CNA

October 2021

# Racial Extremism in the Military: A Continuum of Harm

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CRM-2021-U-030885-Final

**Abstract**

In the approach to, and in the wake of, the January 6, 2021, attack on the US Capitol, a series of reports called attention to the potential threat posed by extremists in the military. This issue is an exceptionally challenging one for a number of reasons including, but not limited to: little existing data on the problem, poorly defined key terms, and a high degree of politicization. In an effort to help inform the work of responding to this challenge, our research team set out to identify an analogous issue that DOD has addressed, which might serve as a model for addressing the challenge posed by racial extremism. We concluded that sexual harassment and sexual assault was the most fitting parallel. Specifically, we note that both sexual harassment/assault and racial extremism are best understood not as isolated illegal activities undertaken by "a few bad apples," but as existing on *continuums of harm* in which tolerance of less onerous behaviors leads to more egregious offenses, ultimately damaging military cohesion and readiness. Recognizing these parallels, we (1) identified the features of DOD's sexual harassment and sexual assault responses that were most relevant to the challenge posed by racial extremism and (2) articulated the precise lessons we thought could be learned from DOD's effort to deal with the problem of sexual harassment and sexual assault.



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10/1/2021

**Cover image credit:** Members of the US National Guard arrive at the US Capitol on January 12, 2021 in Washington, DC. Photo by Andrew Caballero-Reynolds/AFP via Getty Images, accessed September 29, 2021.

**Approved by:** **October 2021**

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# Executive Summary

Concern about extremism in the military did not begin with the January 6 insurrection on the US Capitol, but media reporting on the issue increased in the wake of the attack, which ensured the kind of sustained attention that is often necessary to compel action. On February 5, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin directed a force-wide stand-down to address the problem. He also asked the Countering Extremism Working Group to update the Department of Defense (DOD) definition of *extremist activities,* update training modules so that transitioning servicemembers are aware that they might be targeted for recruitment by extremist organizations, and review the screening questions for new recruits in order to solicit information about extremist behavior.[1]

As part of a CNA-initiated project to examine past efforts to address extremism in the US military, we identified a number of interesting parallels between this issue and the problem of sexual harassment and sexual assault. The purpose of this paper is to describe and explain these parallels, and to identify lessons that DOD should learn from its past experiences trying to address sexual harassment and assault in the context of its current challenge with racial extremism.

***Critically, we are not arguing that DOD's approach to sexual harassment and sexual assault has been successful. Nor are we arguing that sexual harassment, sexual assault, and racial extremism are equivalent or comparable violations.*** Our argument is more modest: DOD's approach to sexual harassment and sexual assault contains elements that are relevant to the problem of racial extremism and could provide a foundation on which to identify both helpful and unhelpful ways of approaching this issue.

## Continuums of harm

DOD does not offer a formal definition of *extremism,* but has instead focused on enumerating extremist activities. One critical shortcoming of the existing guidance is that it does not address the full range of problematic behaviors. By limiting its language about extremism to activities

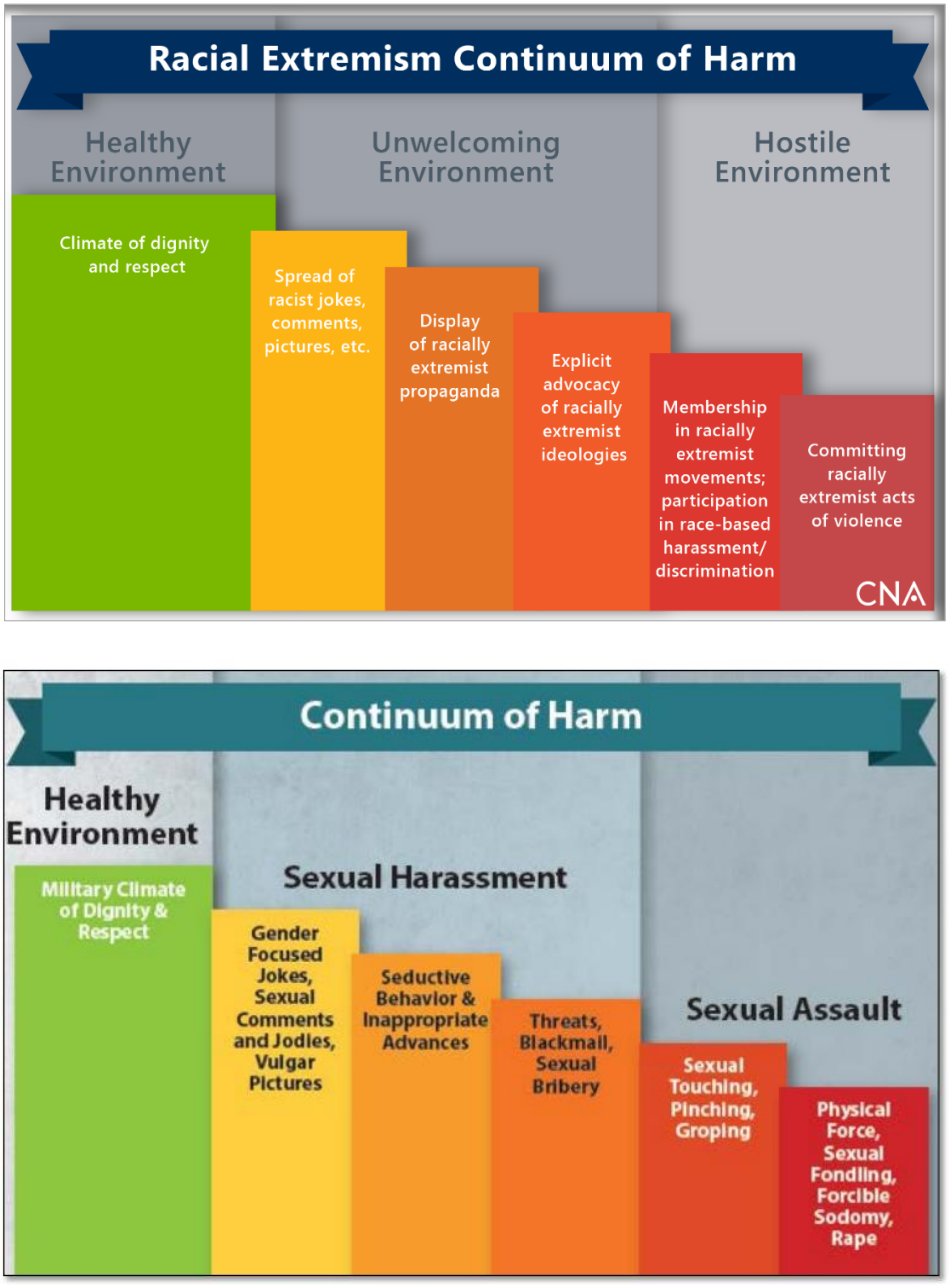
[1] Department of Defense, "Secretary of Defense Austin Announces Immediate Actions to Counter Extremism in the Military and the Establishment of the Countering Extremism Working Group," Apr. 9, 2021, https://www.defense.gov/Newsroom/Releases/Release/Article/2567545/secretary-of-defense-austin-announces-immediate-actions-to-counter-extremism-in/.

such as “illegal discrimination;” “the use of force, violence, or criminal activity;” and “efforts to deprive individuals of their civil rights,” DOD focuses its prohibitions on acts that are already criminal. Yet, these criminal activities represent only the most severe expressions of racial extremism, which is a larger problem that manifests in ways beyond those that are obviously criminal.

Rather than focusing strictly on illegal manifestations of racial extremism, racially extremist activities, much like sexist or misogynistic activities, can be visualized on a spectrum that captures far more than illegal and violent acts. Telling a sexist or racist joke is neither illegal nor violent, sporting sexist or racist bumper stickers is neither illegal nor violent, and sharing sexist or racist web content is neither illegal nor violent. And yet, each of these examples exists on a spectrum that, at its most extreme, includes acts that are both illegal and violent. In other words, racially extremist actions—much like sexual harassment and sexual assault—are best understood as existing on a “continuum of harm” that ranges from respectful behaviors to racist jokes to racially motivated acts of violence. Indeed, DOD already visualizes sexual harassment and assault in this way, as shown in the bottom of Figure 1 on the next page. A major contribution of this report is to recognize that racial extremism can be visualized in the same way (top of Figure 1).

The importance of these parallel visualizations notwithstanding, similarities between sexual harassment/assault and racial extremism are not limited to the concept of a continuum of harm. Additional parallels—explored in the body of this paper—include a tendency to focus on the problem of “a few bad apples,” the role of climate and culture in enabling these behaviors, the challenge of preventing behaviors that are already illegal (e.g., sexual assault, racial violence), and DOD’s long history with both of these issues (described in detail in this paper’s appendix).

**Figure 1. Racial extremism (top) and sexual harassment/assault (bottom) continuums of harm**




Source: CNA (top), DOD (bottom).
Note: These charts are not meant to communicate a progression from green to red, as they do not center the actor or perpetrator; instead, they are intended to capture the full, possible environment experienced by victims.

Given these parallels, an examination of DOD's history of attempting to address sexual harassment and sexual assault in the ranks provides a rich amount of data and analysis on what has and has not been successful to date. The detailed comparison offered in this report should enable DOD to avoid repeating some of the approaches that were unsuccessful in addressing sexual harassment and sexual assault. The comparison we outline should also enable DOD to adapt approaches to gathering data and developing evidence-based interventions that have shown value to efforts aimed at addressing sexual harassment and assault to the problem of racial extremism. Ultimately, the observations and recommendations we offer here should help DOD advance slightly further along the path to effective solutions to racial extremism and to a fighting force that is truly egalitarian and united.

# Recommendations

Given the clear parallels between sexual harassment/assault and racial extremism, we argue that five core components of DOD's sexual harassment and sexual assault prevention strategy can serve as a model for addressing racial extremism (Table 1). None of these components has resolved the challenge of sexual harassment and sexual assault, and none will resolve the challenge of racial extremism. In aggregate, though, they offer DOD a head start in addressing the challenge posed by racial extremism in the military.

**Table 1. Sexual assault and prevention response (SAPR) components and corresponding recommendations**

| Component | Recommendation |
|---|---|
| Evidence-based prevention framework | *Develop and apply an evidence-based prevention framework to understand and address racial extremism.* |
| Strategic plan | *Adopt the robust and multidimensional approach it uses for responding to the problem of sexual harassment and assault to the problem of racial extremism.* |
| Evidence-based training | *Develop evidence-based training requirements and learning objectives to guide development of a training curriculum to prevent racial extremism.* |
| Reporting system and data collection | *Adopt a system for reporting racial extremism and documenting its full effects.* |
| Chain of command | *Consider removing reporting of racism and racial extremism from the chain of command.* |

Source: CNA.

It is likely that—for the foreseeable future—data and research on sexual harassment and sexual assault will outpace that on racial extremism. Those working on the former consequently have a considerable head start that DOD could leverage. As DOD policies designed to end sexual harassment/assault continue to evolve, DOD should review them with an eye toward—when applicable—adapting them to tackle the similarly structured challenge of racial extremism. Additionally, we recognize that this paper presents an initial exploration of these comparisons, and that a more comprehensive analysis of the problem is necessary to identify the precise frameworks, interventions, and policies that can be productively applied to the problem of racial extremism. Most critical, though, at this pivotal moment, is the recognition that the problem of racial extremism is not one of "a few bad apples," but is in fact a more pervasive challenge that—like that of sexual harassment and sexual assault—will require a more comprehensive set of solutions.

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# Contents

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# Introduction

In the approach to, and in the wake of, the January 6, 2021, attack on the US Capitol, a series of reports called attention to the potential threat posed by extremists in the military. Just 10 days after the attack, *Defense One* reported that National Guard personnel being deployed to the capital for the inauguration were being screened for links to extremism.[2] A few weeks later, the *New York Times* confirmed that 12 National Guard members had been removed from this protection detail after they were found to have links to extremist groups.[3] By late January, NPR reported that nearly 20 percent of those who had been charged were either active duty or US military veterans.[4]

Concern about extremism in the military did not begin on January 6, but media reporting on the issue increased in the wake of the attack on the US Capitol, which ensured the kind of sustained attention that is often necessary to compel action. On February 5, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin directed a force-wide stand-down to address the problem of extremism in the military. In doing so, he noted that countering extremist ideologies was critical to the "health, readiness and morale of the Total Force" and argued that "any extremist behavior in the force can have an outsize impact."[5] On March 24, the House Armed Services Committee held a full committee hearing on "Extremism in the Armed Forces" to hear from subject matter experts about extremism in the military.[6]

[2] Katie Bo Williams, "Troops at Inauguration Pre-Screened for Extremism, Says DC Guard Commander," *DefenseOne*, Jan. 16, 2021, https://www.defenseone.com/threats/2021/01/troops-inauguration-pre-screened-extremism-says-dc-guard-commander/171456/.

[3] Eric Schmitt, Jennifer Steinhauer, and Helene Cooper, "Twelve National Guard members are removed from inaugural protection, two for possible links to extremist groups," *New York Times,* Jan. 19, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/19/us/politics/national-guard-extremist-pentagon.html.

[4] Tom Dreishbach and Meg Anderson, "Nearly 1 in 5 Defendants in Capitol Riot Cases Served in the Military," NPR, Jan. 21, 2021, https://www.npr.org/2021/01/21/958915267/nearly-one-in-five-defendants-in-capitol-riot-cases-served-in-the-military.

[5] Secretary of Defense, Memorandum for Senior Pentagon Leadership, Commanders of the Combatant Commands, Defense Agency, and DOD Field Activity Directors, Subject: Immediate Actions to Counter Extremism in the Department and the Establishment of the Countering Extremism Working Group, https://media.defense.gov/2021/Apr/09/2002617921/-1/-1/1/MEMORANDUM-IMMEDIATE-ACTIONS-TO-COUNTER-EXTREMISM-IN-THE-DEPARTMENT-AND-THE-ESTABLISHMENT-OF-THE-COUNTERING-EXTREMISM-WORKING-GROUP.PDF.

[6] House Armed Services Committee, *Extremism in the Armed Forces*, Mar. 24, 2021, https://armedservices.house.gov/2021/3/full-committee-hearing-extremism-in-the-armed-forces.

The statistics on those involved in the January 6 attack have evolved as more people have been charged and more research has been done, but current tallies kept by the George Washington University's Program on Extremism indicate that 12 percent of those charged have some type of military experience.[7,8] While most of the participants (over 90 percent) were veterans, the concern about extremism in the military had transitioned from a media talking point to a pressing national security concern.[9]

This paper does not, however, focus on the events of January 6. Instead, it looks at the issue both more broadly by attempting to understand the full breadth of extremist activities, and more narrowly by focusing on racial extremism (for reasons fully outlined in the next section). DOD has turned its attention to the issue of extremism multiple times in the past, and in each instance, the issue of race has been present:

- In 1995, three white soldiers stationed at Fort Bragg, and in possession of white supremacist and neo-Nazi paraphernalia, were charged with killing a Black couple presumably targeted for racial reasons. A year later, the secretary of the Army's Task Force on Extremist Activities issued a report titled "Defending American Values."
- In 2005, DOD sponsored work culminating in a report titled "Screening for Potential Terrorists in the Enlisted Military Accessions Process." This report included questions such as "Have you ever advocated or practiced discrimination or committed acts of violence or terrorism against individuals based on their religion, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, disability, gender, or loyalty to the U.S. government?"[10]
- In 2009, following the mass shooting at Fort Hood, DOD issued new regulations regarding servicemember engagement in violent extremism that prohibited actively

[7] Daniel Milton and Andrew Mines, *"This is War": Examining Military Experience Among the Capitol Hill Siege Participants* Program on Extremism, George Washington University and Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, Apr. 2021, https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2191/f/This_is_War.pdf.

