

Wisconsin National Guard's sexual misconduct procedures to undergo federal review

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The feds are planning to conduct a review of the Wisconsin National Guard's sexual misconduct procedures, Gov. Tony Evers announced today.

Evers and U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin, D-Madison, last month called for an examination of the Wisconsin Guard's policies to be conducted by the National Guard Bureau's Office of Complex Investigations — a federal agency that provides oversight of Guard units across the country.

The request came after some Wisconsin Guard members came forward with accusations of sexual harassment and assault and highlighted a lack of accountability for those accused of sexual misconduct. One female guard member wrote to Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald in January that her sergeant had sexually harassed her and her colleagues. But the complaints weren't properly investigated, according to The Associated Press.

"I appreciate the National Guard Bureau's Office of Complex Investigations' swift review of my and Sen. Baldwin's request," Evers said today. "The bottom line is that our servicemembers deserve to work in an environment that's free of sexual assault and harassment and the fear they might face retaliation for reporting sexual assault or harassment when it happens."

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The OCI review will delve into the Wisconsin Guard's sexual harassment and assault policies and practices, conduct on-site reviews at all major Wisconsin National Guard locations, examine prior allegations of sexual assault and harassment, and

provide recommendations moving forward.

Wisconsin Guard spokesman Capt. Joe Trovato today told WisPolitics.com that the Guard “welcomes a thorough and independent review of our sexual assault and harassment program.”

“We look forward to the opportunity to work with the National Guard Bureau’s Office of Complex Investigations to identify areas where we can grow as an organization and will provide them with any information they might request,” he said.

At a media roundtable earlier this month, Wisconsin Guard officials told reporters the organization processed 52 reports of sexual assault from 2013 to 2017.

Of the 52 reported incidents, 20 have fallen under the “unrestricted” category, in which the Guard notifies law enforcement and conducts its own administrative investigation. These investigations have substantiated the accusation in 10 of the reports, but could not collect enough information to substantiate the other 10.

Of the 10 that have been substantiated, Trovato said two have resulted in courts-martial. Trovato said one of those courts-martial has concluded and another is ongoing.

Another 20 cases have been submitted as “restricted” reports, in which the alleged victim chooses to request confidentiality in order to protect privacy but still wishes to seek resources to cope with the incident. In the remaining 12 reports, the Guard did not have jurisdiction over the case.

See the release:

<https://www.wispolitics.com/2019/gov-evers-and-sen-baldwin-announce-comprehensive-review-of-wisconsin-national-guards-processes-on-sexual-assault-and-harassment/>