under-reporting sexual harassment complaints, based on a fear of reporting or retaliation. Therefore, the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), in coordination with the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, G-9 (Army G-9), should analyze the differences between the DEOCS results for sexually harassing behaviors and the corresponding number of sexual harassment complaints to identify whether any barriers to Soldiers reporting sexual harassment complaints are present, including confusion with the sexual harassment reporting process. If barriers exist, then the Assistant Secretary, in coordination with the Army G-9, should develop and implement a plan

²⁶ GAO-22-104673, "Sexual Harassment and Assault: The Army Should Take Steps to Enhance Program Oversight, Evaluate Effectiveness, and Identify Reporting Barriers," May 2022.

to address the causes of those barriers. In addition, the Assistant Secretary, in coordination with the Army G-9, should compare the results of their analysis to the Director of the Army SHARP Program's barrier assessment recommended by GAO to determine if systemic issues with the sexual harassment complaint process are present. If systemic issues exist, then the Assistant Secretary, in coordination with the Army G-9, should develop and implement a plan to address the systemic issues.

Recommendations, Management Comments, and Our Response

Recommendation 1

We recommend that the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), in coordination with the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, G-9, develop and implement a plan, including but not limited to updating guidance, to ensure compliance with the requirement that:

- a. Brigade commanders perform historical comparisons of Defense Organizational Climate Survey results and command climate assessment action plans, to identify year-to-year trends with harassment risk factors.**

Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) Comments

The Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) agreed with the recommendation, stating that the Army is finalizing staffing for a new MEO Army Regulation, which is anticipated for publication in FY 2024. The Assistant Secretary stated that the new MEO Army Regulation includes guidance to align with DoD Instruction 1020.03, DoD Instruction 1350.02, and DoD Instruction 6400.11, and identifies changes required for CCAs.²⁷ The Assistant Secretary also stated that the new regulation will include guidance previously contained in Army Regulation 600-20, including the requirement for commanders to conduct a historical comparison of DEOCS data and the use of trend analysis as an assessment tool to help commanders provide depth and clarification of DEOCS concerns. Additionally, the Assistant Secretary stated that officials from the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, G-9, created an Army comprehensive integrated primary prevention plan guide to use as a tool for MEO and Integrated Prevention Advisor Group officials to interpret DEOCS results and CCAs to identify year-to-year trends assessing risk and protective factors.

²⁷ DoD Instruction 1020.03, "Harassment Prevention and Response in the Armed Forces," December 2022. DoD Instruction 1350.02, "DoD Military Equal Opportunity Program," December 2022. DoD Instruction 6400.11, "DoD Integrated Primary Prevention Policy for Prevention Workforce Leaders," December 20, 2022 (Incorporating Change 1, April 4, 2023).

The Assistant Secretary stated that the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, G-9, plans to publish this guide in the Integrated Prevention Army Regulation, which is in staffing as of March 2024.²⁸ Finally, to assist with historical comparisons of DEOCS data, the Assistant Secretary stated that they will be hiring data scientists to provide support across the Army.

Our Response

Comments from the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) addressed the specifics of the recommendation; therefore, the recommendation is resolved but open. We will close this recommendation when we verify that the new MEO Army Regulation has been developed and implemented, and that it includes requirements that commanders perform historical comparisons of DEOCS and command climate assessments. Additionally, we will close the recommendation when we verify that the new Integrated Prevention Army Regulation has been developed and implemented, and that it includes the comprehensive integrated primary prevention plan guide.

- b. Brigade commanders include Defense Organizational Climate Survey response results from company and battalion Soldiers in their command climate assessments and command climate assessment action plans.**

Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) Comments

The Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) agreed with the recommendation, stating that the new MEO Army Regulation will include a requirement for DEOCS results from company and battalion Soldiers be included in the brigade CCAs and CCA action plans. The Assistant Secretary stated that the new MEO Army Regulation is anticipated for publication in FY 2024.

Our Response

Comments from the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) addressed the specifics of the recommendation; therefore, the recommendation is resolved but open. We will close this recommendation when we verify that the new MEO Army Regulation has been developed and implemented, and that it includes requirements that DEOCS results from company and battalion Soldiers be included in the brigade CCAs and CCA action plans.

