



#MeToo

Harnessing This Tipping Point Moment
Protect Our Defenders
Annual Report 2017

HARNESSING THIS TIPPING POINT MOMENT

2017 was a pivotal year in the movement to hold perpetrators accountable for sexual violence. More and more survivors came

forward and the public listened in a way it hadn't in the past. As the #MeToo movement grew, so did our national outrage. From Hollywood to the halls of Congress, sexual predators were beginning to at last be exposed and held to account. These institutions had no choice but to respond to public pressure. **But while the culture of silence and denial was broken for many, military service members are legally silenced, giving up their freedoms to protect ours.**

Protect Our Defenders (POD) was made for this moment.

The only organization of its kind, since 2011, POD has been growing the movement to end the epidemic of sexual assault and harassment in the US Military. In 2017, we made tangible progress towards our goal of ensuring all survivors and service members are provided a safe, respectful work environment and have access to a fair, impartially administered system of justice.

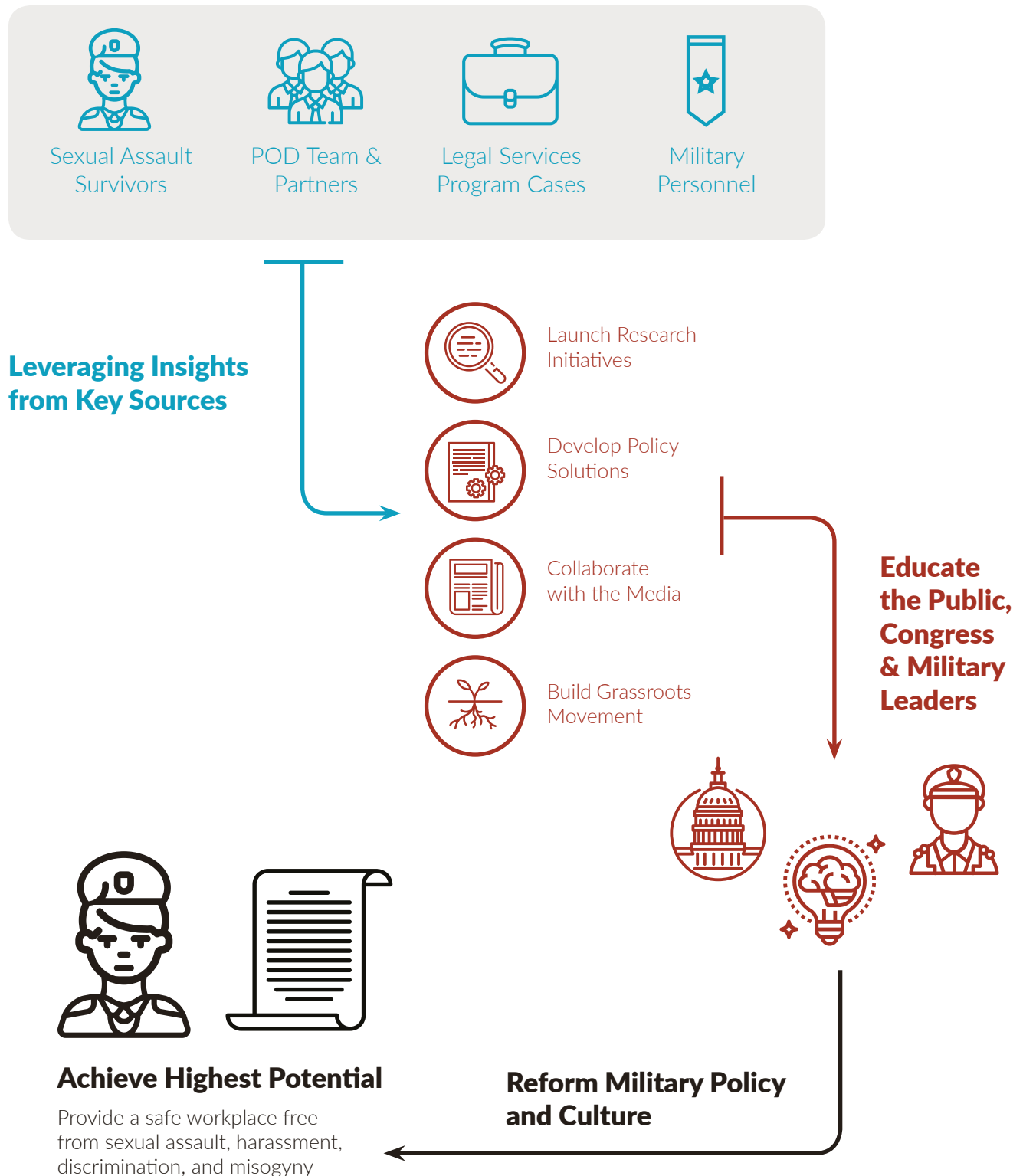


TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>1</i>	PROTECT OUR DEFENDERS' IMPACT CYCLE
<i>2</i>	FROM OUR LEADERSHIP
<i>5</i>	RESEARCH & ANALYSIS
<i>9</i>	POLICY REFORM
<i>15</i>	LEGAL SERVICES PROGRAM
<i>21</i>	GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY
<i>25</i>	MEDIA
<i>29</i>	LEADERSHIP

2017

PROTECT OUR DEFENDERS' IMPACT CYCLE



FROM OUR LEADERSHIP



Dear Friends,

In 2011, I was shocked to learn of the entrenched culture of sexual violence within our nation's military, which is perpetuated by an arbitrary, unjust legal system controlled by commanders. I founded Protect Our Defenders (POD) with a small band of friends and survivors. With your support, we have grown to lead a national movement.

Last year brought the sexual assault and harassment crisis into the national spotlight, and POD has been a leading voice. #MeTooMilitary!

The US Military is the world's largest employer, a path to social mobility. Misogyny, discrimination, and rape are barriers precluding advancement. **Everyone is entitled to a safe workplace and home environment.**

With our President, Col Don Christensen, USAF (ret.), and the members of our dedicated staff, we have had substantial impact, but there is still much to do.

