

# South Dakota National Guard

## Public Affairs Office

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

April 1, 2016

## SD Guard kicks off sexual assault awareness campaign

RAPID CITY, S.D. – The South Dakota National Guard kicked off the “It’s On Us” campaign today at its Joint Force Headquarters on Camp Rapid to raise awareness about sexual assault and educate Soldiers and Airmen on how to prevent sexual violence.

The campaign is a part of the national effort which recognizes April as Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month.

“‘It’s On Us’ is a national campaign, derived from the White House Task Force on Sexual Violence, which we have tailored to reflect the values of the South Dakota National Guard,” said Patricia Fordyce, SDNG sexual assault response coordinator. “It takes its name from the notion of communal responsibility for all cases of sexual assault and aims to create a safer community and environment for all Soldiers, Airmen and civilians in the SDNG.”

The campaign’s goal is to show a visible commitment SDNG members are making to one another, drive participation in sexual assault education and prevention, and embed a culture of respect within its ranks.

“This is an opportunity for all members of the SDNG to become involved in sexual assault prevention on an individual level,” said Air Force Col. Russ Limke, SDNG J1 director of personnel. “The campaign is a way to bring the conversation about sexual assault back to what each of us can do to protect our friends, colleagues and peers.”

Limke says the focus is on creating a culture of respect and responsibility – where there is regard for others and intervention in dangerous situations.

“We want to create a culture where support for those who are victims of sexual assault is the norm,” he said. “We are calling all members of the Guard community to actively create a positive environment that prevents sexual violence by looking out for one another, intervening when necessary and spreading awareness.”

For this year’s Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month, SDNG Adjutant General, Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, signed a proclamation expressing sustained leadership focus and commitment to eliminating sexual assault from within the Guard ranks and to provide their support for the victims.

“Our profession is built on the bedrock of trust, but sexual assault and sexual harassment betray that trust,” said Reisch. “They have a corrosive effect on our unit readiness, team cohesion, good order and discipline. It is up to every one of us, Soldier, Airman, general officer to new enlistee, to eliminate this problem from our ranks. These acts violate everything our organization stands for. They are contrary to our values and they must not be tolerated.”

National studies show one in five women will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime, as well as one in six men. Every two minutes, someone in America is sexually assaulted.

A central theme for the campaign is for SDNG members to start a conversation among leaders, peers, and subordinates and with family and friends – to better understand one another’s experiences and to develop better solutions to this problem.

Reisch says part of the conversation starts with correcting problematic behavior – without hesitation – just as it occurs, and includes: to sternly correct people on the spot who tell inappropriate jokes or make sexual advances; to report inappropriate behavior to the chain of command, to refuse to accept complacency relating to respecting all human beings; and to immediately report violations and potential violations of these standards.

“Leaders at every level are responsible for establishing a command climate and culture of mutual respect, trust, and safety,” said Reisch. “Together, we will set and enforce the highest standards of discipline within our organization and create a culture free from sexual assault.”

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High resolution photos are available at [www.flickr.com/photos/southdakotationalguard](http://www.flickr.com/photos/southdakotationalguard)



**160401-Z-FO377-006:** U.S. Army Col. Bill Freidel, South Dakota National Guard chief of staff, addresses Guard members at Camp Rapid, Rapid City, S.D., April 1, 2016, as the SDNG kicks off the “It’s On Us” campaign. The campaign, in coordination with Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month, is designed to raise awareness about sexual assault and educate Soldiers and Airmen on how to prevent sexual violence. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by 1st Lt. Chad Carlson/Released)



**160401-Z-FO377-007:** Patricia Fordyce, South Dakota National Guard sexual assault response coordinator, speaks to Guard members at Camp Rapid, Rapid City, S.D., April 1, 2016, as the SDNG kicks off the “It’s On Us” campaign. The campaign, in coordination with Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month, is designed to raise awareness about sexual assault and educate Soldiers and Airmen on how to prevent sexual violence. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by 1st Lt. Chad Carlson/Released)



**160401-Z-FO377-008:** Members of the South Dakota National Guard display ribbons to raise awareness about sexual assault as the SDNG kicks off the “It’s On Us” campaign, April 1, 2016, at Camp Rapid, Rapid City, S.D. The campaign, in coordination with Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month, is designed to raise awareness about sexual assault and educate Soldiers and Airmen on how to prevent sexual violence. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by 1st Lt. Chad Carlson/Released)



**160401-Z-FO377-013:** U.S. Army Col. Bill Freidel, South Dakota National Guard chief of staff, and Patricia Fordyce, SDNG sexual assault response coordinator, cut a ceremonial cake as the SDNG kicks off the “It’s On Us” campaign, April 1, 2016, at Camp Rapid, Rapid City, S.D. The campaign, in coordination with Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month, is designed to raise awareness about sexual assault and educate Soldiers and Airmen on how to prevent sexual violence. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by 1st Lt. Chad Carlson/Released)



**160331-Z-ZZ999-005:** (S.D. National Guard courtesy photo/Released)

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