²⁸ According to officials from the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, G-9, the Integration Prevention Regulation will outline the Army's approach to integrated primary prevention, along with the roles, responsibilities, and competencies of the integrated prevention workforce, and competencies for leaders overseeing prevention efforts.

- c. **Military Equal Opportunity officials maintain all command climate assessments and command climate assessment action plans for 5 years, and as a best practice, require those documents be maintained in accordance with Federal and DoD records management requirements, in a location accessible to brigade command teams.**

Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) Comments

The Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) agreed with the recommendation, stating that the Army is developing an automated database that will help with the challenge of proper data and documentation storage, as well as providing a tool to perform relevant analytics. The Assistant Secretary stated that the intent is to provide an effective data capability that will allow MEO professionals to analyze, report, and visualize data and identify harassment within an organization, and will allow MEO professionals to store data in compliance with Privacy Act laws for up to 5 years. Additionally, the Assistant Secretary stated that the new MEO Army Regulation will include a requirement for CCAs and CCA action plans to be stored for 5 years in accordance with Federal and DoD records management requirements.

Our Response

Comments from the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) addressed the specifics of the recommendation; therefore, the recommendation is resolved but open. We will close this recommendation when we verify that the Army has developed and implemented a database to maintain CCA and CCA action plans. Additionally, we will close the recommendation when we verify that the new Army Regulation has been developed and implemented, and that it includes a requirement that CCAs and CCA action plans to be stored for 5 years in accordance with Federal and DoD records management requirements.

Recommendation 2

We recommend that the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), in coordination with the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, G-9, develop and implement a plan to ensure that command climate assessment action plans include initiatives tied to specific objectives, goals, and milestones for completion; and list the individuals responsible for implementing those initiatives; and outline a follow up plan to determine whether those initiatives are addressing Soldier reported issues.

Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) Comments

The Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) agreed with the recommendation, stating that the Army will add language to the MEO Army Regulation on the requirements for an action plan, including an action plan template, which will outline objectives, goals, milestones, and required resources of the plan. The Assistant Secretary stated that action plans will be added to the staff assistance visit checklist and evaluated during staff assistance visits, which the Army MEO office conducts quarterly at the Army commands, Army Service Component commands, and direct reporting unit levels.²⁹

Our Response

Comments from the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) addressed the specifics of the recommendation; therefore, the recommendation is resolved but open. We will close this recommendation when we verify that the MEO Army Regulation has been developed and implemented, and that it includes the action plan language, template, and action plan evaluation.

Recommendation 3

We recommend that the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), in coordination with the DoD Office of People Analytics, take actions sufficient to ensure that bullying and hazing questions are included on all Defense Organizational Climate Surveys.

Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) Comments

The Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) agreed with the recommendation, stating that the Army will explore adding new items on hazing and bullying to the DEOCS, as well as using existing items from the DEOCS database. The Assistant Secretary stated that the new items will need to clear the Office of Management and Budget's survey item review process, resulting in a likelihood that any new items will not be available until the 2025 DEOCS.

²⁹ Staff assistance visits are visits by members of a particular staff section, designed to assist, teach, and train subordinate staff sections on how to meet standards required to operate effectively within a particular functional area. According to Army Regulation 600-20, staff assistance visits provide Army commanders an overall assessment of command climate and are conducted on an annual basis at every command and organizational level within the Army.

Our Response

Comments from the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) addressed the specifics of the recommendation; therefore, the recommendation is resolved but open. We will close this recommendation when we verify that the Army has added the bullying and hazing questions to the DEOCS.

Recommendation 4

We recommend that the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), in coordination with the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, G-9, analyze the differences in sexual harassment complaints and Defense Organizational Climate Survey results to:

- a. Determine whether any barriers to Soldiers reporting sexual harassment complaints exist or confusion is present among Soldiers with reporting harassment complaints. If barriers exist, then the Assistant Secretary, in coordination with the Army G-9, should develop and implement a plan to address the causes of those barriers.**
- b. Compare the results of their analysis to the Director of the Army Sexual Harassment/Assault Response Program's barrier assessment recommended by the Government Accountability Office to determine if systemic issues with the sexual harassment complaint process are present. If systemic issues exist, then the Assistant Secretary, in coordination with the Army G-9, should develop and implement a plan to address the systemic issues.**

Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) Comments

The Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) agreed with the recommendations, stating that a RAND Corporation study, "Understanding Soldiers' Experiences with Sexual Harassment and Gender Discrimination," was initiated to address similar recommendations made by GAO. The Assistant Secretary stated that after the RAND Corporation completes the study, Army SHARP program officials will review the results to identify possible barriers to sexual harassment reporting and develop mitigation plans. The Assistant Secretary stated that the study's findings will help the Army develop more effective prevention efforts for sexual harassment and enable Army senior leaders to make informed decisions about sexual harassment and gender discrimination prevention resources, policies, programs, and practices. The Assistant Secretary stated that Army SHARP officials will compare the results of the RAND Corporation study to the Army SHARP program's barrier assessment recommended by GAO to

determine if systemic issues with the sexual harassment compliant process are present. The Assistant Secretary stated that if systemic issues exist, then Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) officials, in coordination with Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, G-9 officials will develop and implement a plan to address those issues.

Our Response

Comments from the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) addressed the specifics of the recommendation; therefore, the recommendation is resolved but open. We will close this recommendation when we verify that the Army has reviewed the results of the RAND Corporation study, "Understanding Soldiers' Experiences with Sexual Harassment and Gender Discrimination," to identify possible barriers to sexual harassment reporting and developed any mitigation plans to address possible barriers. Additionally, we will close this recommendation when we verify that the Army compared the results of the RAND Corporation study to the Army SHARP program's barrier assessment recommended by GAO to determine if systemic issues with the sexual harassment compliant process are present, and if systemic issues were identified, verify that the Army developed and implemented a plan to address those issues.

Summary of Recommendations Status

Management	Recommendations Unresolved	Recommendations Resolved	Recommendations Closed
Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), in coordination with the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, G-9		1.a, 1.b, 1.c, 2, 4.a, 4.b	None
Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), in coordination with the DoD Office of People Analytics		3	None

Source: DoD OIG.

Note: The following categories are used to describe agency management’s comments to individual recommendations.

- **Unresolved** – Management has not agreed to implement the recommendation or has not proposed actions that will address the recommendation.
- **Resolved** – Management agreed to implement the recommendation or has proposed actions that will address the underlying finding that generated the recommendation.
- **Closed** – The DoD OIG verified that the agreed upon corrective actions were implemented.

Appendix A

Scope and Methodology

We reviewed the Army's actions to prevent and respond to harassment of Soldiers, including sexual harassment, bullying, and hazing. Our scope did not include the National Guard or Reserve. The team reviewed eight brigades at two Army installations:

- **Installation Selection:** To assess and select specific Army installations for review, we reviewed data collected and managed by the Office of Force Resiliency, under the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. The data showed DEOCS risk ratings of installations and specific Army units. Fort Cavazos and Fort Liberty were the two Army installations with the highest DEOCS responses rates and significantly high-risk ratings. Specifically, we reviewed the installations' risk ratings of racially harassing behaviors, sexist behaviors, and sexually harassing behaviors within the system as of June 2023.
- **Brigade Selection:** To assess and select specific Army brigades for review, we selected a non-statistical sample of high-risk and low-risk brigades, based on the Office of Force Resiliency data showing DEOCS responses and risk ratings for specific Army brigades. Specifically, once we selected the specific Army installations, the team reviewed Fort Cavazos and Fort Liberty brigades' risk ratings of racially harassing behaviors, sexist behaviors, and sexually harassing behaviors within the system as of June 2023. We selected eight brigades for review, to include four brigades with a higher risk rating and four brigades with a lower risk rating.

To assess the actions taken by Army brigade commanders as a result of the DEOCS and CCAs, we obtained, compared, and analyzed the following for the eight selected brigades:

- Command Climate Assessments conducted between January 1, 2021, and January 1, 2023, including survey information contained in the assessment.
- Assessments, survey results, and CCA action plans to determine how commanders are using the results of climate assessments to identify and address harassment concerns in their units.
- How Department of Army officials review the results of command climate assessments and reported harassment data from the selected brigades.