[8] It is tempting to compare this number to the percentage of Americans with military experience (7 percent) and conclude that those with military experience constituted a disproportionate number of January 6 arrestees. This comparison may be misleading, though. As one paper on the topic noted: "There is no reason to think that the arrestee population should be a representative sample of the U.S. population…[and] it may be the case that the better comparison for the proportion of individuals with military experience is not with the overall proportion of veterans in the U.S. population, but the proportion of male veterans." This comparison is decidedly less alarming: 14 percent of the US population fall into the category of male veterans, and 13.6 percent of the January 6 arrestees were male veterans (suggesting under-representation instead of over-representation). See https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2191/f/This_is_War.pdf.

[9] Milton and Mines, *"This is War."*

[10] Kelly R. Buck et al., *Screening for Potential Terrorists in the Enlisted Military Accessions Process*, Defense Personnel Security Research Center, Technical Report 05-08, Apr. 2005, accessed July 20, 2021, https://www.hsdl.org/?collection&id=86731.

advocating "supremacist, extremist, or criminal gang doctrine, ideology or causes . . . or advocate[ing] the use of force, violence, or criminal activity or otherwise advance efforts to deprive individuals of their civil rights."[11]

- In 2020, the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness submitted a report to the Armed Services Committees titled "Screening Individuals Who Seek to Enlist in the Armed Forces" that explicitly identified white supremacy and white nationalist ideologies as a critical threat.[12]

The reports listed above addressed the issue of extremism—and racial extremism—from different perspectives and with different emphases. Unfortunately, none has resulted in the recommendations—or follow-through action—necessary to resolve the problem. The 2021 Countering Extremism Working Group is taking a new look at this challenge, and has been tasked with updating DOD's definition of extremist activities, updating training modules so that transitioning servicemembers are aware that they might be targeted for recruitment by extremist organizations, and reviewing the screening questions to solicit information about extremist behavior.[13] Because this work is already happening, we decided to take a different approach that might—in the best-case scenario—give DOD a head start in tackling this challenge. Specifically, we set out to identify an analogous issue that DOD has addressed, which might serve as a model for addressing the challenge posed by racial extremism. We selected the issue of sexual harassment and sexual assault. As we discuss in this paper, our analysis indicates that some of the work DOD has done to address the problem of sexual harassment and sexual assault prevention can be adapted to provide a solid starting point for addressing racial extremism, because of the key parallels between the two issues.

[11] Department of Defense Instruction No. 1325.06, "Handling Dissident and Protest Activities Among Members of the Armed Forces," Nov. 27, 2009, accessed June 7, 2021, https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/issuances/dodi/132506p.pdf; Kristy N. Kamarck, *Military Personnel and Extremism: Law, Policy, and Considerations for Congress*, CRS Insight, May 16, 2019, accessed June 8, 2021, https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/IN11086.pdf,

[12] Department of the Army, *Secretary of the Army's Task Force on Extremist Activity: Defending American Values*, Mar. 21, 1996, accessed June 5, 2021, https://www.hsdl.org/?abstract&did=28893; Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, *Report to Armed Services Committees on Screening Individuals Who Seek to Enlist in the Armed Forces,* Department of Defense, 2020, https://media.defense.gov/2021/Mar/02/2002592042/-1/-1/0/REPORT-TO-ARMED-SERVICES-COMMITTEES-ON-SCREENING-INDIVIDUALS-WHO-SEEK-TO-ENLIST-IN-THE-ARMED-FORCES.PDF; Buck et al., *Screening for Potential Terrorists*.

[13] Department of Defense, "Secretary of Defense Austin Announces Immediate Actions to Counter Extremism in the Military and the Establishment of the Countering Extremism Working Group," Apr. 9, 2021, https://www.defense.gov/Newsroom/Releases/Release/Article/2567545/secretary-of-defense-austin-announces-immediate-actions-to-counter-extremism-in/.

***Critically, we are not arguing that DOD's approach to sexual harassment and sexual assault has been successful. Nor are we arguing that sexual harassment, sexual assault, and racial extremism are equivalent or comparable violations.*** Our argument is more modest: DOD's approach to sexual harassment and sexual assault contains elements that are relevant to the problem of racial extremism and that could provide a foundation from which to address this issue.

We believe that this comparison has value for a variety of reasons—the most significant of which we outline in the first section of this paper. Remarks from Secretary of Defense Austin, the first Black secretary of defense, during his January 2021 confirmation hearing, indicate that he, too, sees connections among a number of violent, discriminatory behaviors and their effects within the military ranks:

> If confirmed, I will fight hard to stamp out sexual assault, to rid our ranks of racists and extremists, and to create a climate where everyone fit and willing has the opportunity to serve this country with dignity…The job of the Department of Defense is to keep America safe from our enemies. But we can't do that if some of those enemies lie within our own ranks.[14]

By addressing these two issues in tandem, and noting that they represent a similar threat to the US military, Secretary Austin opened the door to further exploring the comparison. We have taken up that challenge.

## Key questions

DOD is currently grappling with an issue that is challenging for a number of reasons, including, but not limited to: little existing data on the problem, poorly defined key terms, and a high degree of politicization.[15] It is clear that there will be no easy answer to this problem, and yet it is equally clear that DOD must take definitive action to address it. In an effort to help inform these impending decisions, our research team set out to answer the following questions:

- How has the military tackled the challenge of extremism in the past?
- Why is the challenge of sexual harassment and sexual assault a useful analog for thinking through the challenge of racial extremism?

[14] Phil Stewart and Idrees Ali, "Biden's defense secretary pick pledges to 'rid our ranks of racists and extremists," Reuters, Jan. 19, 2021, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-biden-pentagon/bidens-defense-secretary-pick-pledges-to-rid-our-ranks-of-racists-and-extremists-idUSKBN29O2II.

[15] Tom Cotton, Memorandum to the Senate Armed Services Committee, Subject: SECDEF/CJCS Posture Hearing, June 10, 2021, https://www.govexec.com/media/gbc/docs/pdfs_edit/memorandum_for_recordv2jb.pdf.

- What lessons learned and/or best practices can be gleaned from the military's history with countering extremism in its ranks and from its evolving approach to the challenge of sexual harassment and sexual assault?

## Approach

In order to address the questions above, we first conducted a literature review designed to increase our understanding of how DOD addressed the problem of extremism in its ranks historically. Concurrent with the completion of this literature review (provided in the appendix), we began to search for behavioral issues and related prevention approaches within DOD that could serve as a model for addressing the problem of extremism.

This research culminated in the identification of sexual harassment and sexual assault as the most fitting parallel, and the recognition that both sexual harassment/assault and racial extremism are best understood not as isolated illegal activities undertaken by "a few bad apples," but as existing on *continuums of harm* in which tolerance of less onerous behaviors leads to more egregious offenses, ultimately damaging military cohesion and readiness.

Recognizing these parallels, we (1) identified the features of DOD's sexual harassment and sexual assault responses that were most relevant to the challenge posed by racial extremism and (2) articulated the precise lessons we thought could be learned from DOD's effort to deal with the problem of sexual harassment and sexual assault.

## Organization

The rest of this paper answers the research questions outlined above.

The first section explains why the challenge of sexual harassment and sexual assault is the best analog for thinking through the challenge of racial extremism. The second section discusses DOD's efforts to deal with the challenge of sexual harassment and sexual assault, and identifies those that are the most relevant to the problem of racial extremism. This section is split into five short subsections, each articulating a clear recommendation and explaining its predicate. A conclusion summarizes these recommendations. It is followed by an appendix that includes brief histories of DOD efforts to tackle the challenges of both sexual harassment/assault and racial extremism in the past, and a comparison of the two histories.

# Oranges to Oranges: Racial Extremism and Sexual Harassment/Assault

## Extremism and racism

Defining *extremism* is complicated, and DOD does not have a clear definition (limiting itself, instead, to enumerating extremist activities). Definitions do exist in other sources, though. As one example, a paper that explored the challenges in defining the term noted that extremism

> is essentially a political term which determines those activities that are not morally, ideologically or politically in accordance with written (legal and constitutional) and non-written norms of the state; that are fully intolerant toward others and reject democracy as a means of governance and the way of solving problems; and finally, that reject the existing social order.[16]

While this might seem relatively straightforward, the authors note that it is "not legally precise enough to be effective" and could easily be described as "philosophically, sociologically, psychologically, and especially politically incorrect."[17] Though this definition is imperfect, it is helpful for the purposes of this paper. Our object of analysis, though, is not merely extremism, but racial extremism. In other words, and borrowing from the definition above, we are particularly interested in

> *racially motivated* activities that are not morally, ideologically or politically in accordance with written (legal and constitutional) and non-written norms of the state; that are fully intolerant toward *racial* others and reject democracy as a means of governance and the way of solving problems; and finally, that reject the existing social order *as it pertains to race relations* [italicized language added].[18]

Our decision to focus on the particular challenge posed by racial extremism—instead of focusing on extremism more broadly—is motivated by two realities. First, while other forms of extremism exist within the military, the challenge of racial extremism has seized DOD's—and the nation's—attention over the past year. A June 2020 report on screening enlistees

[16] Andrej Sotlar, "Some Problems with a Definition and Perception of Extremism within a Society," in *Policing in Central and Eastern Europe: Dilemmas of Contemporary Criminal Justice,* edited by Gorazd Mesko, Milan Pagon, and Bojan Dobovsek (Slovenia: University of Maribor, 2004), https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/Mesko/208033.pdf.

[17] Sotlar, "Some Problems with a Definition."

[18] Sotlar, "Some Problems with a Definition."

explicitly identified white supremacy and white nationalist ideologies as a critical threat.[19] And six months later, in December 2020, Acting Secretary of Defense Miller ordered a review of policies, laws, and regulations concerning active participation by servicemembers in extremist or hate group activity.[20] Second, in the wake of the January 6 attacks—which were not primarily motivated by racial extremism—DOD leaders speaking about the issue have often conflated the challenges of extremism and racism. For example, in his memo calling for a stand-down to address extremism, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin wrote:

> We will not tolerate actions that go against the fundamental principles of the oath we share, including actions associated with extremist or dissident ideologies. Service members, DoD civilian employees, and all those who support our mission, deserve an environment free of discrimination, hate, and harassment. It is incumbent upon each of us to ensure that actions associated with these corrosive behaviors are prevented.[21]

In this language, Austin pivots seamlessly from "extremist or dissident ideologies" to "environments free of discrimination, hate, and harassment." Though racial extremism is not the only type of extremism that can produce an environment of discrimination, hate, and harassment (e.g., homophobic extremism could easily do the same), there are other types of extremism (e.g., antiabortion extremism) that are not captured in Austin's framing. In other words, the type of extremism that Austin seems to be addressing is one that results in discrimination.

The Army's chief diversity officer, Colonel Timothy Holman, used similar language: "We have to [address] these issues, move toward diversity, and understand how people who might join the Army with extremist views are redirected."[22] In Holman's framing—and in the framing of the US Army website reporting on his remarks—the conversation about diversity is also a

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[19] Department of the Army. *Secretary of the Army's Task Force on Extremist Activities: Defending American Values;* Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, *Report to Armed Services Committees on Screening Individuals Who Seek to Enlist in the Armed Forces*, Department of Defense, 2020; Buck et al., *Screening for Potential Terrorists.*

[20] Secretary of Defense, Memorandum for Senior Pentagon Leadership, Subject: Actions to Improve Racial and Ethnic Diversity and Inclusion in the U.S. Military, Dec. 17, 2020, https://media.defense.gov/2020/Dec/18/2002554854/-1/-1/0/ACTIONS-TO-IMPROVE-RACIAL-AND-ETHNIC-DIVERSITY-AND-INCLUSION-IN-THE-U.S.-MILITARY.PDF

[21] Secretary of Defense, Memorandum for Senior Pentagon Leadership, Defense Agencies, and DOD Field Activity Directors, "Stand-Down to Address Extremism in the Ranks," Feb. 5, 2021, https://media.defense.gov/2021/Feb/05/2002577485/-1/-1/0/STAND-DOWN-TO-ADDRESS-EXTREMISM-IN-THE-RANKS.PDF.

[22] Thomas Brading, "Army aggressively working to eliminate extremism, says chief diversity officer," U.S. Army, Mar. 12, 2021, https://www.army.mil/article/242747/army_aggressively_working_to_eliminate_extremism_says_chief_diversity_officer.

conversation about extremism. Similarly, when *Task & Purpose* reported on a meeting held as part of the extremism stand-down, it noted that "the conversation occasionally drifted into personal stories about their experiences with racist microaggressions."[23] Additionally, the article concluded that a major issue confronting Army leaders was: "If you're a young soldier whose leadership doesn't seem to care about racism or extremism, why would you feel comfortable bringing it up to them?"[24] Again, racism and extremism were being addressed in tandem.

Thus, identifying mechanisms that might reduce racial extremism in the military—an issue that has a long history, as we discuss in this report's appendix—would represent progress with far-reaching effects.

# Defining extremism

As noted above, DOD does not offer a formal definition of *extremism,* but has instead focused on enumerating extremist activities. The Countering Extremism Working Group, convened in 2021, has been asked to update the department's "definition of extremist activities" as outlined in DOD Instruction 1325.06. These guidelines currently state that:

> Military personnel must not actively advocate supremacist, extremist, or criminal gang doctrine, ideology, or causes, including those that advance, encourage, or advocate illegal discrimination based on race, creed, color, sex, religion, ethnicity, or national origin or those that advance, encourage, or advocate the use of force, violence, or criminal activity or otherwise advance efforts to deprive individuals of their civil rights.[25]

This language is supplemented with additional language clarifying that:

> Active participation includes, but is not limited to, fundraising; demonstrating or rallying; recruiting, training, organizing, or leading members; distributing material (including posting online); knowingly wearing gang colors or clothing; having tattoos or body markings associated with such gangs or organizations; or otherwise engaging in activities in furtherance of the objective of such gangs or organizations that are detrimental to good order, discipline, or mission accomplishment or are incompatible with military service.[26]

[23] Haley Britzkey, "What it's really like inside one of the military's 'extremism stand downs'," *Task & Purpose,* Mar. 31, 2021, https://taskandpurpose.com/news/military-extremism-stand-down/.

[24] Britzkey, "What it's really like."

[25] Department of Defense Instruction No. 1350.02, 2020, *DOD Military Equal Opportunity Program*, https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/issuances/dodi/135002p.pdf.

[26] DOD Instruction 1350.02, 2020, DOD Military Equal Opportunity Program.

This language, for all its putative precision, still suffers from at least two notable shortfalls.

First, the activities prohibited under the language of "active participation" are linked to formal organizations that "advocate supremacist, extremist, or criminal gang doctrine, ideology, or causes; including those that attempt to create illegal discrimination based on race, creed, color, sex, religion, ethnicity, or national origin; advocate the use of force, violence, or criminal activity; or otherwise engage in efforts to deprive individuals of their civil rights."[27] In the absence of affiliation with such an organization, these activities do not appear to be prohibited.

Second, this language does not address the full range of problematic behaviors. By limiting its language to "illegal discrimination;" "the use of force, violence, or criminal activity;" and "efforts to deprive individuals of their civil rights," DOD has focused its prohibitions on things that are already illegal. And yet, these criminal activities represent only the most severe expressions of racial extremism, which is a larger problem that manifests in ways beyond criminal activities.

