

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 30, 2020

The Honorable Mark T. Esper
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Esper,

We write today to address the disheartening report¹ from the Pentagon, obtained by *USA Today*², revealing a significant increase in incidents of sexual assault at our nation's military academies. While it seems that the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response program is empowering cadets and service members to report and seek restorative care, the continued increase in reported incidents from year to year point to a disturbing trend that now requires us to reexamine our efforts to find solutions.

The Pentagon's annual report on sexual harassment and violence at the military service academies states that there were 122 sexual assault reports during the 2018-19 school year compared to 92 reports from 2017-18, a 32 percent increase. While this sharp increase may reflect an increased willingness to report, it also shows an alarming trend that is heading in the wrong direction.

We request a briefing on this report to complete our own analysis, as well as a meeting with the appropriate DoD personnel to discuss its overall findings, with a particular focus on the suspected causes and proposed plans of action moving forward.

The DoD and Congress have prioritized combating sexual assault in our military formations but we must continue to evaluate and reassess our efforts. It is our shared responsibility to ensure the men and women who will be the next generation of leaders in our nation's armed forces are being instilled with the necessary values to combat the scourge of sexual assault and are immersed in a safe environment where they do not fear becoming a sexual assault victim themselves.

We look forward to hearing from you and working with you to ensure we are doing everything we can to stop sexual assault from degrading our readiness, lethality, and combat effectiveness. In order to facilitate this briefing, please reach out to Grace Galvin, Legislative

¹ [https://sapr.mil/sites/default/files/DoD Annual Report on Sexual Harassment and Violence.pdf](https://sapr.mil/sites/default/files/DoD%20Annual%20Report%20on%20Sexual%20Harassment%20and%20Violence.pdf)

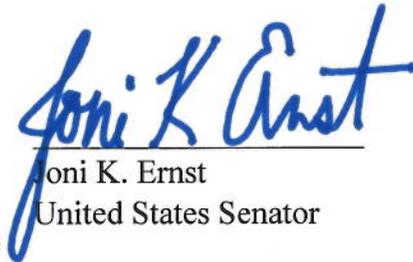
² Vanden Brook, Tom. "Sexual assault reports by cadets, midshipmen at military academies surge by 32%." *USA Today*. Jan 30, 2020. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2020/01/30/sexual-assault-reports-surge-32-military-academies-pentagon-says/4589368002/>.

Counsel (grace_galvin@ernst.senate.gov) or Nic Adams, National Security Advisor (nic_adams@ernst.senate.gov).

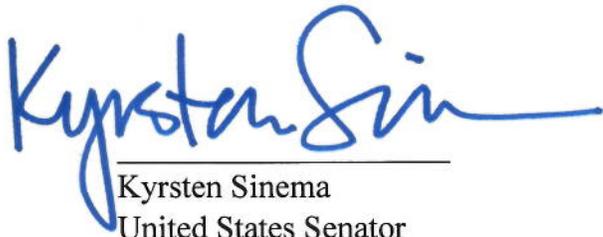
Sincerely,



Thom Tillis
United States Senator



Joni K. Ernst
United States Senator



Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator



Kelly Loeffler
United States Senator