To assess trends within the DEOCS data, the team identified the total number of responses that were favorable and unfavorable for each of the three different risks factors to include racially harassing behaviors, sexist behaviors, and sexually harassing behaviors. Within each risk factor, we calculated and compared the percentages of favorable and unfavorable responses to the total responses.

To assess if the number of reported sexual harassment complaints correlated with the reported risk of sexually harassing behaviors in those brigades' DEOCS responses and determine if reporting barriers were present, we reviewed the total number of formal, informal, and anonymous sexual harassment complaints tracked by the brigades. We compared those complaints to the unfavorable responses to the set of DEOCS questions in the sexually harassing behaviors factor. Specifically, the brigades provided sexual harassment case reports, which allowed the team to determine how many complaints, were report per fiscal year.

In addition to the DEOCS and complaint data, the team analyzed the custom multiple-choice questions related to our objective. Specifically, the two questions related to sexual harassment complaints, included:

- In my unit, military members/employees who file a sexual harassment complaint would be blamed for causing problems.
- In my unit, military members/employees who file a sexual harassment complaint would be discouraged from moving forward with the complaint.

We analyzed how many Soldiers responded to the custom questions 1.) Strongly Disagree/Disagreed, 2.) Neither Agree Nor Disagree, or 3.) Agree/Strongly Agree. Additionally, we reviewed criteria and guidance from the DoD and the Army.

We interviewed personnel from the following offices and commands:

- Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness
- Office of People Analytics
- Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, G-9 (Installations)
- Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs)
- U.S. Army Forces Command
- U.S. Army Special Operations Command
- 1st Cavalry Division Sustainment Brigade
- 3rd Security Force Assistance Brigade
- 166th Aviation Brigade
- 1st Armored Brigade Combat Team (1st Cavalry Division)
- 82nd Airborne Sustainment Brigade
- 20th Engineer Brigade

- 95th Civil Affairs Brigade
- 4th Psychological Group

We conducted this review with integrity, objectivity, and independence, as required by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency's, "Quality Standards for Federal Offices of Inspector General," August 2012.

Appendix B

Mission of Army Brigades Reviewed

The scope of our review included two commands, FORSCOM and USASOC, located at Fort Cavazos, Texas, and Fort Liberty, North Carolina. FORSCOM trains and prepares a combat ready, globally responsive Total Force to build and sustain readiness to meet combatant command requirements. USASOC staffs, trains, equips, educates, organizes, sustains, and supports forces to conduct special operations across the full range of military operations and spectrum of conflict in support of joint force commanders and interagency partners, to meet theater and national objectives. Within the two commands, we assessed eight brigades' actions to prevent and respond to harassment of Soldiers. Table 5 shows each brigade's mission, associated command and installation, and number of authorized Soldiers.

Table 5. Reviewed Brigades' Installation, Command, Mission, and Authorized Soldiers.

Installation	Command	Brigade	Brigade Mission	Number of Authorized Soldiers
Fort Cavazos	FORSCOM	1st Cavalry Division Sustainment Brigade	Provides troopers to sustain the 1st Cavalry Division in executing multi-domain operations in Large-Scale Combat Operations environments anywhere in the world.	1,424
		1st Armored Brigade Combat Team (1st Cavalry Division)	To close with the enemy using fire and movement to destroy or capture enemy forces, to repel enemy attacks by fire, to engage in close combat, and to counterattack to control land areas, including populations and resources.	3,613
		3rd Security Force Assistance Brigade	Maintains a persistent presence to advise, support, liaise, and assess in priority countries to increase interoperability and build partner capacity in support of the U.S. Central Command Theater Security Cooperation objectives. Develops relationship with identified Host Nation Commands and Tactical Units, and enables Coalition Forces Land Component Commander to quickly build combat power and transition from competition to conflict.	816
		166th Aviation Brigade	Partners with the Army National Guard and U.S. Army Reserve aviation units throughout conus, to enable Reserve Component aviation formations to achieve Department of the Army Headquarters directed readiness goals and deliver trained and ready Reserve Component aviation units to support combatant commanders' requirements.	218

Table 5. Reviewed Brigades' Installation, Command, Mission, and Authorized Soldiers. (cont'd)