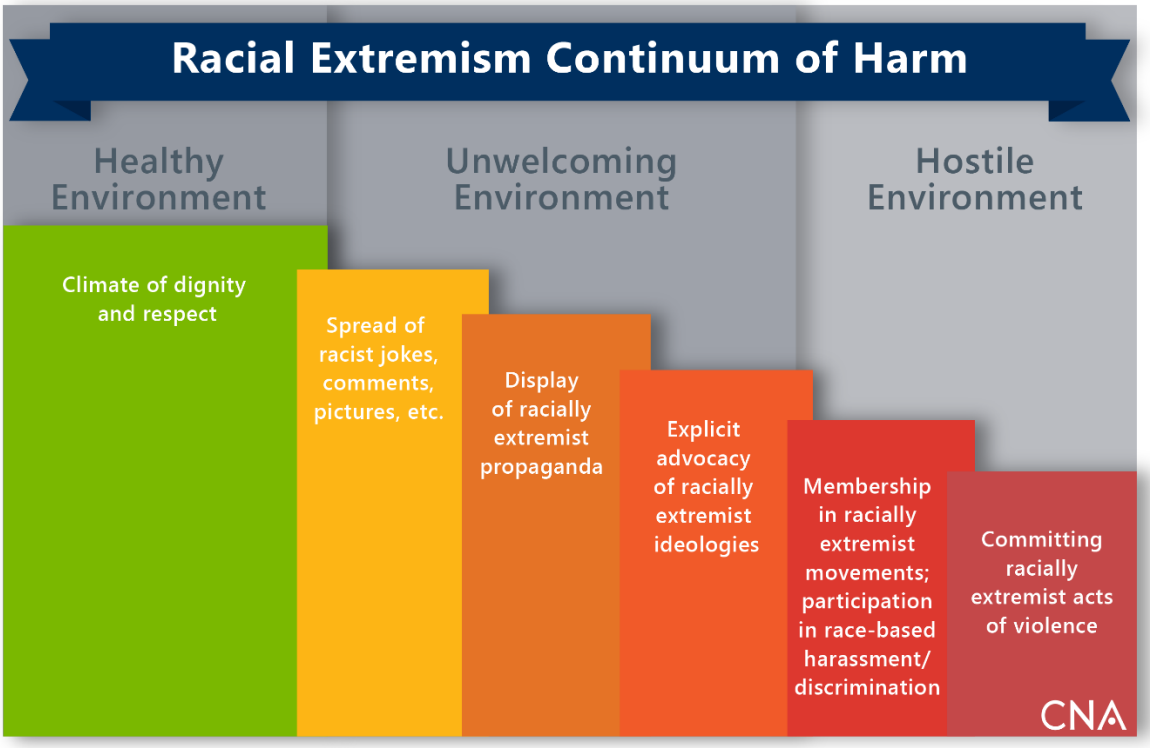
Rather than focusing strictly on illegal manifestations of racial extremism, it is worth recognizing that racially extremist activities—much like sexist or misogynistic activities—can be visualized on a spectrum that captures far more than illegal and violent behaviors. Telling a sexist or racist joke is neither illegal nor violent, having sexist or racist bumper stickers on a vehicle is neither illegal nor violent, and sharing sexist or racist web content is neither illegal nor violent. And yet, each of these examples exists on a spectrum that—at its most extreme—includes acts that are both illegal and violent.

## Continuums of harm

Recognizing that racially extremist activities exist along a spectrum ranging from the legal but socially unacceptable to the illegal and violent is critical to informing a holistic approach to addressing this complex issue. This approach is, however, also very actor centered in that it focuses on the individual engaged in racially extremist activities. Thus, even this framing is inadequate for understanding the effects that these activities have on the broader population. To do this, it is necessary to recognize that racially extremist actions are best understood as existing on a "continuum of harm" that ranges from respectful behaviors to racist jokes to racially motivated acts of violence (Figure 2).

[27] DOD Instruction 1350.02, 2020, DOD Military Equal Opportunity Program.

**Figure 2. Racial extremism continuum of harm**

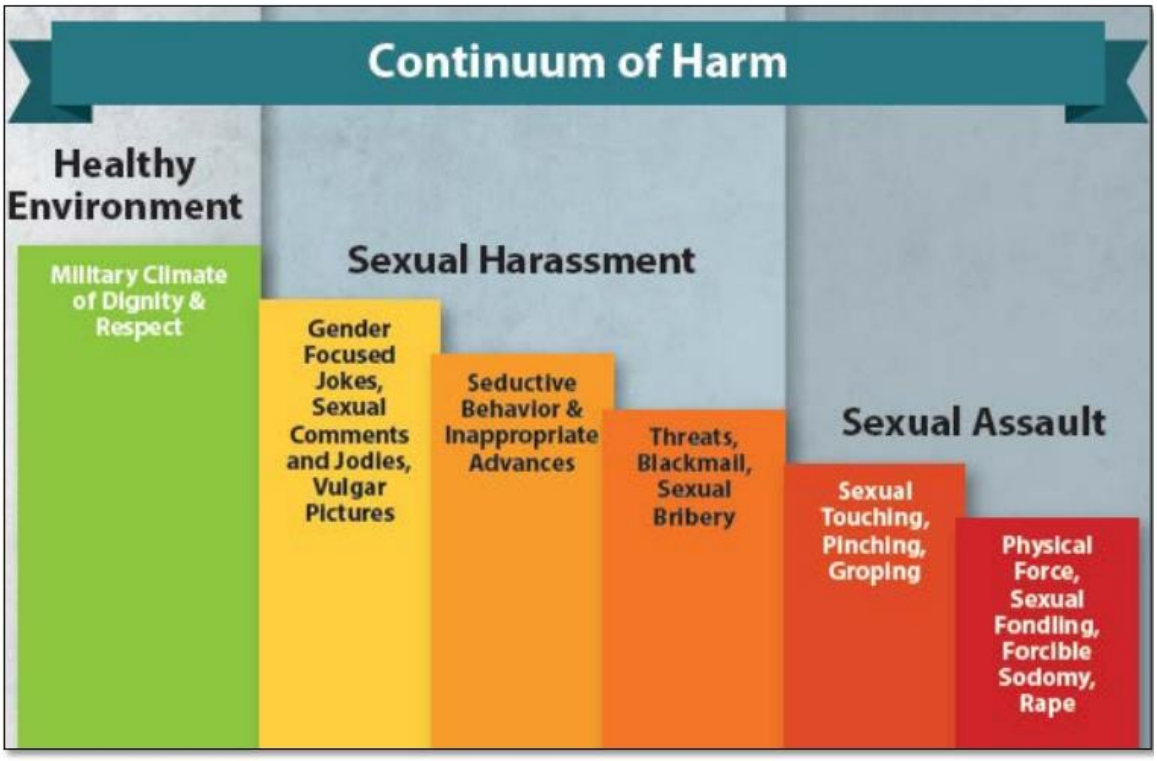



Source: CNA.
Note: This chart is not meant to communicate a progression from green to red, as it does not center the actor or perpetrator; instead, it is intended to capture the full, possible environment experienced by victims.

If this model looks familiar, it is because we based it on the continuum of harm that DOD uses to understand the effects of sexual harassment and sexual assault in the military (Figure 3). In fact, one of the major themes highlighted in the 2021 Independent Review Commission's (IRC's) report on sexual assault in the military was: "Sexual assault does not stand alone, but rather exists on a continuum of harm which may begin with sexual harassment and escalate into sexual assault…To think of them as two separate problem sets is to fundamentally misunderstand the challenge the Department–and the force–face, especially with regard to unit climates."[28]

[28] Independent Review Commission, Sexual Assault in the Military, *Hard Truths and the Duty to Change: Recommendations from the Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military,* July 2, 2021, https://media.defense.gov/2021/Jul/02/2002755437/-1/-1/0/IRC-FULL-REPORT-FINAL-1923-7-1-21.PDF/IRC-FULL-REPORT-FINAL-1923-7-1-21.PDF.

**Figure 3. DOD's sexual harassment and sexual assault continuum of harm**




Source: Litonya J. Wilson, "Advancing National Efforts to Prevent and Respond to Sexual Assault through Department of Defense Programs," Presentation at EVAWI Conference on Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, and Campus Response, (New Orleans, LA, Apr. 8, 2015, accessed Sept. 28, 2021), https://www.sapr.mil/public/docs/speeches/EVAWI_2015_Briefing.pdf.

DOD's efforts to counter sexual harassment and sexual assault in the armed services offer a critical comparison to nascent efforts to counter racial extremism. Perhaps most important is the recognition that while only a small number of individuals might engage in the most extreme activities depicted in these continuums, neither of these issues can productively be understood as a situation involving just "a few bad apples." This notion—that atomized service personnel operating in isolation are largely responsible for promoting or participating in violent racial extremism—has persisted for decades.[29] In early 2021, Secretary of Defense Austin noted that

[29] See, for example, Eliot Engel, "Engel, Davis Call for Zero Tolerance on White Supremacy," Vote Smart, July 14, 2006, accessed Sept. 13, 2021, https://justfacts.votesmart.org/public-statement/191601/engel-davis-call-for-zero-tolerance-on-white-supremacy.

he believes "99.9% of our troops embrace those values [i.e., the ideals of the constitution] and are focused on the right things and are doing the right things each and every day."[30]

But in the view of some experts, the "bad apples" analogy is flawed; the problem, they argue, is more deeply rooted and systemic. In the judgment of Amanda Rogers of the Century Foundation, whenever a white-supremacist incident occurs:

> It's treated as if it's an isolated phenomenon; it's never treated in comparative context with other military members in the movement … looking at strategy or ties . . . .Giving the appearance of "a few bad apples" helps further ideas of [white supremacists] being lone-wolf actors radicalized online, instead of coordinating via a strategy that's effective precisely because it's individual.[31]

## Climate and culture

As research on sexual harassment and sexual assault has shown, focusing on the few bad apples—the relatively small number of people who commit acts of sexual assault—obscures the reality that these acts often occur after a series of escalating behaviors (sexist jokes, unwanted touching, other forms of harassment) that establish a pattern of behavior. A 2018 report, for example, found a strong correlation between sexual harassment and sexual assault, leading the authors to suggest that the military "carefully monitor sexual harassment across the force."[32] Similarly, a 2020 Pentagon report found that female servicemembers who experienced sexual harassment were three times as likely to become victims of sexual assault as those who did not.[33] Though neither report included clear evidence of a causal relationship between sexual harassment and sexual assault, the authors of the first noted that the strong

[30] Luis Martinez, "Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin brings experience dealing with racism, extremism to Pentagon," ABC News, Mar. 7, 2021, https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/defense-secretary-lloyd-austin-brings-experience-dealing-racism/story?id=76300742.

[31] Talia Lavin, "The U.S. Military Has a White Supremacy Problem," *The New Republic*, May 17, 2021, accessed Sept. 1, 2021, https://newrepublic.com/article/162400/us-military-white-supremacy-problem. See also Jeff Schogol, "The Pentagon's Extremism Stand Down is not Enough," *Task & Purpose*, Feb. 6, 2021, accessed Sept. 10, 2021, https://taskandpurpose.com/news/pentagon-extremism-stand-down/.

[32] Andrew R. Morral et al., *Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment in the US Military: Volume 5. Estimates for Installation- and Command-Level Risk of Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment from the 2014 RAND Military Workplace Study* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2018), accessed May 27, 2020, https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/1061349.pdf.

[33] Caitlin M. Kenny, "Pentagon: Reports of sexual assault, harassment in the military have increased," *Stripes,* Apr. 30, 2020, https://www.stripes.com/news/us/pentagon-reports-of-sexual-assault-harassment-in-the-military-have-increased-1.627966.

correlation made it possible that "interventions to reduce sexual harassment could address the same risk factors that contribute to sexual assault."[34]

Moreover, the broader range of activities depicted in the continuum of harm are problematic in themselves because they create an environment—known within military units as a "command climate"—that is inhospitable to women and that has the potential to degrade morale within a unit and increase separation of unit members from the military.[35] As the 2021 IRC report on sexual assault noted: "Few things corrode morale and unit cohesion more than a command climate that favors some over others."[36] The report then went on to explicitly invoke racial tensions as a parallel issue: "The racial tension in the military in the 1960s and 1970s, too often resulting in fights and riots, is testimony to the destructive power of command climates that are not based on treating everyone with dignity and respect."[37]

After trying a number of less holistic approaches (as described in this report's appendix), DOD has consequently recognized that tackling the issue of sexual assault involves changing environmental and cultural features (i.e., tolerance of sexist or misogynistic behavior) that hinder the acceptance of women in the military. Military leaders, moreover, recognize the relationship between these behaviors and sexual assault. The 2021 IRC report on sexual assault notes that the Commandant of the Marine Corps has described sexual violence as an issue rooted in "subcultures of misogyny."[38]

In a 2015 *Current Psychiatry Reports* article, Carl Andrew Castro and his co-authors list elements of military culture that make it difficult for the military to address sexual harassment and sexual assault.[39] Our research suggests that many of these elements also help explain the military's struggle to create a climate inhospitable to racial extremism.

- A premium on performance that can lead to a leader dismissing claims of assault or harassment of a "high performer"
- A culture that promotes conflict resolution at the lowest possible level, which discourages reporting problematic behavior to one's superiors

[34] Morral et al., *Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment in the US Military*.

[35] Patricia Kime, "Woman Nearly 30% More Likely to Leave the Military than Men, New Report Finds," *Military.com,* May 19, 2020, https://www.military.com/daily-news/2020/05/19/women-nearly-30-more-likely-leave-military-men-new-report-finds.html; Kari Hawkins, "Building safe command climate combats sexual assault in workplace," US Army, Aug. 29, 2019, https://www.army.mil/article/226275/building_safe_command_climate_combats_sexual_assault_in_workplace.

[36] Independent Review Commission, Sexual Assault in the Military, *Hard Truths and the Duty to Change*.

[37] Independent Review Commission, Sexual Assault in the Military, *Hard Truths and the Duty to Change*.

[38] Independent Review Commission, Sexual Assault in the Military, *Hard Truths and the Duty to Change*.

[39] Carl Andrew Castro et al., "Sexual Assault in the Military," *Current Psychiatry Reports* 17, no. 54 (2015), https://cir.usc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Sexual-Assault-in-the-Military.pdf.

- A culture that prioritizes resiliency as a matter of personal pride, which is a disincentive to asking for help
- The continuous movement of personnel, which renders it difficult to identify perpetrators (particularly repeat offenders)
- A "team" mentality, in which reporting a problem demonstrates that one is not being a team player
- A complex reporting system with barriers and uncertainty
- The difficulty in securing convictions and inconsistencies or ambiguities related to assault investigations

Not all of these factors can be modified, but it is possible to effect a cultural change that shifts the military's awareness of the issue, awareness of its consequences, and understanding of what is and is not acceptable (e.g., creating an environment hostile to certain types of behavior, in which bystanders are responsible for stepping forward).

In keeping with our assertion that these two issues share a number of important commonalities, the elements in this list are also relevant to the issue of racial extremism in the military. Over time, sexual harassment and sexual assault have come to be viewed as actions that are symptoms of a deeper problem within the military's culture (i.e., sexism and misogyny). We contend here that racial extremism can be viewed in the same way (i.e., symptomatic of racism and white supremacy), and that doing so can lead to more productive framing of the issue relative to possible solutions.

## Power differentials

Another similarity supporting our contention that these issues can be meaningfully compared is the role of power imbalances and their relation to culture within the military. Sexual harassment and sexual assault are linked to gender, and social perceptions of gender have led to power imbalances between men and women. Both because there are more men than women in the military, and because the military has a hyper-masculine culture, these differences are exacerbated in the military services.[40] Similarly, racial extremism is linked to perceived hierarchies among races. There are more white servicemembers than nonwhite servicemembers in the military, and this is particularly evident in positions of senior

[40] Jessica A. Turchik and Susan M. Wilson, "Sexual Assault in the US Military: A Review of the Literature and Recommendations for the Future," *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 15 (2010): 267-277; Anne G. Sadler et al., "Factors Associated with Women's Risk of Rape in the Military Environment," *American Journal of Industrial Medicine* 43 (2003): 262-273.

leadership. In fact, data show that approximately 18 percent of enlisted personnel are Black (a percentage higher than that in the US population where approximately 13 percent of citizens self-identify as "Black or African American alone").[41] However, just 8 percent of officers are Black (a percentage lower than in the US population in general).[42] This is, in part, due to the fact that Black officers are less likely than white officers to be promoted and retained at ranks above O-4.[43]

For both issues, the "dominant" actors in the problematic power paradigm are also in the numeric majority of both the military and military leadership (men with regard to sexual harassment and sexual assault, and white people with regard to racial extremism). In other words, both women and people of color operate at a disadvantage within this culture, and when they are harmed, they are implicitly and indirectly coerced to laugh it off, to forgive, and to be a good sport rather than to challenge the existing norms and the institutional structures and hierarchies that propagate them.