To accelerate progress on our ambitious agenda, we are proud that Col Scott Jensen, USMC (ret.) has joined POD as our new CEO. Scott brings a commander and warfighter's perspective to the cause. He cares deeply about this issue and eagerly joins us in this fight.

Now that Scott has taken over as CEO, I will, as Board Co-Chair, remain intensely involved, concentrating on strategy and external relationship-building. Don will continue as our legal expert and spokesperson on the military justice system.

Scott's joining is a game-changer for POD and the movement. Thank you for your continued commitment to this effort, and we look forward to all that we will continue to accomplish together.

In gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Parrish', written over a horizontal line.

Nancy Parrish

Founder, Co-Chair

Col Scott Jensen, USMC (ret.)

Protect Our Defenders' new Chief Executive Officer

As head of the Marines' Sexual Assault Prevention and Response unit, Scott's reform efforts were thwarted by senior leadership. After 27 years in service, Scott left to push for change from the outside.

"Scott Jensen is first and foremost a warrior. He deployed to combat more times than any field grade officer I knew, and he was exactly the right leader for difficult times. He knew that his unit's success was only possible if his Marines worked together and trusted each other. Colonel Jensen understands that any loss of trust can have life-changing, or life-ending consequences. Sexual assault devastates that trust and makes us weaker as a unit, as a military, and a nation. In this new position, I know he will work as tirelessly as he did in the Marines, with a commitment to making our nation safer, and to making all of our service members safer as well." - General Christopher S. Owen, USMC (ret.)



1989

Warfighter

Missions to Somalia,
Iraq, Afghanistan



2005-14

Commander

2013 – 2014
Marine Air Operations
Afghanistan
2011-2013
Marine Aircraft Group
North Carolina
2005 – 2007
Squadron
Iraq



2014-16

Chief of Marines SAPR Office

Led Sexual Assault
Prevention and
Response Office & other
behavioral programs



2017

Protect Our Defenders CEO

"We are at a tipping
point in this movement."

Dear Supporters,

Our nation's military is at a tipping point. For too long, a culture of misogyny and bias has been accepted by those who lead, allowing sexual assault, harassment, and retaliation to reign over those who serve and their families. The current national dialogue and the expectations of our citizens all point toward change!