Installation	Command	Brigade	Brigade Mission	Number of Authorized Soldiers
Fort Liberty	FORSCOM	82nd Airborne Division Sustainment Brigade	Provides sustainment mission command of and support in the areas of maintenance, aerial delivery, ammunition, supply, water production, cargo transportation, human resources, and mortuary affairs while posturing forces and sustainment capabilities to meet forcible entry demands and future contingences as the globally aligned Sustainment Brigade.	2,715
		20th Engineer Brigade (Combat/Airborne)	Provides critical capabilities to dominate the enemy at the point of contact, whenever, and wherever the nation calls.	3,126
	USASOC	95th Civil Affairs Brigade	Trains, organizes, equips, and deploys Civil Affairs forces to understand, influence, and assess the civil component of the operational environment across all domains through Civil Reconnaissance, Civil Engagement, Human Network Analysis, and Unified Action in support of Geographic Combatant Commands, U.S. Ambassadors, and U.S. global priorities.	1,594
		4th Psychological Operations Group	Trains, equips, validates, and, on order, deploys fully capable forces to combatant commanders, Joint Special Operations Forces, U.S. Ambassadors, and other agencies to plan, synchronize, and execute Information Related Capabilities across the full range of military operations.	1,529

Source: U.S. Army Brigades.

Appendix C

DEOCS Sexually Harassing Behaviors Risk Factor Questions

The DEOCS administered contain a set of questions categorized by protective and risk factors. For the sexually harassing behaviors risk factor, participants can select “Never,” “Rarely,” “Sometimes,” or “Often” as a response to the five DEOCS questions. See Table 6 for the sexually harassing behaviors questions.

Table 6. DEOCS Questions for the Sexually Harassing Behaviors Risk Factor

Risk Factor	DEOCS Question
Sexually Harassing Behaviors	How often does someone from your unit make attempts to establish unwanted romantic or sexual relationships with you?
	How often does someone from your unit make sexual comments about your appearance or body that make you uncomfortable, angry, or upset?
	How often does someone from your unit ask you questions about your sex life or sexual interests that make you uncomfortable, angry, or upset?
	How often does someone from your unit tell sexual jokes that make you uncomfortable, angry, or upset?
	How often does someone from your unit embarrass, anger, or upset you by suggesting that you do not act how a man or a woman is supposed to act?

Source: U.S. Army Defense Organizational Climate Survey.

Appendix D

DEOCS Sexual Harassment Complaint Questions

Each DEOCS administered contains custom multiple-choice questions generally selected by the brigade command team. For this review, two questions related to sexual harassment complaints were present in the DEOCS. The survey participants can select “Strongly Disagree,” “Disagree,” “Neither Agree Nor Disagree,” “Agree/Strongly Agree” or “Agree” for each question. Table 7 shows the listing of questions and the response numbers and percentages across the 8 brigades for DEOCS administered between January 1, 2021, and January 1, 2023.

Table 7. DEOCS Sexual Harassment Complaint Questions and Responses Administered between January 1, 2021, and January 1, 2023

DEOCS Questions Related to Sexual Harassment Complaints	Strongly Disagree or Disagreed Response	Strongly Disagree or Disagree Percentage	Neither Agree Nor Disagree Response	Neither Agree Nor Disagree Percentage	Agree or Strongly Agree Response	Agree or Strongly Agree Percentage
In my unit, military members/employees who file a sexual harassment complaint would be blamed for causing problems.	2,207	60	1,109	30	365	10
In my unit, military members/employees who file a sexual harassment complaint would be discouraged from moving forward with the complaint.	2,259	62	1,124	31	279	8
Total Responses and Percentages for Questions Related to Sexual Harassment Complaints	4,466	61	2,233	30	644	9

Source: The DoD OIG.

Management Comments

Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs)



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE ARMY
MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS
111 ARMY PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20310-0111

SAMR-ZA (600-20a1)

29 February 2024

MEMORANDUM FOR Department of Defense Inspector General Office, 4800 Mark Center Drive, Alexandria, VA 22350-1500

SUBJECT: Responses to the DoDIG Report of the Army's Effort to Prevent and Respond to Harassment of Soldiers Recommendations and potential release to the public and to Congress.

1. The Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower Reserve and Affairs) agrees with the recommendations provided in the DoDIG Review of the Army's Effort to Prevent and Respond to Harassment Project No. D2023-D0DIEM-0140.000. Below are the actions the Army will take to address the recommendations.