# Additional considerations

As further support for our argument that there are valuable comparisons to be made between these issue areas, we offer two additional considerations. First, though the continuum of harm models makes clear that not all problematic behaviors are illegal, it is still the case that addressing racial extremism and sexual assault requires reducing the frequency with which a set of already prohibited and/or illegal behaviors (e.g., sexual assault, violence) occur. Obviously, the illegality of these behaviors—under both civilian and military law—has not been adequate to prevent them from occurring. Thus, it would be naïve to believe that preventing them will be a simple matter. Nonetheless, it is possible that similar approaches might work for both issues and it is worth exploring this possibility in more depth. Second, DOD has a long history with both of these issues that involves having taken some similar past approaches to them (as described in the appendix). Second, and finally, is recognition of the reality that DOD has a long history with both of these issues, which involves having taken some

[41] Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, Population Representation in the Military Services: Fiscal Year 2018. Appendix D: Historical Data Tables, Table B-37: Active Component Enlisted Members by Pay Grade, Service, and Race/Ethnicity, fiscal year 2018, and Table B-39: Active Component Commissioned Officer Corps by Paygrade, Service, and Race/Ethnicity, fiscal year 2018, 2020, http://www.cna.org/research/pop-rep; United States Census Bureau (July 2019). Quick facts-United States-Race and Hispanic Origin, https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045219.

[42] Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, *Population Representation in the Military Services: Fiscal Year 2018*; United States Census Bureau. Quick facts-United States-Race and Hispanic Origin.

[43] Department of Defense Board on Diversity and Inclusion, *Recommendations to Improve Racial and Ethnic Diversity and Inclusion in the U.S. Military,* 2020, https://media.defense.gov/2020/Dec/18/2002554852/-1/-1/0/DOD-DIVERSITY-AND-INCLUSION-FINAL-BOARD-REPORT.PDF.

similar past approaches to them (as described in the appendix). While DOD has not solved the problem of sexual harassment and sexual assault in the military, it has learned from its unsuccessful past attempts to do so—some of which parallel past unsuccessful attempts to address racial extremism in the ranks.

Moreover, DOD has begun to prioritize the problem in recent years, and has structures in place to document and address the issue. An examination of DOD's history of attempting to address sexual harassment and sexual assault in the ranks provides a rich amount of data and analysis—not always coming to the same conclusions—on what has and has not been successful to date. Our analysis indicates that these data—and the systems and structures they inform—can be adapted to address the problem of racial extremism. A comparison of these issues (and past attempts to address them) therefore might provide DOD with a potential head start as it attempts to address the issue of racial extremism in the military.

By using the comparison we outline here, DOD can avoid repeating some of the approaches that were unsuccessful in addressing sexual harassment and sexual assault, and, instead, advance further along the path to effective solutions and to a fighting force that is truly egalitarian and united.

# A Head Start: Learning from Work on Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault

As mentioned in the previous section, this paper is not predicated on the idea that the DOD has successfully dealt with the challenge of sexual harassment and sexual assault in the military. Instead, it is premised on the reality that the DOD has been actively engaged with this issue for some time. As a result, DOD's strategy has evolved alongside the data, research, and expertise necessary to address this problem in ways that are at least better than those used in the past.

Given the clear parallels between sexual harassment/assault and racial extremism, we argue that there are five core components of DOD's sexual harassment and sexual assault prevention strategy that can serve as a model for addressing racial extremism (Table 2). None of these has resolved the challenge of sexual harassment and sexual assault, and none will resolve the challenge of racial extremism. In aggregate, though, they offer DOD a head start in addressing the challenge posed by racial extremism in the military.

**Table 2. Sexual assault and prevention response (SAPR) components and corresponding recommendations**

| Component | Recommendation |
|---|---|
| Evidence-based prevention framework | *Develop and apply an evidence-based prevention framework to understand and address racial extremism.* |
| Strategic plan | *Adopt the robust and multidimensional approach it uses for responding to the problem of sexual harassment and assault to the problem of racial extremism.* |
| Evidence-based training | *Develop evidence-based training requirements and learning objectives to guide development of a training curriculum to prevent racial extremism.* |
| Reporting system and data collection | *Adopt a system for reporting racial extremism and documenting its full effects.* |
| Chain of command | *Consider removing reporting of racism and racial extremism from the chain of command.* |

Source: CNA.

We look at each of these suggestions in more detail next. For each, we describe the SAPR program element, outline a proposed racial extremism program element, and provide a comparison.

# Develop an evidence-based prevention framework

*Recommendation: Develop and apply an evidence-based prevention framework to understand and address racial extremism.*

## Sexual harassment and sexual assault

Several organizations, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), use a socio-ecological model (SEM) to understand multidimensional risk and protective factors for sexual assault.[44] This model "offers a framework for understanding the complex interplay of individual, relationship, social, political, cultural, and environmental factors that influence sexual violence (Dahlberg and Krug 2002)" and "provides key points for prevention and intervention (Powell, Mercy, Crosby, et al. 1999)."[45] Prevention efforts based on SEM address not only on "individuals and relationships, but also the environments in which they are embedded, including schools, workplaces, communities, and society."[46] Commonly cited principles of effective prevention programs recommend that prevention programs be based on theory and evidence about the risk and protective factors associated with the harmful behavior, and offer interventions targeting those factors at multiple levels simultaneously.[47]

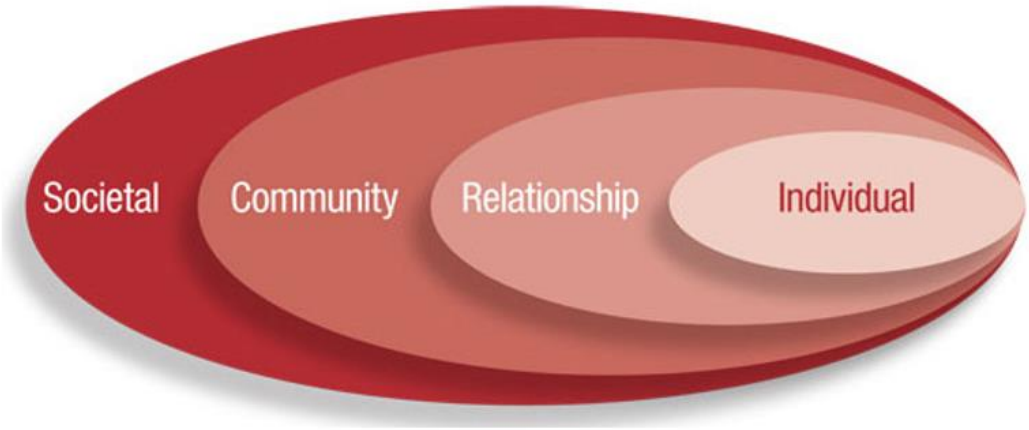
[44] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Sexual Violence Prevention: Beginning the Dialogue*, 2004, accessed Feb. 13, 2021, https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/svprevention-a.pdf.

[45] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Sexual Violence Prevention: Beginning the Dialogue.

[46] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Violence Prevention: The Social-Ecological Model: A Framework for Prevention*, 2019, https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/publichealthissue/socialecologicalmodel.html.

[47] Maury Nation et al., "What Works in Prevention: Principles of Effective Prevention Programs," *American Psychologist* 58 (6/7) (2003): 449-459, doi: 10.1037/0003-066X.58.6-7.449; Stephen A. Small et al., "Evidence-Informed Program Improvement: Using Principles of Effectiveness to Enhance the Quality and Impact of Family-Based Prevention," *Family Relations* 58 (1) (2009): 1-13, accessed Sept. 4, 2019, https://www.jstor.org /stable/pdf/20456832.pdf,

**Figure 4. Socio-ecological model**




Source: Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, *Principles of Community Engagement – Second Edition: Models and Frameworks*, last modified June 25, 2015, accessed Sept. 28, 2021, https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/communityengagement/pce_models.html.

Levels in the CDC SEM (depicted in Figure 4) are individual, relationship, community, and societal. Table 3 lists definitions of each level and some prevention strategies associated with them.

**Table 3. SEM definitions and prevention strategies**

| Level | Definition | Prevention strategy |
|---|---|---|
| Individual | • Biological and personal history factors linked to being a victim or perpetrator of violence<br>• Includes age, education, income, substance use, or history of abuse | • Promoting attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that prevent violence<br>• Conflict resolution and life skills training, social-emotional learning, safe dating and healthy relationship skill programs |
| Relationship | • Close relationships that may increase the risk of experiencing violence as a victim or perpetrator<br>• Includes peers, partners, family members | • Parenting or family-focused prevention programs and mentoring, peer programs designed to promote positive peer norms, problem-solving skills and promote healthy relationships |
| Community | • Settings where social relationships occur, such as schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods<br>• Characteristics of settings that are associated with becoming victims or perpetrators of violence | • Improving the physical and social environment in these settings and by addressing other conditions that give rise to violence in communities |

| Level | Definition | Prevention strategy |
|---|---|---|
| Societal | • Broad societal factors that help create a climate in which violence is encouraged or inhibited<br>• Social and cultural norms; economic or social inequalities | • Promoting societal norms that protect against violence as well as efforts to strengthen household financial security, education and employment opportunities, and other policies that affect the structural determinants of health |

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Violence Prevention: The Social-Ecological Model," Last modified Jan. 2021, accessed Sept. 28, 2021, https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/about/social-ecologicalmodel.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fviolenceprevention%2Fpublichealthissue%2Fsocial-ecologicalmodel.html.

DOD began to consider using a SEM framework as early as 2008; a DOD report that year referenced the concept of SEM within the context of sexual assault prevention activities. The report recommended "Intervention at Multiple Levels of the Social Ecology" and stated the following:

> Sexual assault is a social and public health problem that impacts and is impacted by cultural, organizational, community, peer, family, and individual factors. Six recent comprehensive reviews of factors associated with interpersonal violence and its prevention strongly recommend intervening at multiple levels of the social ecology (i.e., at the level of the individual, family, peer group, community, organization, and society).[48]

Moreover, the DOD has used this model to "establish a framework for understanding risk and protective factors, their influences, and their relationship to one another," since at least 2016.[49] In fact, the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO) explicitly noted in a 2016 report that it had "adapted the CDC SEM model to address the unique nature of the military environment."[50]

## Racial extremism

Currently, DOD does not have a publically announced framework to counter racial extremism in its ranks. While not explicitly designed to address racial extremism, the existence of the SEM and DOD's adoption of it for the purpose of combatting sexual assault may allow DOD to create

[48] Department of Defense, *FY08 Report on Sexual Assault in the Military,* 2009, https://sapr.mil/public/docs/reports/dod_fy08_annual_report_combined.pdf.

[49] Department of Defense, *2014-2016 Sexual Assault Prevention Strategy*, 2014, https://www.sapr.mil/public/docs/prevention/DoD_SAPR_Prevention_Strategy_2014-2016.pdf. The model was also used in the 2021 IRC report on sexual assault in the context of explaining a recommendation.

[50] Department of Defense, 2014-2016 Sexual Assault Prevention Strategy.

a similar model for racial extremism or adopt it wholesale. Such a model is critical, because research shows that prevention programs are more successful when based on "empirically tested intervention theories" and evidence about the risk and protective factors associated with the target behavior.[51] SEM provides a framework for organizing data and designing interventions. An examination of the SEM definitions displayed above reveals significant overlap with racial extremism. No single explanation determines patterns in racial extremism. While some of the specific factors in the SEM may not be applicable, the interplay between different "levels" within the model likely holds true, lending credence to the comparison.

For example, stopping a pattern of racist, but legal, actions (such as a military unit sharing white supremacist propaganda) is not as simple as reprimanding the specific culprits (the individual/relationship levels in the SEM framework). Rather, it is necessary to holistically address the issue by examining every level in the framework. In the example mentioned, DOD would also need to examine how long the sharing of such propaganda had been going on and how the unit itself had allowed it to continue without punishment (the community level). Addressing it would also benefit from a broader understanding of the societal level of analysis as well, including the general acceptance of posting controversial material.

## Comparison

The adoption of an organizing framework, through which DOD could better understand and respond to the problem of extremism in the military, is critical to success. Such a framework is especially critical given research demonstrating that prevention programs based on theory and evidence are more successful. As early efforts to address the problem of sexual harassment and sexual assault in DOD make clear (see the appendix), the absence of a structuring rubric can result in efforts that are reactionary, ad hoc, uncoordinated, and likely unsuccessful (given that, as the SEM framework illustrates, addressing an issue at only one level will fail to change the problematic behavior).

Additionally, DOD should be careful to differentiate between evidence-based prevention efforts and awareness campaigns. As the 2021 IRC report on sexual assault noted:

> The Services continue to confuse sexual assault response and awareness (e.g., training on reporting, conducting awareness campaigns) with prevention. Examples include teal pancake breakfasts, dance contests, and golf tournaments to raise awareness of the SAPR program on base. Although these activities are well meaning, they trivialize the seriousness of the issue, and alienate Service members who have experienced sexual assault. Moreover, these kinds of events are not rooted in prevention science.[52]

[51] Nation et al., "What Works in Prevention."

[52] Independent Review Commission, Sexual Assault in the Military, *Hard Truths and the Duty to Change*.

The SEM framework is an exceptional choice because it is well established and peer reviewed, because it has helped DOD to recognize and begin addressing the problem of sexual harassment and sexual assault, and because it is a framework with which at least parts of DOD are already familiar (as a result of work on sexual harassment/assault)—thus, there is already pre-existing military expertise on its adaption and implementation. Using this (or a similar) framework to organize its response—while avoiding the error of conflating awareness with prevention—could significantly improve DOD efforts to prevent racial extremism.

# Develop and implement a strategic plan

*Recommendation: Adopt the robust and multidimensional approach it uses for responding to the problem of sexual harassment and assault to the problem of racial extremism.*

## Sexual harassment and sexual assault

DOD has developed a strategic plan for addressing sexual assault prevention and response. The plan states that DOD's goal is to foster a culture free of sexual assault through an environment of prevention, education and training, response capability, victim support, reporting procedures, and appropriate accountability that enhances the safety and well-being of individuals employed by all DOD components.[53]

The SAPR Strategic Plan (2017–2021) aims to facilitate a coordinated approach to addressing sexual assault prevention efforts in the military.[54] The plan has five lines of effort or goals, and multiple supporting objectives:

- Goal 1: Prevention
  - Foster a culture that prevents sexual assault.
  - Develop, integrate, and expand prevention tools and knowledge.
  - Conduct collaboration and outreach efforts.
  - Foster a culture that prevents retaliation.

[53] Department of Defense Directive 6495.01, *Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) Program*, Apr. 30, 2013, https://www.sapr.mil/public/docs/directives/649501p.pdf.

[54] Department of Defense Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, "DOD SAPR Strategic Plan," accessed Sept. 28, 2021, https://www.sapr.mil/dod-sapr-strategic-plan; Department of Defense, *Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Strategic Plan, 2017-2021*, Dec. 2016, https://www.sapr.mil/sites/default/files /public/docs/strategic-plan/DoD_SAPR_Strategic_Plan_2017-2021_Signed.pdf.

- Goal 2: Victim assistance and advocacy
  - Enhance quality of service from Sexual Assault Response Coordinators and Victim Advocates.
  - Advance DOD Safe Helpline services.
  - Strengthen response services for men who report.
  - Increase awareness or availability of retaliation reporting options and services.
- Goal 3: Investigation
  - Sustain a high level of competence and yield timely investigative results.
  - Monitor, evaluate, and enhance program performance.
- Goal 4: Accountability
  - Professionalize and institutionalize DOD Special Victims Investigation and Prosecution capability.
  - Support independent review.
- Goal 5: Assessment
  - Improve data collection and reporting capability.
  - Standardize and enhance oversight.
  - Expand knowledge base.

The comprehensive nature of this approach reflects an understanding that preventing sexual harassment and sexual assault within the military is not merely the post-hoc work of investigation and prosecution.[55] Instead, this framework begins with prevention—twice mentioning *culture* as critical to the solution—and explicitly identifies victim advocacy as a key element of a successful strategy.

