

Wayne Allard

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 25, 2004

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COLORADO U.S. SENATOR WAYNE ALLARD CALLS ON MILITARY TO DEVELOP MORE EFFECTIVE PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH SEXUAL ASSAULTS

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Wayne Allard made the following statement Wednesday at a hearing of the Senate Armed Services Committee Personnel Subcommittee:

“Understanding the problem of sexual assaults in the military and effectively developing policies, processes and procedures for addressing it will not be an easy task.

“Last November the *Denver Post* wrote a series of reports on sexual assaults in the military that I found very disturbing. These reports raised the serious question of whether the military is responding appropriately to sexual assault cases. Were victims receiving the care and treatment they needed? Were victims being punished for reporting? Were perpetrators of these crimes being punished? Does the Uniform Code of Military Justice need to be revamped? I have been asking these questions ever since.

“I later met with a number of victims who were sexually assaulted while serving in our military, including some who had just returned from Iraq. Many of the victims’ stories were heart-wrenching and appalling. In some cases, I was utterly speechless and outraged. I believe we have a serious problem that will not go away with time.

“One lesson I took away from my experience in dealing with sexual assault issues at the U.S. Air Force Academy is that there is no such thing as a perfect sexual-assault prevention and response program. For years most sexual assault experts believed the Air Force Academy’s prevention and response program was ideal – confidentiality was protected and victims could seek peer counseling. As we all know now, the reason why confidentiality was protected was because victims were discouraged from reporting. Those in charge of the academy had no idea that a large number of female cadets were being sexually assaulted.

“I urge these witnesses to constantly review their programs for dealing with sexual assault and always look for ways to improve them. Thinking that you have the perfect system will only lead to failure and result in innocent victims being mistreated, or worse, punished. We cannot afford to lose good men and women just because we haven’t taken this issue seriously.

“The mental and physical health of service members is at stake. Coupled with the fact that many of them are currently deployed in stressful combat environments, this makes it imperative that we get to the bottom of these allegations.

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