



February 12, 2015

**Statement of Protect Our Defenders President, Col. Don Christensen (ret.)
on the Introduction of the Military TRAC Act**

I want to thank Congresswoman Speier and Congressman Coffman for their leadership on this issue and for their dedication to keeping Americans safe. Right now, the military is failing our servicemembers and our communities. The current system is broken, and it allows convicted predators to escape detection, to disappear into our neighborhoods and operate in our societies without suspicion.

As recent accounts have shown, the harm and devastation of military sexual assault is not isolated to our servicemembers, but impacts all Americans. This is a national security issue, and has the potential to impact the life of every citizen.

Currently, does not track convicted offenders serving in their ranks, and lacks jurisdiction to ensure that military offenders register with civilian authorities upon their release from confinement.

Instead, the Pentagon relies on an “honor system,” in which convicted sex offenders are trusted to register themselves when they leave the military. This is absurd. When military sex offenders are not held accountable for their crimes, and are not properly identified, why would we expect anything other than impunity and additional violence?

In my 23 years of experience, I have seen first-hand the devastation sexual assault can cause. I also know how hard it is to convict someone of these awful crimes. This makes it all the more absurd that even when we do bring these criminals to justice, all too often, they are released into the civilian world and essentially given a clean slate.

As we have witnessed, the result of this failure to track and identify military offenders can be catastrophic. Because these predators are so often able to operate in society without notice, they have gone on to prey on American civilians in our own communities.

This is why it is critical that Congress pass the Military TRAC Act. This bill instructs DoD to establish a sex offender registry for service members who are convicted of rape, sexual assault, and other sex offenses. It requires registration prior to an offender’s release, and would ensure that the information would be provided to civilian law enforcement and made available to the public.

This bill, unlike similar provisions proposed in the Senate, takes a comprehensive approach to this problem and holds the military accountable for identifying and tracking offenders convicted of sex crimes in the military justice system. This is necessary to ensure that offenders do not slip through the cracks and will ensure that Americans are kept safe from these criminals.