## Racial extremism

As of yet there appears to be no parallel strategic plan to address the issue of racial extremism in the ranks. While the DOD has acknowledged that extremism (including racial extremism) is a concern, reporting indicates that mitigation methods are lacking. Absent a systemic approach

[55] The 2021 IRC report on sexual assault was organized around four lines of effort that closely parallel, but do not directly replicate, the five goals listed in the SAPR Strategic Plan. Those included in the IRC report are accountability, prevention, climate and culture, and victim care and support.

to racial extremism, DOD has tended to focus on disciplinary action at the individual level.[56] Given the significance of the problem, DOD would benefit from adopting a more robust, multifaceted, and systemic approach to combatting racial extremism in the ranks.

### Comparison

The SAPR strategic plan could serve as a model for developing a similar plan to address racial extremism, using the evidence-based framework to target risk and protective factors associated with racial extremism. Beginning with the same set of overarching goals (prevention, victim assistance and advocacy, investigation, accountability, and assessment), and nesting tailored associated supporting objectives seems to be an appropriate approach. Doing so, moreover, would institutionalize an approach that does not focus exclusively on the "bad apple" perpetrator. Instead, this approach—with its emphasis on culture and victim advocacy—makes clear that, in aggregate, these acts populate a continuum of harm to the armed forces.

## Develop and deploy evidence-based training

*Recommendation: Develop evidence-based training requirements and learning objectives to guide development of training curriculum to prevent racial extremism.*

### Sexual harassment and sexual assault

DOD has had formal training on sexual harassment and sexual assault prevention since 2005, with the approval of DOD Directive 6495.01, *Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program*.[57] The frequency and content of mandatory DOD sexual harassment training varies across departments, but there are a number of annual trainings focused on sexual assault prevention across the armed services, including all-hands trainings, in-person trainings, online trainings, and SAPR Awareness months.[58]

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[56] Todd South, "Extremism in the ranks is a 'threat,' but the Pentagon's not sure how to address it," *Military Times,* Feb. 21, 2021, https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-military/2021/02/21/extremism-in-the-ranks-is-a-threat-but-the-pentagons-not-sure-how-to-address-it/.

[57] Department of Defense Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, "Mission & History," accessed Sept. 28, 2021, https://sapr.mil/mission-history.

[58] United States Government Accountability Office, Report to Congressional Committees, *Sexual Harassment and Assault: Guidance Needed to Ensure Consistent Tracking, Response, and Training for DOD Civilians,* GAO-21-113. 2021, accessed Sept. 28, 2021, http://www.gao.gov/pdf/product/712308.

New models of training have been introduced over time. In the mid 2010s, bystander intervention training and workplace civility training were integrated into SAPR. Beginning in 2013, civilian employees, including supervisors, began to participate in an annual, one-hour, online SAPR training, called "Sexual Assault Prevention: One Team, One Fight."[59] These modules focus not just on individual behavior or leadership, but on collective responsibility.[60] There are also examples of services developing complementary educational materials that address issues related to sexual assault, such as the Navy's graphic novel on consent.[61]

The principles of effective prevention recommend that programs offer universal training for all recipients as well as training tailored to the needs of specific sub-populations.[62] In alignment with this guidance, DOD offers SAPR training tailored to a range of audiences including, but not limited to, new recruits, senior enlisted leaders, pre- and post-deployment forces, and chaplains. SAPR training thus begins at the earliest possible moment, as "all recruits receive an initial SAPR brief during the first 14 days of training."[63] Moreover,

> all phases of professional military education, from junior-level noncommissioned officer schools through the senior-level War Colleges, provide SAPR training…designed to address the specific SAPR responsibilities at each grade and billet assignment. In addition, prior to assuming command at the O-5 level (i.e., battalion, ship, squadron, etc.) and O-6 level (i.e., brigade, group, wing, carrier), officers and their senior enlisted leaders are given specific SAPR training designed to address the roles of leaders and commanding officers (COs) in all aspects of the SAPR program.[64]

Every servicemember must also take an annual mandatory refresher course.

[59] Department of the Navy Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, *Sexual Assault Prevention: One Team, One Fight Course Details,* Department of the Navy, 2013, accessed Oct. 6, 2020, https://www.public.navy.mil /bupersnpc/support/21st_Century_Sailor/sapr/Documents/SAPR-C%20Course%20Details.pdf.

[60] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Sexual Violence Prevention: Beginning the Dialogue.

[61] Department of the Navy Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, *Atlantic*: *A Graphic Novel on Consent*, https://usmc-mccs.org/mccs/assets/File/PDFs/Atlantic_Graphic_Novel.pdf.

[62] Nation et al., "What works in prevention"; Stephen Small and Mary Hsuer, "Family-Based Prevention Programs," *Encyclopedia of Adolescence,* 2016, accessed Sept. 28, 2021, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-32132-5_161-2.

[63] Department of Defense Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, "Fact Sheet: SAPR Training," accessed Sept. 28, 2021, https://www.sapr.mil/sites/default/files/public/docs/prevention/CoreCompetencies _LearningObjectives_FactSheet__20140407.pdf.

[64] Department of Defense Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, "Fact Sheet: SAPR Training."

## Racial extremism

The military has long recognized the problem of racism in the ranks, but attention to the issue has ebbed and flowed over time.[65] Currently, formal antidiscrimination and harassment training occurs under the "DOD Military Equal Opportunity (MEO) Program," which is administered to all servicemembers and civilian employees. The training provides an overview of the MEO program, including topics such as the definition of discrimination, the consequences of prohibited discriminatory behaviors, and available resources. It focuses on "the entire cycle of prohibited discrimination prevention, reporting, response, and accountability procedures."[66] New and prospective commanders also receive training geared towards "fostering a climate that does not tolerate prohibited discrimination."[67] While SAPR training's mandate is external to DOD and training has to be completed before deployment, the MEO training is neither an external mandate nor a pre-deployment requirement.[68] Instead, it is provided "during pre-commissioning programs, initial entry training, and professional military education programs."[69]

MEO training contains some content relevant to racially extremist activities, such as "discussing hate group attributes, in accordance with DODI 1325.06 and Department of Justice and Federal Bureau of Investigations resources" and covering permitted social media behavior. However, the only time extremism is explicitly mentioned is in training for civilian employees assigned to MEO, Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), and human relations positions, who receive "training on policies and programs on the prevention and response to prohibited discrimination, harassment, and participation in extremist activities."[70]

In addition to MEO, some services already have trainings focused on extremism, such as the Army's Threat Awareness and Reporting Program (TARP), which identifies indicators of extremist activity.[71] All Army personnel receive TARP training within 30 days of an assignment

[65] David Barno and Nora Bensahel, "Reflections on the Curse of Racism in the U.S. Military," *War on the Rocks,* June 30, 2020, https://warontherocks.com/2020/06/reflections-on-the-curse-of-racism-in-the-u-s-military/.

[66] DOD Instruction 1350.02, 2020, DOD Military Equal Opportunity Program.

[67] DOD Instruction 1350.02, 2020, DOD Military Equal Opportunity Program.

[68] Department of Defense Instruction 1322.21, Feb. 20, 2020, *Common Military Training,* https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/issuances/dodi/132231p.pdf

[69] DOD Instruction 1350.02, 2020, DOD Military Equal Opportunity Program.

[70] DOD Instruction 1350.02, 2020, DOD Military Equal Opportunity Program.

[71] Army Regulation 381-12, June 2016, *Threat Awareness and Reporting Program*, http://milreg.com/File.aspx?id=4#_Toc34126. Indicators of extremist activity described in the training include: (1) receiving financial assistance from a person who advocates the use of violence to undermine or disrupt US military operations or foreign policy; (2) soliciting advice, encouragement, finances, training, or other resources from a person who advocates the use of unlawful violence to undermine or disrupt US military operations or

and undergo training annually. TARP training is designed to ensure that personnel understand and report, among other things, incidents and indicators of attempted or actual extremist activities directed against the Army and its personnel.[72]

## Comparison

In spite of the structure DOD has created to address sexual harassment and sexual assault, studies have indicated that the training has not yet achieved its goals. Though this is a serious concern, the current training does offer a structure that might be adapted to develop an education program on preventing racial extremism.

Any anti-extremism training should leverage lessons from SAPR and other trainings, with the goal of creating productive, educational, interactive trainings that move the military forward. Training should focus upon certain elements present in SAPR training, such as the importance of bystander intervention strategies and the idea of the collective responsibility model, emphasizing the role every servicemember can play in preventing harm by recognizing red flags, reporting warning signs, and creating a climate that is inhospitable to racial extremism. Most critically, this training should address evidence-based risk and protective factors in a way that will increase its likely efficacy.

Additionally, as noted above, sexual assault training initially has often been described as routinized and as a one-size-fits-all or check-the-box activity. As the military develops training on extremism—and specifically on racial extremism—it should try to avoid creating another routinized training. Instead, racial extremism prevention training should be tailored to its audience. Training for individuals taking on leadership responsibilities, for example, needs to focus on fostering a positive climate; one conducive to diversity and inclusion instead of extremism. This would build on the MEO training model, which provides new or prospective commanders at all levels of command with training tailored to the requirements of a leadership position, but would transcend what currently exists.[73]

MEO training serves a critical role. However, just as it was insufficient to address sexual assault and harassment prevention, it is likewise insufficient to handle the scope and complexity of extremism. One issue is that this training focuses on three specific concerns: ensuring that

foreign policy; (3) making a financial contribution to a foreign charity, an organization, or a cause that advocates the use of unlawful violence to under-mine or disrupt US military operations or foreign policy; (4) expressing a political, religious, or ideological obligation to engage in unlawful violence directed against US military operations or foreign policy; (5) expressing support for foreign persons or organizations that promote or threaten the use of unlawful force or violence to achieve political, ideological, or religious objectives; and participation in political demonstrations that promote or threaten the use of unlawful violence directed against the Army, DOD, or the United States based on political, ideological, or religious tenets, principles, or beliefs.

[72] Brading, "Army aggressively working to eliminate extremism."

[73] DOD Instruction 1350.02, 2020, DOD Military Equal Opportunity Program.

servicemembers are aware of prohibited extremist activities, helping individuals recognize the potential warning signs of extremism in other servicemembers, and helping prevent prohibited acts of discrimination and harassment. This approach, in short, focuses on activities at the far right of the continuum of harm—that is, activities that are already illegal or prohibited. Similarly, this training should be distinct from the insider threat training that already occurs. Extremism—to include racial extremism—poses a threat to the military not just in terms of infiltration (which can and should be addressed as part of insider threat training), but also in a broader way captured by the continuum of harm outlined above. The uniqueness of this continuum of harm necessitates a tailored and robust response akin to that for sexual harassment and sexual assault. Such an approach might require a formal policy akin to DOD Directive 6495.01, *Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program*.

# Develop a reporting system and collect data

*Recommendation: Adopt a system for reporting racial extremism and documenting its full effects.*

## Sexual harassment and sexual assault

Within the DOD, survivors of sexual assault are presented with two options for reporting the crime: first, file an official, unrestricted report and trigger a military investigation; or second, submit a confidential, restricted report that enables confidential access to care but does not trigger an investigation. In an unrestricted report, the unit leadership and military law enforcement are notified of the sexual assault and may begin a formal criminal investigation. In a restricted report, the assault remains confidential, and the servicemember is able to receive medical care and supportive services without involving the military chain of command or law enforcement. Confidentiality is forfeited, however, if a servicemember tells another servicemember who discusses it with leadership, or if the servicemember tells any person in the chain of command. This triggers a formal investigation.

There are several reasons why an individual would choose to submit a restricted report (and restricted reports rose by 17 percent from 2018 to 2019).[74] As in one example, a survivor might wish to have "personal space and time and increased control over the release and management of their personal information."[75] Survivors may also choose a restricted reporting mechanism

[74] Kenny, "Pentagon: Reports of sexual assault."

[75] Department of Defense Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office. "Restricted Reporting." accessed Sept. 18, 2021, https://sapr.mil/restricted-reporting.

if they would like more information and time to make an informed decision about participating in a criminal investigation.

Another common reason cited for restricted reports is fear of retribution. According to the national human rights organization *Protect Our Defenders*—which works to end sexual violence, victim retaliation, misogyny, and racism in the military[76]—the number of restricted reports indicates a lack of faith in public mechanisms.

Even restricted reports have led to concerns about confidentiality. While technically confidential, restricted reports do not ensure anonymity, because once the report is filed with the Sexual Assault Response Coordinator, others—such as medical personnel, legal staff, and the chaplain—may be informed. The senior leadership of the servicemember's location is also notified, although the victim is not identified. Many servicemembers therefore doubt the confidentiality of a restricted report.

In addition to a lack of faith in even the restricted reporting option, there are other significant barriers to reporting sexual assault in the military, including actual and perceived consequences for reporting.[77] An intentional or unintentional poor official response to a report of sexual assault can perpetuate a culture of assault, because it creates an environment in which victims do not report due to concerns about being further traumatized.[78] Response is crucial to prevention and could be considered a "secondary prevention strategy": how an organization responds can either encourage or inhibit future reports.[79]

DOD literature on sexual assault often includes rote references to sexual harassment with no indication that reporting and responses to sexual harassment differ from that of assault. However, DOD does have separate policies on harassment prevention and response in the armed forces, such as DOD Instruction 1020.03. This document focuses solely on harassment, and *sexual* harassment is listed as one type of harassment alongside discrimination, bullying, and stalking.[80] The policy highlights that the procedure for processing sexual harassment complaints differs from that for nonsexual harassment complaints. Sexual harassment complaints *involving sexual assault allegations* must be reported to a sexual assault response coordinator for survivor support services and then reported for investigation to a military

[76] Protect Our Defenders, "About Us," accessed Sept.18, 2021, https://www.protectourdefenders.com/about/.

[77] M.A. Mengeling, J.C. Torner Booth, and A.G. Sadler, "Reporting Sexual Assault in the Military: Who Reports and Why Most Servicewomen Don't," *American Journal of Preventative Medicine* 47, no. 1 (2014).

[78] Center for Law and Military Policy, "Military Sexual Trauma," https://centerforlaw.org/military-sexual-trauma.

[79] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Sexual Violence Prevention: Beginning the Dialogue.

[80] Department of Defense Instruction 1020.03, Feb. 8, 2018, *Harassment Prevention and Response in the Armed Forces*, https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/issuances/dodi/102003p.PDF.

criminal investigative organization. Sexual harassment complains that *do not involve sexual assault allegations* are forwarded to the next superior officer in the chain of command, who is authorized to convene a general court martial and then commences an investigation. Similarly, harassment complaints that *do not involve sexual harassment or sexual assault allegations* are handled by the next superior officer in the chain of command, who takes steps to commence an investigation.[81]

In addition to formal reporting and support mechanisms—such as DOD's "Safe Helpline," a 24/7 confidential crisis service designed for survivors of sexual assault in the military—a number of local and/or informal services also exist.[82] Individual commands or installations may have websites focused on providing sexual assault resources, such as helplines, policy information, and information on legal resources.[83] Finally, there are several support groups for veterans and their families. For example, Combat Female Veterans Families United Shero Survivors, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, is a military sexual assault peer support group that offers free services to Combat Female Veterans and their families.[84] In addition, Veterans Affairs provides services for "military sexual trauma" (MST), which is the term used to mean sexual assault or sexual harassment experienced during military service.[85]

One outcome correlated with shifts to DOD's reporting mechanisms has been an *increase* in reported sexual assaults in the military over the past 10 years. DOD has interpreted this increased reporting as evidence that its reporting mechanisms—and corresponding education about the options available—have improved.[86] It is not entirely clear, however, whether these data reflect an increase in assaults or an increase in the reporting of assaults that were already occurring. What is clear, though, is that this number—higher than in previous years—represents a minimum number of assaults occurring (DOD differentiates the number of reported assaults from the "estimated prevalence" of sexual assault in the military, which is a

[81] DOD Instruction 2018, Harassment Prevention and Response in the Armed Forces.

[82] RAINN, "Megan's Story," accessed Sept. 18, 2021, https://www.rainn.org/survivor-stories/megan.