2. Recommendation #1: The Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), in coordination with the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, G9, will develop and implement a plan, including but not limited to updating guidance to ensure compliance with the requirement that:

1a. Brigade commanders perform historical comparisons of Defense Organizational Climate Survey (DEOCS) results and command climate assessment action (CCA) plans, to identify year-to-year trends with harassment risk factors.

Army Regulation (AR) 600-20 Appendix E identifies the requirement for Commanders to conduct a comparison of historical data within 60 days and annually thereafter the DEOCS is conducted. Additionally, trend analysis is another assessment tool that commanders will consider to provide depth and clarification on concerns raised in the survey results. Appendix E-3 explains how to recognize trends and potential problem areas that might affect the organization, how to gather unit historical trend data, and who might own the data needed to provide a thorough assessment.

The Military Equal Opportunity (MEO) Policy Office of the Equity and Inclusion Agency (EIA) conducts virtual quarterly engagements with the MEO Enterprise to address challenges that MEO professionals face on a regular basis. During recent training, the MEO Policy Office of the EIA demonstrated how to triangulate data and assess the information found in the DEOCS. This training served as a refresher and reminder for MEO professionals to provide analysis of the DEOCS and CCA tools to assist their commanders using trend analysis to direct their action plans.

In response to the feedback from the DEOCS, FORSCOM published Fragmentary Order (FRAGORD) 230767, dated 18 December 2023, that outlines the requirements for action plans for all subordinate units. The previous guidance required only the Corps and Major Subordinate Commands to provide their action plans to FORSCOM.

Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) (cont'd)

SAMR-EI (600-20a1)

SUBJECT: Responses to the DoDIG Report of the Army's Effort to Prevent and Respond to Harassment of Soldiers Recommendations and potential release to the public and to Congress.

FORSCOM leaders will modify the FRAGORD to include tasking Commanders to review their past five DEOCS to assess trends and action plans. While some commanders may not have the ability to produce five years' worth of DEOCS and action plans, they will be required to state how many years they were able to backtrack data.

The FRAGORD also stated that each 2-star and 3-star command should maintain accountability of their subordinate commands to ensure they complete their DEOCS and submit their action plans not later than 60 days upon completion. FORSCOM will monitor the progress by inspecting the 2-star and 3-star commands on our annual Staff Assistance Visits (SAV).

1b. Brigade commanders include DEOCS response results from company and battalion Soldiers in their CCA and CCA action plans.

Table E-1 CCA guidance in AR 600-20 Appendix E, illustrates how company and battalion or equivalent level DEOCS should be rolled up into the Brigade CCA.

FORSCOM will ensure FRAGORD 23076 is modified to ensure the Brigade action plan has a roll up of company and battalion elements. FRAGORD 230767 will state that once Brigade commanders complete their DEOCS, they will take the last DEOCS conducted from battalion commanders and include preventative measures in the overall brigade action plan. This will be monitored by MEO professionals while conducting the annual SAV.

1c. MEO officials maintain all CCAs and command CCA action plans for five years, and as a best practice, require those documents be maintained in accordance with Federal and DoD records management requirements, in a location accessible to brigade command teams.

AR 600-20 Appendix E specifies that the MEO professional will secure copies of all CCA executive summaries, action plans and results will be stored in a controlled container for 5 years. Storage of CCA results is an evaluated item on the SAV checklist. SAVs provide commanders an overall assessment of their command climate. SAVs are conducted at every command level, on an annual basis.

The Army MEO Policy Office of the EIA is engaged in developing an automated database that will help with the challenge of proper data and documentation storage, as well as providing a tool to perform relevant analytics. The intent is to provide an effective data capability that will allow MEO professionals to analyze, report, and visualize data and identify harassment within an organization. The automated platform will allow MEO professionals to store data in compliance with Privacy Act laws for up to five years. The MEO Policy Office of the EIA has taken strides toward identifying data

Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) (cont'd)

SAMR-EI (600-20a1)

SUBJECT: Responses to the DoDIG Report of the Army's Effort to Prevent and Respond to Harassment of Soldiers Recommendations and potential release to the public and to Congress.

security requirements that will allow for a secure reliable system that will allow storage for historical data and trend analysis.

