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Dept. of Military Affairs: The Adjutant General's statement on National Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month

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by Maj. Gen. Don Dunbar, Wisconsin's adjutant general

April is National Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month. Sexual assault is a crime and the Wisconsin National Guard treats it as such. There is no place for sexual assault in our ranks and its impact is like a cancer on unit morale and cohesion. Our program continues to show signs of trust, as victims report this crime to our Sexual Assault Response Coordinator and all such reports are treated in the same consistent manner. We support victims, we ensure due process, and we hold perpetrators to account.

This month provides an opportunity to recommit to this program and ensure that we continue to build trust in our ranks. The Wisconsin National Guard does not tolerate sexual assault and its perpetrators have no place within our organization.

Sexual assault causes long-lasting harm to a person. Survivors cope with unfathomable pain and scars both physical and emotional. When a sexual assault happens to one us regardless of circumstance its impact ripples throughout our organization. Sexual assault violates every value we hold as Airmen and Soldiers.

Sexual assault is a national problem and the Wisconsin National Guard cannot protect people from what may happen on a college campus, at a civilian workplace or in a person's community. What this organization does is support every Airman and Soldier who has experienced sexual assault, no matter where and when it occurred.

The Wisconsin National Guard Sexual Assault Response Coordinator stands ready 24/7 to connect you with mental and physical health support. Call 608-469-2627 anytime day or night and trained professionals will be there to help you. You can also visit https://safehelpline.org for additional resources.

The Wisconsin National Guard can only meet its mission when we work and support each other as a team. We take care of our battle buddies and wingmen in battle and can be no different with sexual assault. Most of us fortunately will never experience a sexual assault, but all of us can support one another and create a climate where this crime is not tolerated. Live the Army Values of loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage. Live the Air Force Values of integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all we do. Demand that everyone in your unit live them too.

As your senior commander let me assure you — I will not look the other way. I have full confidence in my leadership team. Our First Sergeants, Command Chiefs, Command Sergeants Major, Command Chief and senior Warrant Officers, and my Commanders. I have full confidence in each of you. Together, we have drawn a line against this crime and, together, we cannot look the other way.

This month Wisconsin National Guardsmen can show support for sexual assault survivors by hanging a teal ribbon on a tree set up at Joint Force Headquarters. We will post these ribbons to show just how many of us know someone in our lives who has survived sexual assault and how we stand with them and support them. They are not alone. I am hanging the first ribbon for someone close to me who has survived and for all the Wisconsin National Guard Soldiers and Airmen who have come forward; and I encourage you to do the same for someone you know personally. If you cannot make it to JFHQ, you can email a message to ng.wi.wiarng.mbx.sarc-sapr@mail.mil and we will post your ribbon to honor someone you know.

It is a privilege to wear this uniform and serve with you. Together, let's recommit to our command philosophy that there is no place for sexual assault in our ranks.

Thank you for all that you do for our communities, state, and nation.