

[View this email in your browser.](#)



**Opening Statement (As Prepared)**  
**Chair Jackie Speier**  
Subcommittee on Military Personnel:  
*"Update on the Implementation of Recommendations of the Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military and the Establishment of the Office of Special Trial Counsel"*  
September 21, 2022

Click [here](#) to view the hearing.

---

The hearing will now come to order. I want to welcome everyone to this hearing -- an *Update on The Implementation of Recommendations of the Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military and the Establishment of the Office of Special Trial Counsel*.

The Independent Review Commission released their report in July 2021, so it is important that we closely monitor implementation of those recommendations. Also, last year's National Defense Authorization Act included historic military justice reforms, so we need to ensure the implementation of those provisions is closely aligned with the IRC's recommendations.

The implementation of the 82 IRC recommendations is urgently needed, because the situation is increasingly dire. The crisis of military sexual assault and harassment continues unabated. The FY2021 Department of Defense Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military delivered catastrophic news: Over 8 percent of active-duty women and about 1.5 percent of active-duty men indicated experiencing some form of unwanted sexual contact.

For women this is the highest prevalence rate reported since the annual study was instituted. And the news doesn't get better. In 2021, survey results also found that 29 percent of servicewomen experienced sexual harassment—a 5 percentage point increase—and men and women alike experienced greater workplace hostility compared with findings from 2018. Service member sexual assault reports increased by 13 percent in 2021 compared to 2020, yet the overall rate of those who experienced sexual assault and

came forward to report has decreased.

Finally, the data also shows that trust in the military to protect privacy of victims, ensure safety, and treat victims with dignity and respect *is going down*.

It is vital for the Department and services to implement and execute the IRC's recommendations expeditiously for the readiness of our force and the safety and wellbeing of our service members. It is essential for our military leaders to address a culture of harassment and mistrust. To teach our service members they can not only trust their leaders enough to follow them into harm's way, but to also protect them from danger within the ranks.

Sexual assault and harassment in our military is a readiness issue: It makes our force less lethal; it makes recruiting a challenge; it makes young men and women scared to serve; and it often damages or cuts short the military career of the victim. We cannot protect and defend the United States when we are protecting and defending our own servicemembers from the enemy within. We cannot ask our children to serve, when their parents can't be sure their commands won't protect them from abuse.

I have spent the last ten years battling this cancer and with this most recent report, I know we still have a long way to go. But I also know the Department is working hard to implement new prevention strategies and a completely new and *independent* military justice system to eradicate this scourge.

I feel confident that if the Department of Defense keeps their foot on the pedal and Congress doesn't turn a blind eye, this is the beginning of the end for those who wish to harm their brothers and sisters in arms. And let me be clear, even if I am not sitting as Chair of the Military Personnel Subcommittee, I'll still be watching. I will make sure the voices of our service members are heard, and heard loudly.

I would like to hear from the first panel the status of the IRC's recommendations and implementation. What has been completed so far? What is going well? What challenges are you facing? What are your timelines for full implementation? What resources do need to get this right for our service members?

From the second panel I would like to hear how your Military Department plans to execute DoD's IRC implementation plan, and what progress your services have made in implementing military justice reform? What are your timelines? What resources do you need? Additionally, how are you going to increase trust in your military leaders? What cultural changes do you intend to make so that the military really is a place that treats all members with dignity and respect?

###

---

### Connect With Us on Social Media:



**House Armed Services Committee Democrats**

Rayburn House Office Building I Room 2216

Washington, D.C. 20515

Want to change how you receive these emails?

You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).