



Protect Our Defenders

Strengthen our Military. Prosecute Rape. Support Survivors.

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LEADING NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATION LAUNCHES SUPPORT NETWORK FOR SURVIVORS OF MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA

On heels of The Invisible War release, Protect Our Defenders launches new resource for service members who have been victims of rape or sexual assault by fellow service members

Park City, Utah – Following the premiere of *The Invisible War*, a highly anticipated documentary from Kirby Dick, Protect Our Defenders has launched a first-of-its kind support network for US service members who are victims of military sexual violence.

Protect Our Defenders, established in May 2011, aims to fix the military training, investigation and adjudication systems related to sexual violence and harassment. The organization made a name for itself capturing stories of survivors who were denied appropriate protections, medical treatment and justice by a military system that acknowledges the problem of rape and sexual assault but still refuses to fix it. *Invisible War* and Protect Our Defenders are building a chorus of voices, the voices of survivors who the military tried to silence.

Responding to the needs expressed directly by survivors, Protect Our Defenders has launched an online network, connecting survivors with each other and with mental health care, mentoring, case management and other services available to cope with the trauma of military rape. The new network can be found at ProtectOurDefenders.com.

“Military rape survivors have a much harder time accessing VA services,” said Nancy Parrish, President of Protect Our Defenders. “Often they’ve been discharged involuntarily, even dishonorably, and services available to other veterans are denied them,” she continued. “The Survivors Support Network is a resource for and by survivors.”

“We’re doing two things at once, here,” says Parrish. “We’re opening a Military Sexual Trauma Forum where survivors can share experiences and help each other. And we’re creating a comprehensive database of MST-related services to make it as easy as possible for survivors to find the help they need. The growing database is organized geographically and each entry is flagged based on the service it provides. The network also allows users to add new resources.

BY THE NUMBERS: The Department of Defense estimates that in 2010, 19,000 service members were raped or sexually assaulted. But of these 19,000 assaults, only 13.5% were reported. A little known DOD statistic is that 38% of the victims of rape and sexual assault in the military are young men.

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