[83] Commander Navy Installations Command, "Sexual Assault Resources," accessed Sept. 18, 2021, https://www.cnic.navy.mil/ffr/family_readiness/fleet_and_family_support_program/sexual_assault_prevention_and_response/resources.html.

[84] Combat Female Veterans Families United, "Shero Survivors: A Military Sexual Assault Peer Support Group," accessed Sept. 18, 2021, https://www.cfvfunited.com/sheroes-survivor-support-group/.

[85] Department of Veterans Affairs, "Mental Health: Military Sexual Trauma," accessed Sept. 18, 2021, https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/mentalhealth/msthome/index.asp.

[86] Jim Garamone, "Defense Officials Tout Progress in Fight Against Sexual Assault," US Department of Defense, Apr. 30, 2020, https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/2172056/defense-officials-tout-progress-in-fight-against-sexual-assault/source/GovDelivery/.

"[scientific] estimate" of the number of individuals affected by this activity).[87] These data—both data collected via reporting and the estimated prevalence—provide DOD with a detailed picture of what is happening within the military (see Figure 5).

**Figure 5. Data from *DOD Fiscal Year 2020 Report on Sexual Assault in the Military***

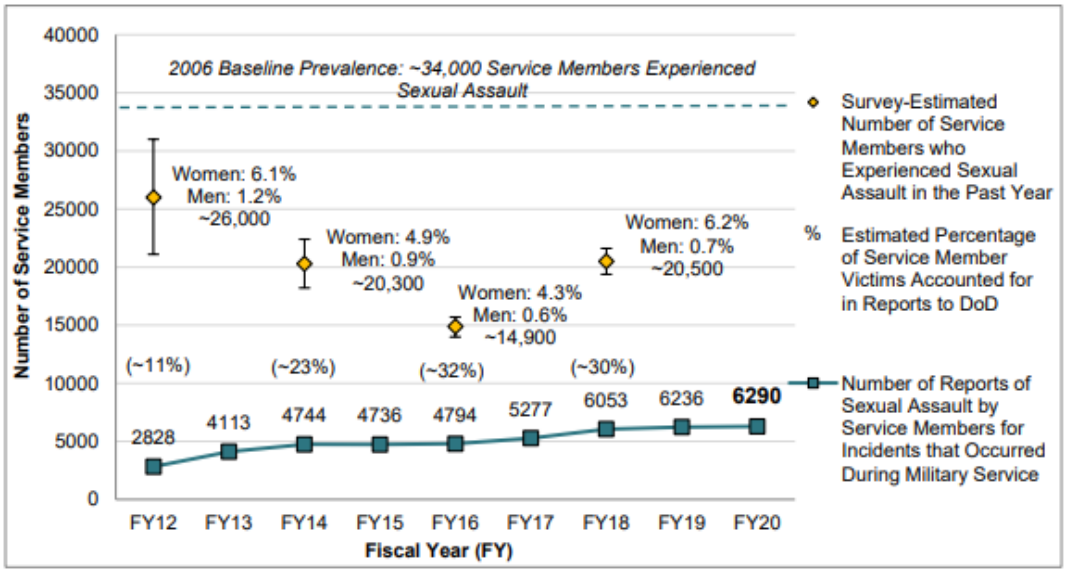


**Exhibit 1. Active Duty Estimated Biennial Prevalence Compared to Annual Reporting of Sexual Assault**

Source: Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, "Principles of Community Engagement – Second Edition: Models and Frameworks," Last modified June 25, 2015, accessed Sept. 28, 2021. https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/communityengagement/pce_models.html.

Understanding the scope of a problem is not the same as resolving the problem—and the data above speak solely to already illegal activities at the far end of the spectrum. Still, having this dataset facilitates the kind of research that results in the evidence necessary to inform effective prevention programming. It also makes clear that the problem, even at the far end of the spectrum, is not limited to "a few bad apples."

[87] "Department of Defense Releases Fiscal Year 2020 Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military," US Department of Defense, May 13, 2021, https://www.defense.gov/Newsroom/Releases/Release/Article/2606508/department-of-defense-releases-fiscal-year-2020-annual-report-on-sexual-assault/.

## Racial extremism

Some of the same challenges in reporting sexual assault are also present around reporting racial extremism, including fear of retribution and a desire for anonymity.[88] There are, however, other challenges presented by the unique nature of racial extremism—most notably a lack of clear definitions of what is unacceptable, and therefore reportable, behavior. While racial extremism may manifest as actions directed at other members in the form of racist speech, verbal harassment, or physical intimidation, it may also manifest in ways that have fewer individual effects, such as membership in racially extremist movements or participation in racially extremist events. Some of these behaviors are already prohibited, so it is important to both provide servicemembers who have been personally and negatively affected by racial extremism with safe and anonymous reporting options and to provide reporting options that allow other servicemembers to report suspected or suspicious extremist behavior, even if they have not been personally affected.

DOD's MEO policy stipulates that all servicemembers have the right to "serve, advance, and be evaluated based on only individual merit, fitness, capability, and performance in an environment free from harassment, including sexual harassment, and unlawful discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex (including gender identity), or sexual orientation."[89] Servicemembers who experience harassment or discrimination because of their race are encouraged to submit a formal MEO complaint, which would initiate command investigation. There are also processes in place for servicemembers to communicate with the DOD inspector general or a member of Congress.[90] The fact that the MEO policy covers both sexual harassment and racial harassment speaks to the similarities in individual effects and the opportunities for DOD to build upon sexual assault and harassment reporting processes to create a safe and effective reporting process for individuals who experience the personal effects of racial extremism in the form of harassment or discrimination.

## Comparison

While the mechanisms in place to report racial extremism are important, they are also problematically inadequate. As the continuum of harm makes clear, racial harassment, racial discrimination, and active association with racially extremist ideologies or groups are already prohibited behaviors that comprise just one component of larger problems. Thus, a truly effective reporting mechanism would be designed to capture all activities represented in the

[88] Department of the Army. *Secretary of the Army's Task Force on Extremist Activities: Defending American Values.*

[89] DOD Instruction 1350.02, 2020, DOD Military Equal Opportunity Program.

[90] Kamarck, *Military Personnel and Extremism*.

continuum. As the 2021 IRC report on sexual assault highlights, though, DOD's current approach to sexual harassment problematically fails to integrate it into the larger continuum of harm model. As a result, those who report sexual harassment are rarely granted access to the range of services that are available to survivors of sexual assault (despite the fact that those who experience sexual harassment have an increased sexual assault risk).[91] This critique of DOD's approach to sexual assault and sexual harassment could be used to inform racial extremism programming before it is fully implemented.

In addition, an effective reporting mechanism will require clear definitions (though not necessarily a definition of extremism). One of the challenges complicating reporting around racial extremism is that it is still unclear what extremist activities are banned and at what point they rise to the level where they should be reported. In April 2021, Secretary Austin called for DOD officials to review and update the definition of *extremism* contained in DOD Instruction 1325.06, based in part on feedback from the service secretaries that members were asking for a clear definition of what constituted extremist behavior.[92] Some of the current gray areas include reading, following, and liking extremist material and content on social media forums and platforms.[93] The continuum of harm expands, but also clarifies, the behaviors that are prohibited. In doing so, it shifts focus away from the most extreme and violent actions undertaken by a very small population of individuals and toward a broader array of activities that creates an environment that is hospitable to this extreme behavior (and that is inhospitable to racial minorities).

At a bare minimum, though, an effective mechanism for reporting racial extremism—even one that focuses exclusively on activities that are already illegal—is critical to raising awareness about the scope of the problem, providing resources for victims and survivors, and facilitating the kind of data collection that would facilitate additional research on the issue. There are currently no clear data on how prevalent extremism—or racial extremism—is within the military. As Dr. Audrey Cronin noted in her testimony at the House Armed Services Committee hearing on "Extremism in the Armed Forces":

> The most immediate problem in determining how to handle extremism in the military is an absence of good data…No one at the Pentagon tracks or monitors extremism aggressively and systematically, across all military Services, military law enforcement, and investigative bodies…Currently, no centralized data are collected across DoD Services and agencies to measure allegations,

[91] Independent Review Commission, Sexual Assault in the Military, *Hard Truths and the Duty to Change*.

[92] Jim Garamone, "Austin Orders Immediate Changes to Combat Extremism in Military," US Department of Defense, Apr. 9, 2021, https://www.defense.gov/Explore/News/Article/Article/2567179/austin-orders-immediate-changes-to-combat-extremism-in-military/.

[93] Department of Defense, "Secretary of Defense Austin Announces Immediate Actions."

> disciplinary infractions, discharges, or reprimands related to extremism. We do not know how many people are identified as extremists in the military and how many incidents or crimes they commit. Decisions on discharges and penalties are handled by commanders, individually, on a case-by-case basis. Military leaders like to say that you cannot fix what you cannot measure, and no serious plan can be built without defining the scope of the problem.[94]

Some modest data do exist. CSIS notes, for example, that in 2020, "the FBI alerted the DOD that it had opened 143 criminal investigations involving current or former servicemembers—of which nearly half (68) were related to domestic extremism."[95] This same CSIS report analyzed domestic terrorism cases from 1994 to 2020 and found a troubling trend: the "percentage of attacks and plots committed by active-duty and reserve personnel rose in 2020 to 6.4 percent of all attacks and plots (7 of 110 total), up from 1.5 percent in 2019 (1 of 65 total) and none in 2018."[96] These data, though, focus exclusively on open FBI investigations and known domestic terrorism plots. As a result, they likely represent a sliver of a larger pie on which there is almost no visibility. Thus, a robust reporting system is necessary, not only to respond to individual incidents but also to increase understanding of precisely what is happening.

Finally, it is not entirely clear what array of reporting and support services might be necessary for racial minorities victimized by activities on the continuum of harm. Answering this question should be at the top of DOD's list of priorities given that, as the SAPR framework makes clear, the goal of reporting and support services is not merely to facilitate investigation but also to ensure that survivors are provided with the resources necessary to recover.

## Consider removing response authority from chain of command

*Recommendation: Consider removing reporting of racism and racial extremism from the chain of command.*

[94] Audrey Kurth Cornin, "Statement by Audrey Kurth Cornin for the Hearing on Extremism in the Armed Forces at the House Armed Services Committee," (Washington, DC, Mar. 26, 2021), accessed Sept. 28, 2021, https://www.american.edu/sis/centers/security-technology/audrey_kurth_cronin_testifies_before_a_full_hearing_of_the_house_armed_service_committee_on_extremism_in-the_armed_forces.cfm.

[95] Seth G. Jones et al., "The Military, Police, and Rise of Terrorism in the United States," CSIS, Apr. 2021, accessed Sept. 28, 2021, https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/210412_Jones_Military_Police_Rise_of_Terrorism_United_States_1.pdf.

[96] Jones et al., "Military, Police, and Rise of Terrorism."

## Sexual harassment and sexual assault

DOD leadership has long spoken about the challenge of addressing sexual harassment and sexual assault in the military and the question of whether ultimate authority should lie within or outside the chain of command. In 2013, then secretary of defense Chuck Hagel stated, in reference to assaults, "(The) chain of command has failed over the years, obviously, for a lot of reasons."[97]

In the same year, then chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Martin Dempsey stated, "You might argue that we have become a little too forgiving because, if a perpetrator shows up at a court-martial with a rack of ribbons and has four deployments and a Purple Heart, there is certainly the risk that we might be a little too forgiving of that particular crime."[98] Also in 2013, then commandant of the Marine Corps General James Amos commented on reporting, "Why wouldn't female Marines come forward? Because they don't trust us. They don't trust the command. They don't trust the leadership."[99]

Other senior leaders have also spoken publicly on the matter in recent years. In a 2018 agency-wide memo, then secretary of defense James Mattis stated:

> Preventing sexual assault is our moral duty….By its nature, sexual assault is one of the most destructive factors in building a mission-focused military….While casualties on the battlefield are understood to be consistent with our military duties, I accept no casualties due to sexual assault within our ranks….Military leaders are to be zealous in carrying out in loco parentis responsibilities and ridding our ranks of such illegal, abhorrent behavior. [100]

Striking a similar tone, Navy Rear Admiral Ann M. Burkhardt, the director of DOD's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, stated in 2018, "Every sexual assault in the military is a failure to protect the men and women who have entrusted us with their lives….We will not rest until we eliminate this crime from our ranks."[101]

Despite clear recognition that the chain of command might not be suited to addressing the issue of sexual harassment and sexual assault, and despite continued pressure from individuals such

[97] "Military Justice Improvement Act: Quotes You Should Read," Kristen Gillibrand: United States Senator for New York, accessed Sept. 28, 2021, https://www.gillibrand.senate.gov/mjia/quotes.

[98] "Military Justice Improvement Act."

[99] "Military Justice Improvement Act."

[100] Lisa Ferdinando, "DoD releases Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military," *DoD News,* May 1, 2018, https://www.defense.gov/Explore/News/Article/Article/1508127/dod-rseleases-annual-report-on-sexual-assault-in-military.

[101] Ferdinando, "DoD releases Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military."

as Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, the DOD has long advocated for dealing with the challenge internally.

However, in May 2021, General Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, signaled openness to changing how military rules govern the prosecution of sexual assault by taking the decisions out of the chain of command.[102] General Milley indicated this change was based on data indicating that over 20,000 servicemembers were sexually assaulted in the previous year. General Milley stated,

> We can't tolerate that level of divisiveness in our force. These are blue-on-blue assaults…It cannot stand. It has to be resolved. So, yes, my mind is very open….We the chain of command, we the generals and colonels, the captains and so on, we have lost the trust and confidence of those subordinates in our ability to deal with sexual assault. So we need to make a change….We haven't moved the needle….And that's the bottom line.[103]

Continuing this trend, Secretary of Defense Austin reviewed the findings of the Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military, which he commissioned after taking office, and announced in June 2021 that he would follow the commission's recommendation and "work with Congress to amend the Uniform Code of Military Justice, removing the prosecution of sexual assaults and related crimes from the military chain of command."[104] Just days later, President Biden announced that he supported this move, which he described as one of the necessary "concrete actions that fundamentally change the way we handle military sexual assault and that make it clear that these crimes will not be minimized or dismissed."[105]

[102] Missy Ryan and Dan Lamothe, "'We haven't moved the needle' on sexual assault in the military, general," *Washington Post,* May 6, 2021, https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/military-sexual-assault/2021/05/06/a8f51a7c-ae98-11eb-8109-f8ba1ea2eeab_story.html.

[103] Lloyd J. Austin, Mark Milley, and John Kirby, "Secretary of Defense Austin and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Milley Press Briefing," (Washington D.C., May 6, 2021), accessed Sept. 28, 2021, https://www.defense.gov/Newsroom/Transcripts/Transcript/Article/2598964/secretary-of-defense-austin-and-chairman-of-the-joint-chiefs-of-staff-gen-mille/.

[104] Department of Defense, "Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III Statement on the Conclusion of Independent Review Commission," June 22, 2021, https://www.defense.gov/Newsroom/Releases/Release/Article/2667381/secretary-of-defense-lloyd-j-austin-iii-statement-on-the-conclusion-of-independ/.

[105] Nancy A. Youssef, "Biden Urges Pentagon to Remove Sexual-Harassment, Assault Cases From Chain of Command," *Wall Street Journal,* July 2, 2021, https://www.wsj.com/articles/white-house-to-urge-pentagon-to-remove-sexual-harassment-assault-cases-from-military-chain-of-command-11625238046.

## Racial extremism

Historically speaking, compared to the issue of sexual harassment and sexual assault, DOD has not spoken as publically about the issue of racial extremism in the ranks. This is not to say that racial extremism was not known to be an issue. Black leaders in DOD and in the military services have routinely spoken about their personal experiences dealing with implicit and explicit biases. As one example, Air Force General Charles Q. Brown, the first Black service chief, recently noted how "people have a perception that African Americans can't be in key positions just because you're African American. They just assume that it's always gonna be somebody else."[106] Secretary of Defense (and former Army General) Austin has made similar comments. Yet the issue of racial extremism does not seem to have received the same level of attention from the DOD as an institution (nor does it appear to have a vocal congressional advocate of stature similar to Senator Gillibrand).

