

COMMANDER'S COLUMN



Colonel Thomas J. Owens II

First, I would like to thank you all for the tremendous hard work you all did over the last couple of days for the 2013 Readiness Exercise (ORE), during our June Unit Training Assembly (UTA). Also during the UTA, I spoke to you about sexual assault, and I would like to take this opportunity to discuss the subject again.

On May 30, 2013, Air Force Secretary Michael Donley told the Air Force Academy's graduating class at commencement that sexual assault, in the military, is "a scourge" that is inconsistent with Air Force values. Secretary Donley said, "This is your Air Force, and changing behavior depends on changing at every level, the command climate and the social culture in which we operate and live, both on and off duty," Donley said. "Each of us is responsible for the character of this Air Force and its reputation, and I therefore charge you to serve with integrity and by your example to lead, to say and to do what is right for our Air Force."

Just last week, on June 4, Air Force Chief of Staff General Mark A. Welsh III re-emphasized to the Senate Armed Services Committee the Air Force's commitment to combating sexual assault within its ranks and improving care for victims when it does occur. Sexual assault "undermines the mission effectiveness of our great force," he said. "Nothing saddens me more than to know this cancer exists in our ranks." According to Welsh, preventing sexual assault is every Airman's responsibility. "Every Airman is either part of the solution or part of the problem," he said. "There is no middle ground."

Both Secretary Donley and General Welsh agree that each one of us has an individual responsibility and a responsibility in working together, to remove sexual assault from our ranks.

I agree, there is no middle ground in this area, we are either going to be part of the problem or part of the solution, and I want each member of the 106th Rescue Wing to be part of the solution.

<http://www.military.com/daily-news/2013/05/30/donley-end-scourge-of-sexual-assault-in-military.html>

<http://www.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123351150>