3. Recommendation #2: The Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) in coordination with the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, G9, develop and implement a plan to ensure CCA action plans include initiatives tied to specific objectives, goals, and milestones for completion; and list the individuals responsible for implementing those initiatives; and outline a follow up plan to determine whether those initiatives are addressing Solider reported issues.

AR 600-20 specifies that an action plan is required to complete the CCA requirements in accordance with DoDI 6400.11, DoD Integrated Primary Prevention Policy for Prevention Workforce and Leaders. Although AR 600-20 specifies that a written action plan with milestones is required, more specific guidance is necessary to ensure action plans include initiatives tied to specific objectives, goals, and milestones. MEO Equal Opportunity Advisors and MEO Program Managers are responsible for assisting the commander with the action plan; however, the commander is responsible for implementing those initiatives.

Similar to how executive summaries are explained in detail in AR 600-20, the MEO Policy Office of the EIA will add updated language on the requirements for an action plan in the CCA section, in the Glossary of Terms, and include an action plan template. The template action plan will outline objectives, goals, milestones, and required resources. Updated guidance will be added to the MEO Army Regulation FY 25. The action plans will be added to the SAV checklist and evaluated during SAVs conducted at all levels. The MEO Policy Office of the EIA conducts quarterly SAVs at the Army Commands, Army Service Component Commands, and Direct Reporting Unit levels.

4. Recommendation #3: The Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), in coordination with the DoD Office of People Analytics, should take actions sufficient to ensure that bullying and hazing questions are included on all DEOCS.

The Army will explore adding new items on hazing and bullying to the DEOCS, as well as utilizing existing items from the DEOCS database. New items will need to clear the Office of Management Budget's survey item review process in accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act, resulting in a likelihood that any new items will not be available until the 2025 DEOCS. Commanders can also utilize CCA tools such as focus groups, interviews, observations, and organization trend data and reports to assess the command climate.

5. Recommendation #4: The Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) in coordination with the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, G9,

Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) (cont'd)

SAMR-EI (600-20a1)

SUBJECT: Responses to the DoDIG Report of the Army's Effort to Prevent and Respond to Harassment of Soldiers Recommendations and potential release to the public and to Congress.

analyze the differences in sexual harassment complaints and Defense Organizational Climate Survey results to:

4a. Determine whether any barriers to Soldiers reporting sexual harassment complaints exist or confusion are present amongst Soldiers with reporting harassment complaints. If barriers exist, then the Assistant Secretary, in coordination with the Army G9, should develop and implement a plan to address the causes of those barriers.

4b. Compare the results of their analysis to the Director of the Army Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP) Program's barrier assessment recommended by Government Accountability Office to determine if systemic issues with the sexual harassment complaint process are present. If system issues exist, then the Assistant Secretary, in coordination with the Army G9, should develop and implement a plan to address the systemic issues.

A RAND Arroyo study was initiated to address similar recommendations by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (U.S. GAO). After RAND completes its study "Understanding Soldiers' Experiences with Sexual Harassment and Gender Discrimination," the Army SHARP Program will use those results to identify possible barriers to reporting and develop mitigation plans. The study's findings will help the Army develop more effective prevention efforts for sexual harassment; promote better target prevention efforts and resources; and enable Army senior leaders to make evidence-informed (policy, program, and practice) decisions about sexual harassment and gender discrimination prevention resources, policy, programs, and practices.

The SHARP Policy Office will compare the results of the RAND study to the Army SHARP Program's barrier assessment recommended by the U.S. GAO to determine if systemic issues with the sexual harassment complaint process are present. If system issues exist, then Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), in coordination with G-9, will develop and implement a plan to address the systemic issues.

Additionally, the Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness initiated a RAND study to help identify barriers to sexual harassment and sexual assault reporting. This study will help inform next steps to address DoD IG Recommendation #4.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

Army G-9	Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, G-9
CCA	Command Climate Assessment
DEOCS	Defense Organizational Climate Survey
DEOMI	Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute
FORSCOM	U.S. Army Forces Command
GAO	Government Accountability Office
MEO	Military Equal Opportunity
SARC	Sexual Assault Response Coordinator
SHARP	Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention
USASOC	U.S. Army Special Operations Command

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