This pattern appears to be changing in recent years. Following the 2017 violence in Charlottesville, Virginia, the heads of the military services and the Joint Chiefs of Staff collectively, and publically, condemned racial extremism and firmly stated that it has no place in the ranks.[107] Furthermore, following the January 6 insurrection at the US Capitol and revelations of the military ties of some who were involved, Secretary Austin initiated a mandatory one-day stand-down to address extremism in the ranks.[108] These actions seem to indicate that DOD is more amenable to openly discussing the challenges posed by extremism in the ranks, as evidenced by the naming of extremism (though not specifically racial extremism) as one of the secretary of defense's top priorities.[109]

## Comparison

Notably missing from the remarks that have been made about extremism are the kind of recriminations that characterize the remarks on sexual assault. In other words, there is no pattern of comments noting that the military has failed to protect servicemembers from acts of racial extremism. Two potential factors are that there are relatively few high-profile cases like the 1995 Fayetteville murders and that there is no congressional advocate like Senator Gillibrand ensuring constant attention to the issue. Another cause may be that the military has

[106] David Martin, "Race in the Ranks: Investigating Racial Bias in the U.S. Military," CBS News, Aug. 22, 2021, https://www.cbsnews.com/news/us-military-racism-60-minutes-2021-08-22/.

[107] W.J. Hennigan and Noah Bierman, "Joint Chiefs denounce racism in stark terms as Trump's isolation grows," *Los Angeles Times,* Aug.16, 2017, https://www.latimes.com/politics/la-na-pol-joint-chiefs-race-20170816-story.html.

[108] C. Todd Lopez, "Extremism Stand Downs Focus on Oath, Not Data Collection," Department of Defense, Mar. 30, 2021, https://www.defense.gov/Explore/News/Article/Article/2555883/extremism-stand-downs-focus-on-oath-not-data-collection/.

[109] South, "Extremism in the ranks is a 'threat.'"

not historically understood racial extremism within the context of a continuum of harm. By focusing on the activities of "a few bad apples," instead of on a series of broader cultural factors that create a hospitable environment for extremism, the military has largely failed to understand that racial extremism victimizes an entire population of individuals. Without recognizing these victims, the military is unable to recognize the ways in which it has failed them.

One lesson that might be learned from the current approach to sexual assault is that it may be helpful to remove the military's response to racial extremism (in terms of accountability) from the chain of command. Historically, DOD has placed the responsibility on military commanders to identify, investigate, and intervene when they see signs that their troops may be actively associating with extremist ideologies or groups.[110] That is now starting to shift, as exemplified by the fact that the training provided to all troops following the DOD's 2021 60-day stand-down highlighted that it was soldiers' duty to report extremism if they saw it occurring. Given some of the cultural characteristics highlighted in this report, this evolution is promising, because ground-up reporting is likely to be more effective.[111] Further changes, though, may be equally important.

At a minimum, DOD's experience with sexual harassment and sexual assault approaches suggests that it should consider the pros and cons of removing the prosecution of relevant crimes from the chain of command. A perhaps equally important lesson—evident primarily in a comparison of how the issues are being framed by military leaders—is that an effective response will require recognition of past failures.

[110] Kamarck, *Military Personnel and Extremism*.

[111] PBS NewsHour, "Exploring Hate: An inside look at anti-extremism training in the military," PBS, Apr. 11, 2021, https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/exploring-hate-an-inside-look-at-anti-extremism-training-in-the-military.

# Recommendations and Conclusion

While our report focused on the challenge posed by racial extremism, it is by no means the only type of extremism confronting the DOD. However, tackling this specific challenge would represent meaningful progress and lay a foundation for tackling additional forms of extremism.

We find that comparing the challenge posed by racial extremism to that posed by sexual harassment and sexual assault is compelling for a variety of reasons. Most significant among these, perhaps, is the reality that the damage done by both racial extremism and sexual harassment/assault can be represented as occurring on a continuum of harm that ranges from the immoral to the impermissible and from the legal to the illegal.

In this paper, we acknowledge that DOD has implemented a number of approaches that were deemed ineffective or insufficient. As the 2021 IRC report on sexual assault makes clear, there is much work yet to be done. What is clear, though, is that DOD has adapted its approaches based on studies of, and lessons from, past experiences to try to improve over time. Obviously, this issue has not be resolved, and this process—of data-informed adjustment and improvement—is central to stopping these problematic behaviors.

Given this, we are not arguing that DOD should simply replicate its sexual harassment and assault procedures to deal with the issue of racial extremism. Instead, our analysis suggests that there are valid and compelling comparisons between the challenges of sexual harassment/assault and racial extremism that make it worthwhile to examine what DOD has learned from its experiences with the former in the context of the latter. With that in mind, we present recommendations to provide DOD leaders with ideas that might help them skip past approaches to racial extremism that we can reasonably predict will be ineffective or insufficient given the nature of this issue.

We do, however, identify five core components that can be adapted from work done to prevent sexual harassment and sexual assault. These approaches are not perfect, but they represent an opportunity for DOD to start a few steps ahead from where it might otherwise begin. Specifically, we make the following recommendations:

1. DOD should develop and apply an evidence-based prevention framework to understand and address racial extremism.
2. DOD should adopt the robust and multidimensional approach it uses for responding to the problem of sexual harassment and assault to the problem of racial extremism.
3. DOD should develop evidence-based training requirements and learning objectives to guide development of training curricula to prevent racial extremism.

4. DOD should adopt a system for reporting racial extremism and documenting its full effects.
5. DOD should consider removing reporting of racism and racial extremism from the chain of command.

Moreover, it is likely that, for the foreseeable future, data and research on sexual harassment and sexual assault will outpace data and research on racial extremism. Those working on the former consequently have a considerable head start that DOD could easily leverage. As DOD policies designed to end sexual harassment/assault continue to evolve, DOD should review them with an eye toward—when applicable—adapting them to tackle the similarly structured challenge of racial extremism.

Additionally, we recognize that this paper presents an initial exploration of these comparisons, and that a more comprehensive analysis of the problem is necessary in order to identify the precise frameworks, interventions, and policies that can be productively applied to the problem of racial extremism. Most critical, though, at this pivotal moment, is the recognition that the problem of racial extremism is not one of "a few bad apples," but is in fact a more pervasive challenge that—like that of sexual harassment and sexual assault—will require a more comprehensive set of solutions.

# Appendix: A History of Tackling Hard Problems

## Sexual harassment and sexual assault

In 1980, the *Washington Post* quoted retired Air Force General Jeanne M. Holm for a story on sexual harassment on US military bases: "In the military a racist is not allowed to act like one, but it's still sort of winked at to be sexist."[112] An anonymous Ranger instructor quoted in the same article confirmed General Holm's perspective: "Harassment will exist as long as there are women in the military."

In the years after that, sexual harassment and sexual assault in the military arose frequently in the broader US conversation. The pattern repeated itself: a harassment or assault scandal—often egregious—made national headlines; Congress and political and military leadership vowed to "do something," and a blue ribbon commission would publish authoritative reports; the military held few abusers to personal account; and the scandal would die down, only to be dredged up as a memory at the outbreak of the next scandal.

In the early years, national media such as the *Baltimore Sun* also identified "an epidemic of sexual harassment" as a symptom of "the rapid influx of women into the lower ranks of the United States Army."[113] However, in the eyes of some congressional overseers, compounding scandals across the services pointed to a broader culture of misogyny and sexual harm in the US military.

At the 1991 Tailhook convention for the Navy and Marine Corps aviators, attendees spent their nights partying in Las Vegas and—it was later found—sexually assaulted 83 women and 7

[112] Sandra G. Boodman, "Women GIs Cite Sexual Harassment at Army Bases," *Washington Post*, Jan. 29, 1980, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1980/01/29/women-gis-cite-sexual-harassment-at-army-bases/1142830a-93f7-45da-a69b-14fedc03ff92/.

[113] "Women Accuse Many Army Men Of Sexual Harassment," *Indianapolis Star*, Dec. 31, 1979, https://www.newspapers.com/image/?clipping_id=5029495&fcfToken=eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiIsInR5cCI6IkpXVCJ9.eyJmcmVlLXZpZXctaWQiOjEwNTk4Mzg4NiwiaWF0IjoxNjMxMjg1MDc0LCJleHAiOjE2MzEzNzE0NzR9.Ftbshkd8ciiOy6PuoCM5uTImv4ap7MGFOt74CjDX9BI.

men.[114] The Navy secretary resigned and two admirals were forced to retire, but none of the abusers was convicted for the attacks.[115]

Power dynamics are often at play in cases of sexual assault and harassment. In 1996, drill instructors at the Army's Aberdeen Proving Grounds were accused of sexually coercing their trainees. This incident led to thousands of complaints against Army training facilities throughout the US.[116] A similar scandal rocked the Air Force in 2003, when cadets alleged that they were sexually assaulted at the USAF Academy—and that Air Force leadership covered it up and retaliated against one survivor for speaking out.[117]

Female personnel have faced sexual assault not only in training and in the academies, but also while deployed. With the US at war in the Middle East, reports came home of sexual assault in deployed environments (in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Kuwait)—over 100 reports from 2002 to the beginning of 2004.[118] In 2017, sexual harassment in the military caught up to the cyber age, when a user on the closed, men-only Facebook group "Marines United" shared a Google Drive containing nude photos of women Marines taken or shared without their consent.[119] At least 500 members of the Facebook group—mostly active duty and retired Marines—viewed, commented on, and added to the content.

Following the Tailhook scandal, then Navy secretary H. Lawrence Garrett III—who himself was socializing on the same floor as the debauchery, but was "unaware" of the unfolding events—ordered harassment training for all Navy personnel.[120] The Aberdeen Proving Ground scandal led then Army secretary Togo West to order sexual harassment training for Army personnel.[121] This was not the first time military leadership addressed sexual harassment, and it would not be the last. For example, in May 1981, the US Army secretary defined sexual harassment in a

[114] Michael Winerip, "Revisiting the Military's Tailhook Scandal," *New York Times*, May 13, 2013, https://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/13/booming/revisiting-the-militarys-tailhook-scandal-video.html.

[115] Julie K. Carson and Brad R. Carson, "The historical roots and future directions for military law and policies on rape and sexual assault," *Military Psychology* 30:3 (2018), https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1037/mil0000180.

[116] Carson and Carson, "Historical roots."

[117] Carson and Carson, "Historical roots."

[118] Eric Schmitt, "Military women reporting rapes by US soldiers," *New York Times*, Feb. 26, 2004, https://www.nytimes.com/2004/02/26/us/military-women-reporting-rapes-by-us-soldiers.html.

[119] Anna Hiatt, "How The Marines United Investigation and Scandal Unfolded," *War Horse*, July 11, 2017, https://thewarhorse.org/how-the-marines-united-investigation-and-scandal-unfolded.

[120] Eric Schmitt, "Wall of Silence Impedes Inquiry Into a Rowdy Navy Convention," *New York Times*, June 14, 1992, https://www.nytimes.com/1992/06/14/us/wall-of-silence-impedes-inquiry-into-a-rowdy-navy-convention.html.

[121] Carson and Carson, "Historical roots."

memorandum to all Army personnel and "reminded recipients that sexual harassment was unacceptable and incompatible with professional behavior."[122]

Typically, sexual assault scandals resulted in congressional inquiries, which themselves often led to lawmakers pushing legal mandates on the DOD. For example, in response to the 2003 USAF scandal, Congress mandated that DOD establish the Panel to Review Sexual Misconduct Allegations at the United States Air Force Academy (also known as the Fowler Commission for its chair, former congresswoman Tillie Fowler).[123] If sexual assault was an issue at the USAF Academy, representatives thought perhaps it was also an issue at other service academies. The following year, in 2004, Congress mandated the establishment of the Defense Task Force on Sexual Harassment and Violence at the Military Service Academies.[124] Language in the fiscal year 2005 NDAA, passed later in 2004, broadened the service academy task force to create the Defense Task Force on Sexual Assault in the Military Services (DTF-SAMS). DTF-SAMS's mandate is to assess sexual assault in the US military; it published its first report in 2008.[125]

Concurrent with congressional mandates, then secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld established the Care for Victims of Sexual Assault Task Force in 2004 in response to publicized reports of incidents against women personnel in Iraq and Kuwait.[126] That task force recommended the creation of another task force, the Joint Task Force for Sexual Assault Prevention and Response in order to carry out the former task force's recommendations, as well as the FY 2005 NDAA mandate for a DOD-wide sexual assault policy.[127]

In October 2005, the department first approved DOD Directive 6495.01, *Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) Program.*[128] DODD 6495.01 led to the establishment of DOD's SAPR program and the SAPR Office (SAPRO) as a permanent "single point of authority for sexual assault policy" as well as oversight of policies in the services.[129]

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[122] Anne W. Chapman, *Mixed-gender Basic Training: The US Army Experience, 1973–2004* (US Army Training and Doctrine Command, Fort Monroe, Virginia, 2008).

[123] Richard J. Newman, "Upheaval at the Academy," *Journal of the Air Force Association* 87:1 (2004), https://web.archive.org/web/20051114064832/http://afa.org/magazine/jan2004/0104academy.asp.

[124] Carson and Carson, "Historical roots."

[125] Carson and Carson, "Historical roots."

[126] Secretary of Defense, Memorandum for the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, "Department of Defense Care for Victims of Sexual Assaults," Feb. 5, 2004, https://www.sapr.mil/public/docs/laws/d20040213satf.pdf.

[127] Department of Defense Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, "Mission & History."

[128] Department of Defense Directive 6495.01, Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) Program.

[129] Department of Defense Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, "Mission & History."

DOD's implementation of a SAPR policy and establishment of SAPRO did not end congressional interventions into military sexual assault policies or procedures. Among the recommendations of the Defense Task Force on Sexual Harassment and Violence at the Military Service Academies was that DOD "bring greater transparency to the UCMJ [Uniform Code of Military Justice], improve definitions of sexual assault, and resolve confusion over terms, behaviors, and legal definitions."[130] In the FY 2005 NDAA, Congress asked the secretary of defense to review the sexual assault portions of the UCMJ and recommend changes; in the 2006 NDAA, Congress moved forward with its own rewrite of UCMJ article 120, "Rape and carnal knowledge."[131]

The new article 120 brought military sex crimes more in line with civil law, including a spectrum of offenses from harassment to rape. The new language also shifted the burden of proof to the accused in order to alleviate potential torment for the survivor, but the Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces found this shift unconstitutional.[132] Congress again rewrote article 120 in the FY 2012 NDAA, thus creating three separate UCMJ articles: depending on whether the alleged offense occurred (1) before October 2007, (2) between then and June 2012, or (3) since June 2012.[133]

One of the more controversial issues has been the ability of the military chain of command to deal with sexual harassment and sexual assault. In October 1987, then secretary of defense Caspar Weinberger established the Task Force on Women in the Military, which recommended in early 1988 that DOD set up a sexual harassment complaint channel outside the military chain of command.[134] The task force reported, "an indecisive, if not uninterested, attitude among the chain of command when confronted with episodes of sexual harassment."[135]

In June 2021, after the Independent Review Commission (IRC) on Sexual Assault in the Military pointed to chain of command challenges, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin told a congressional committee, "I fully support removing the prosecution of sexual assaults and related crimes from the military chain of command."[136] This policy decision, which requires

[130] Carson and Carson, "Historical roots."

[131] Carson and Carson, "Historical roots."

[132] Carson and Carson, "Historical roots."

[133] Joint Service Committee on Military Justice, *Manual for Courts-Martial, United States* (2012 Edition), https://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/Military_Law/pdf/MCM-2012.pdf. See Article 120 and appendices 27 and 28.

[134] Melissa Healy, "AF, Marines to Open More Jobs to Women," *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 3, 1988, https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1988-02-03-mn-27216-story.html.

