



PRESS RELEASE

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

No. 21-10; May 4, 2021
Contact: Mokie Pratt Porter
301-996-0901

VVA Applauds Major Policy Reversal by Joint Chiefs on Military Sexual Trauma

(Washington, D.C.) --“Vietnam Veterans of America applauds the recent decision of Joint Chiefs Chair Gen. Mark Milley to drop his opposition to policy changes on how the military handles sexual assault and his current openness to removing Military Sexual Assault investigations from the chain of command,” said John Rowan, VVA National President.

“We are grateful for the leadership of Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, who formed an independent review commission to carry out a critical, 90-day review of Pentagon policies and procedures on the handling of sexual assaults,” said Rowan. “This major reversal of military practice on the part of the Joint Chiefs follows the review commission’s recommendation that the prosecution of servicemembers for sexual assault be made by independent authorities.”

“Vietnam Veterans of America has been at the forefront of the fight for justice for the women and men of our armed forces who have suffered incidents of sexual trauma and harassment,” said Rowan. “This major reversal of military practice, which comes amid mounting pressure from both the administration and Congress, is long overdue,” said Rowan.

“On Capitol Hill, we are grateful for the tenacious leadership of Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) who, for over a decade, has led the charge, building bipartisan support for this change, and for her forty-two Senate colleagues who stand with her. We encourage swift passage of S.1520, the *Military Justice Improvement Act Military and Increasing Prevention Act*,” noted Rowan.

“For over a decade, Vietnam Veterans of America and fellow advocates have pushed for changing the way the U.S. military handles Military Sexual Assault cases, including advocating for these cases to be adjudicated outside the chain of command. This disturbing climate in our military is unacceptable and has existed for far too long.”

“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,” noted Rowan. “These crimes go unreported, and until now, silence has been the only safe choice for these active-duty men and women who have been betrayed by the chain of command.”

Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) is the nation's only congressionally chartered veterans service organization dedicated to the needs of Vietnam-era veterans and their families. VVA's founding principle is "Never again will one generation of veterans abandon another."