

# Vietnam Veterans of America: To military sexual trauma survivors: Stand up and speak out, be heard

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(Washington, DC) – “Vietnam Veterans of America has been at the forefront, fighting for justice for the women and men of our armed forces who have suffered incidents of sexual trauma and harassment,” said John Rowan, VVA National President. “As veterans, we know only too well the power and constraints that military commanders can—and often do—exert on those who have come forward to report the circumstance of their assaults and indignities. More often than not, these crimes go unreported; silence has been the only safe recourse for these active-duty men and women who have been betrayed by their own. This disturbing climate in our military is unacceptable and has existed for far too long.”

“Military Sexual Trauma is pervasive; it continues to erode the unity of force, its mission capability, our service members’ trust in one another, and the honor of all those who serve our nation in uniform,” said Rowan. “We at Vietnam Veterans of America urge all those victimized by sexual assault to step forward and seek the counseling and care critical to their health, safety, and well-being.”

Despite claims by military leadership of “zero tolerance” for sexual assault, the reporting rate has only increased one and a half percent. DoD’s FY 16 Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military finds that only one in three survivors report their assault, belying the fact that the men and women who serve in our military do not have confidence in their command or the justice they would receive. In FY16,

female service members reported sexual assault at a rate two and a half times greater than male MST survivors; however, more men reported the crime than ever before.

“As we listen to the tragic stories of sexual assault from survivors in the entertainment industry, the political arena, and the media, we cannot and must not ignore those who have answered the call to defend our Constitution,” said Rowan. “Vietnam Veterans of America will continue to advocate on behalf of these men and women survivors of MST, so that they receive fair and judicious outcomes, and most importantly, to ensure their health and well-being.