[135] Molly Moore, "Pentagon unit finds sexual harassment," *Washington Post*, Sept. 18, 1987, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1987/09/18/pentagon-unit-finds-sexual-harassment/1466f727-6dbc-4b11-808a-73cbd58e1898.

[136] Jennifer Steinhauer, "Defense Secretary Backs Changes to Military Law on Sexual Assault," *New York Times*, Aug. 3, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/23/us/politics/lloyd-austin-military-law-sexual-assault.html.

congressional backing, came after the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff changed his mind on the matter. In May 2021, General Mark Milley told reporters:

> I'm one of the guys who used to argue against that, but we have a problem, a big problem…. I haven't seen the needle move, and people like me have repeatedly, over and over and over again, said, "Leadership, leadership, leadership," and we've tried all kinds of systems over the last years and the needle hasn't moved.[137]

Not all military leaders agree. For example, USMC Commandant General David Berger recently wrote (in response to language in a congressional bill), "It is unclear to me whether or not [removing the chain of command from the process] would promote the interests of justice by increasing accountability for perpetrators of sexual assault."[138] However, the *New York Times* noted that scandal—once again—could move the issue forward: "This year is different in large part because of the murder of Specialist Vanessa Guillén, whose body was found in Texas in June 2020. Guillén had reportedly been sexually harassed by a fellow soldier before her death, and an Army investigation revealed a culture of harassment and bullying at Fort Hood where she was based."[139]

## Racial extremism

The problem of extremism in the military is one that dates back at least 100 years. Right-wing extremists, particularly the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), recruited openly among service personnel beginning in the 1920s. Indeed, in 1923, the KKK formed a provisional Klan chapter, "U.S. Navy Klan No. 1," aboard a battleship, the USS *Tennessee*.[140] Decades later, the KKK renewed its efforts to attract military personnel and by the late 1970s, the KKK was waging a large-scale campaign to attract military personnel. For example, in 1979, the Klan held a recruiting rally in Virginia Beach, hoping to attract some of the 50,000 military personnel stationed in the area. Commanders declared that the rally was off limits, but a number of servicemembers attended anyway. No servicemember was reprimanded. According to a military spokesman at the time,

[137] Oren Liebermann, "Top US general drops opposition to major policy changes on sexual assault in the military," CNN, May 3, 2021, https://www.cnn.com/2021/05/03/politics/milley-sexual-assault-military/index.html.

[138] David Berger, Letter to Mr. James M. Inhofe, Subject: Response to Questions Regarding Military Justice Improvement and Increasing Prevention Act 2021, May 17, 2021, https://www.inhofe.senate.gov/imo /media/doc/usmc_response_to_jmi_apr_30_ltr_-_military_justice_act.pdf.

[139] Melinda Wenner Moyer, "'A Poison in the System': The Epidemic of Military Sexual Assault," *New York Times Magazine*, Aug. 3, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/03/magazine/military-sexual-assault.html.

[140] Trevor Griffey, "The Washington State KKK and the U.S. Navy," Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project, 2007, accessed June 10, 2021, https://depts.washington.edu/civilr/kkk_navy.htm.

"the Navy's policy is that membership in the Klan is no more illegal than membership in the Elks."[141]

By the 1980s, this laissez-faire approach to extremism began to change: senior Pentagon leaders had concluded that military involvement in white supremacist activities posed a threat not only to good order and discipline, but to national security more generally. In 1986, after soldiers and Marines in uniform were photographed at a rally in St. Paul's, North Carolina, with a flag that read "KKK rally, no Jews allowed,"[142] then secretary of defense Caspar Weinberger issued a directive that for the first time established an explicit, albeit limited, DOD policy on extremism in the military. Weinberger's directive discouraged, but did not expressly prohibit, servicemember "participation in white supremacy, neo-Nazi, and other such groups which espouse or attempt to create overt discrimination."[143]

The 1995 murders in Fayetteville, in which three white soldiers stationed at Fort Bragg were charged with killing a Black couple presumably targeted as a result of their race, together with the Oklahoma City bombing (carried out by Army veteran Timothy McVeigh), prompted a new wave of concern about extremism in the ranks. The secretary of the army assembled a "Task Force on Extremist Activities" that analyzed 17,080 confidential written surveys of soldiers at 28 major Army installations in the United States, Germany, and Korea. In its 1996 report, the task force concluded that there was an "undercurrent of subtle racism which reflects a similar undercurrent in contemporary American society."[144] However, it also concluded that there was "minimal evidence of extremist activity" in the service.[145] At the same time, the panel identified shortfalls in existing policies, particularly Army Regulation (AR) 600-20, *Army Command Policy*. That regulation, according to the task force, failed to address the behaviors of an individual soldier who had no formal affiliation with an extremist organization, was hazy about the distinctions between "active" and "passive" participation, and failed to consider participation in extremist but not explicitly racist organizations that sought the violent overthrow of the government by militia and "patriot" groups.[146]

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[141] Quoted in Ben A. Franklin, "Klan Faction's 'Recruiting Efforts Pose a Problem for the Navy," *New York Times,* Oct. 7, 1979, https://www.nytimes.com/1979/10/07/archives/klan-factions-recruiting-efforts-pose-a-policy-problem-for-the-navy.html.

[142] William E. Schmidt, "Soldiers Said to Attend Klan-Related Activities," *New York Times*, Apr. 15, 1986, accessed June 10, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/1986/04/15/us/soldiers-said-to-attend-klan-related-activities.html.

[143] Quoted in Kathleen Belew, *Bring the War Home: The White Power Movement and Paramilitary America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 150.

[144] Department of the Army, *Secretary of the Army's Task Force on Extremist Activity: Defending American Values*.

[145] Department of the Army, *Secretary of the Army's Task Force on Extremist Activity: Defending American Values*.

[146] Department of the Army, *Secretary of the Army's Task Force on Extremist Activity: Defending American Values*. More recent iterations of AR 600-20 have included prohibitions on participation in activities "advocating or

The task force offered a set of recommendations, including the following:

- Clarify and expand the Army's regulation on extremist activity.
- Conduct separate assessments of extremist activity in the Reserve Components and Army civilian workforce.
- Develop a reporting process for timely and accurate information sharing on extremism among appropriate staff agencies.
- Ensure that all law enforcement and other relevant information on extremist activities is disseminated to battalion and lower levels.
- Develop a process to evaluate soldiers' behavior, adaptability, and human relations sensitivity during recruitment and Initial Entry Training.[147]

It is unclear to what degree the Army acted on these recommendations, although it does seem that the service did not put into place measures to improve information sharing, a perennial, ongoing challenge. In the words of Mark Pitcavage of the Anti-Defamation League's Center on Extremism, "Our experience has been, given the lack of overall guidance or uniform training on this issue, responses from the military are fairly haphazard or varied."[148] In 2005, a Department of Defense study recommended a set of questions to be put to military applicants regarding participation in violent extremism, such as, "Have you ever advocated or practiced discrimination or committed acts of violence or terrorism against individuals based on their religion, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, disability, gender, or loyalty to the U.S. government?"[149] This recommendation suggests that 10 years after the Army task force report, there was little or no screening for extremism during the recruitment process.

Following the mass shooting by a lone Army gunman at Fort Hood, Texas, in 2009 (an attack that was carried out not by a white supremacist but by a purported Islamic extremist), DOD issued new regulations regarding servicemember engagement in violent extremism.[150] Notably, it was more explicit about the prohibited activities, including actively advocating "supremacist, extremist, or criminal gang doctrine, ideology or causes…or advocate[ing] the use of force, violence, or criminal activity or otherwise advance efforts to deprive individuals

teaching the overthrow of the U.S. Government by force or violence, or seeking to alter the form of government by unconstitutional means (sedition)." Army Regulation 600-20, "Army Command Policy," July 24, 2020, accessed June 9, 2021, https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/ARN31651-AR_600-20-003-WEB-4.pdf.

147 Department of the Army, *Secretary of the Army's Task Force on Extremist Activity: Defending American Values*.

148 Mark Satter, "Divide Over Scope of Military's Extremism Problem Impedes Culture, Policy Changes," *Stars and Stripes*, May 23, 2021, accessed Sept. 9, 2021, https://www.stripes.com/theaters/us/2021-05-23/Divide-over-scope-of-military%E2%80%99s-extremism-problem-impedes-culture-policy-changes-1569838.html.

149 Buck, *Screening for Potential Terrorists*.

150 Kamarck, *Military Personnel and Extremism*.

of their civil rights."[151] Again, the Pentagon declared that neither membership in extremist organizations nor the possession of extremist literature was prohibited. This guidance was imperfect because it seemed to prohibit advocating supremacist doctrine but allowed membership in groups such as the KKK. Moreover, commanders would have the primary responsibility for identifying extremists under their command, being alert to warning signs, and intervening early through counseling to thwart "future prohibited activities."[152]

Today, the prohibitions spelled out in the 2009 DOD directive remain in effect across the armed services.[153] But in the judgment of some analysts, policy-makers, and journalists, more needs to be done to prevent violent extremists from joining the military, and new measures are required to identify and root out servicemembers who participate actively in such activities.[154] This concern extends to the highest levels of the Pentagon itself. In December 2020, Acting Secretary of Defense Christopher Miller ordered a review of policies, laws, and regulations concerning active participation by servicemembers in extremist or hate group activity.[155] Just two months later, in February 2021, Lloyd Austin, the newly confirmed secretary of defense, issued a memo calling for "a concerted effort to better educate ourselves and our people about the scope of this problem and to develop sustainable ways to eliminate the corrosive effects that extremist ideology and conduct have on the workforce."[156]

The journalist Leo Shane III, writing in March 2021, noted that "only nine soldiers and 17 Marines have been forced out of the military in recent years for misconduct related to extremism." But according to Shane, that does not necessarily indicate the depth of the problem, such as "how many troops may be frequenting white supremacist web sites, attending

[151] Department of Defense Instruction No. 1325.06, "Handling Dissident and Protest Activities Among Members of the Armed Forces."

[152] Department of Defense Instruction No. 1325.06, "Handling Dissident and Protest Activities."

[153] In addition, personnel who participate in extremist activity "may be subject to court-martial conviction and detention under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (Chapter 47 of Title 10, United States Code) under various articles (e.g., Article 92 —Failure to obey an order or regulation, among others listed in DODI 1325.06)." Kamarck, *Military Personnel and Extremism.*

[154] See, for example, Lecia Brooks, Southern Poverty Law Center, Testimony before the Subcommittee on Military Personnel U.S. House Armed Services Committee, "Alarming Incidents of White Supremacy in the Military—How to Stop It?" Feb. 11, 2020, accessed Sept. 28, 2021, https://www.congress.gov/116/meeting/house/110495/witnesses/HHRG-116-AS02-WstateBrooksL-20200211.pdf; and Carrie A. Lee and Celestino Perez, Jr., "Education Against Extremism: Suggestions for a Smarter Stand-Down," *War on the Rocks*, July 16, 2021, accessed Sept. 28, 2021, https://warontherocks.com/2021/07/education-against-extremism-suggestions-for-a-smarter-stand-down/.

[155] Secretary of Defense, Memorandum for Senior Pentagon Leadership, Subject: Actions to Improve Racial and Ethnic Diversity and Inclusion in the U.S. Military, Dec. 17, 2020.

[156] Secretary of Defense. Memorandum for Senior Pentagon Leadership, Defense Agencies, and DOD Field Activity Directors, "Stand-Down to Address Extremism in the Ranks."

meetings of extremist groups or helping spread that ideology to peers."[157] Moreover, it is unclear how many extremist servicemembers have been separated from the military or otherwise punished for more general offenses, such as conduct prejudicial to good order and discipline.[158]

Recent proposals to counter extremism in the military include the following:

- Create a specific separation code for active participation in extremism (only one service, the Navy, has one in place today).[159]
- Conduct command climate surveys (i.e., assessment of leadership, cohesion, morale, and the human relations environment, including prevalence of extremism).[160]
- Conduct deeper and more sophisticated pre-enlistment screening (for example, by moving beyond bluntly asking "Are you a terrorist?" and posing more nuanced questions such as "Do you think black and brown people have unfair advantages?" and "Is the white race in danger of elimination?")[161]

DOD and the armed services are also grappling with broader challenges associated with violent extremism. These include developing solid empirical data that would enable an accurate accounting of the problem; reviewing the UCMJ to identify what, if any, changes are required to address current conditions; coming to terms with what "active participation" in extremist groups entails, and whether *any* participation, active or not, can or should be prohibited; and finally—and most fundamentally—addressing the question of how the defense establishment

[157] Leo Shane III, "Lawmakers Spar Over Problem of Extremism in the Military," *Military Times*, Mar. 24, 2021, accessed May 30, 2021, https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2021/03/24/lawmakers-spar-over-problem-of-extremism-in-the-military/.

[158] Kyle Rempfer, "The Army Doesn't Know How Many Extremists it has Booted," *Army Times*, Feb. 19, 2021, accessed Aug. 19, 2021, https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2021/02/19/the-army-doesnt-know-how-many-extremists-it-has-booted/.

[159] John M. Donnelly, "Pentagon Report Reveals Inroads White Supremacists Have Made in Military," *Roll Call*, Feb. 16, 2021. The referenced report is Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, *Report to Armed Services Committees on Screening Individuals Who Seek to Enlist in the Armed Forces*, Department of Defense, 2020. But while the Navy has such a code, the service remains uncertain about how many service personnel have been forced out for extremist activities. Geoff Ziezulewicz, "The Navy Has No Idea How Many Sailors it has Booted for Extremist Activity," *Army Times*, Feb. 11, 2021, accessed Aug. 19, 2021, https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-navy/2021/02/11/the-navy-has-no-idea-how-many-sailors-it-has-booted-for-extremist-activity/.

[160] U.S. Army, "Command Climate Survey (TO&E Version 2.0): Commanders Guide," Feb. 5, 2005, accessed June 12, 2021, https://www.armyg1.army.mil/dcs/docs/Command%20Climate%20Survey.pdf.

[161] For more on strengthening pre-enlistment screening for white supremacist activism and other forms of extremism, see Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, *Report to Armed Services Committees on Screening Individuals Who Seek to Enlist in the Armed Forces*, Department of Defense, 2020, pp. 41-46.

should define "extremism."[162] The challenge of deciding on a definition is a formidable one. In the words of General C.Q. Brown, the chief of staff of the US Air Force, "I don't know that you'd ever be able to get a kind of black-and-white definition that we could all say we agree on, and it's going to stick."[163]

# Comparison

A comparison of the issues of sexual assault and extremism in military cases since the 1980s reveals some similarities and differences. In both issues, the scope and size of the problem has been less than fully understood; however, the level of incidence has been viewed as similar to that in broader US civilian society. Also in both cases, the military has historically perceived a difference between thought or association and action. One could have misogynist or racially extremist opinions, as long as those opinions and associations did not result in behavior at the higher end of the continuum of harm. Opinion was personal, whereas actions negatively affect "good order and discipline" of the force. Of course, in both cases, the penalty—if there was one—would be determined by one's immediate superior and military chain of command.

There are also important differences between the two cases. While both have been defined as "incompatible with professional military behavior," only racial extremism in the military was recognized as a direct national security threat. In part, that was because of the concern about (and historical examples of) extremists in the military recruiting others with military training to their cause. There may have been a "bandwagon" effect in sexual assaults—for example, those at the Tailhook convention—but there was no recruitment or conversion to a dangerous cause. Lastly, until recently, Congress has made only limited inquiries into the issue of racial extremism in the military—whereas, under the leadership of focused members, it has continued to push DOD on sexual harassment and assault.

[162] Carla Anne Robbins, "The Enemy Uncounted," *American Purpose*, July 30, 2021, accessed Aug. 18, 2021, https://www.americanpurpose.com/articles/the-enemy-uncounted-2/.

[163] Paul D. Shinkman, "The Extremism Question the Military Can't Answer," *U.S. News & World Report*, Apr. 8, 2021, accessed Aug. 19, 2021, https://www.usnews.com/news/national-news/articles/2021-04-08/military-may-never-conclude-what-extremism-is-top-general-says.

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CRM-2021-U-030885-Final

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