I have observed the culture and unacceptable behavior within our military ranks for three decades. As a commander in combat and at home, I witnessed the negative impacts of a poor culture on the trust and cohesion of our units and the corresponding erosion of our national security. As a father who has a daughter serving, I struggled watching my child go in harm's way—not from an external enemy, but from an enemy within. Finally, **as the program lead for sexual assault prevention and response in the Marine Corps, I saw the good intentions and plans of hardworking people thwarted by an uncaring, bureaucratic wall and less than interested leadership.**

Throughout my time in uniform, Protect Our Defenders (POD) stood out as an organization that not only demanded change, but also knew how to create the conditions that made change happen. POD got things done—in Congress, in the military, in the public's eye, and in the survivor community. That reputation has only grown with time. Seeing that impact led me to conclude that I needed to be a part of it. Working with POD, I can affect change from outside the military much more effectively than inside.

I am incredibly optimistic and happy that I will be part of the future with Protect Our Defenders. As we move forward, we will expand our knowledge of the impact of the current culture on the national security of our nation, using that knowledge to highlight the risks to unit cohesion, readiness, recruitment, and retention. We will continue to leverage the media to shine a bright light on the misogyny and bias that currently exists within our military and its corresponding impact on cohesion and diversity. We will aggressively expand the legal support we offer to those survivors in need of our help.

Reforms to both the military justice system and the cultural environment in which our young men and women work must come rapidly and permanently. We can make change! Now is the time!



Colonel Scott Jensen, USMC (ret.)



RESEARCH & ANALYSIS

Influencing change through groundbreaking research



RACIAL DISPARITY REPORT

POD's seminal *Racial Disparities in Military Justice* report led Congress to mandate an independent US Government Accountability Office (GAO) investigation.

POD is dedicated to exposing and eradicating bias within the military justice system and to ensuring that all service members are afforded fair, efficient, and impartial justice.

Through our work, we witnessed what appeared to be indications of racial disparities in the military's criminal justice and disciplinary systems. These indicators were consistent with the experiences of POD's President, Col Don Christensen, as a military attorney.

RACIAL DISPARITIES IN MILITARY JUSTICE: FINDINGS OF SUBSTANTIAL AND PERSISTENT RACIAL DISPARITIES WITHIN THE UNITED STATES MILITARY JUSTICE SYSTEM

POD's analysis of the data showed that, for every year reported and across all service branches, black service members were substantially more likely than white service members to face military justice or disciplinary action. These disparities have not improved and, in some cases, have increased in recent years.

Protect Our Defenders' racial disparity report spurred Congress to act. As part of the National Defense Authorization Act, Congress tasked the GAO with overseeing a critical fact-finding mission on racial disparities in the military justice system. In addition to determining how the military currently tracks the racial breakdown of convictions, Congress instructed the GAO to recommend methods for better data collection and to determine the extent of racial disparities in prosecutions.

USA TODAY
06

USA TODAY EXCLUSIVE
Russia link
Extent of election cyberattacks more than previously thought, senator says

Black troops twice as likely to face discipline
Analysis points out persistent racial disparities within the U.S. military justice system

AIR FORCE
From 2004 to 2015, black service members were...
71% more likely to face court-martial or non-judicial punishment (NJP) than white members in an average year.

MARINE CORPS
more likely to have a guilty finding at a court-martial or NJP proceeding than white Marines in an average year.
32%

NAVY
more likely than white sailors to be referred to special or general court-martial.
40% (From 2014 to 2015)

ARMY
more likely to face general or special court-martial compared with white service members.
61%

Even moderate drinking is bad for the brain
Cognitive decline and physical changes have been detected

Kim Painter
@KimPainter
Special for USA TODAY

Here's one more reason to think before you drink. Even a modest amount of booze might be bad for aging brains. A study published Tuesday in the medical journal *BMJ* says moderate drinkers were more likely than abstainers or light drinkers to develop worrisome brain changes that might signal eventual memory loss. They also were more likely to show rapid slippage on a language test, though not on several other cognitive tests. Moderate drinking in the British study was defined at a level that, in the United States, would equal eight to 12 small glasses of wine, bottles of beer or shots of liquor each week. **"Moderate drinking" would amount to eight to 12 small glasses of wine, bottles of beer or shots of liquor a week.**

Faces of Pride
What does LGBT pride look like across America? We ask the question: pride.usatoday.com

HOME DELIVERY
1-800-472-6001
USATODAYSERVICE.COM



YALE LAW CLINIC REPORT: THE PREVALENCE OF RETALIATION

Protect Our Defenders (POD) and the Yale Law Clinic collaborated on a report about the prevalence of retaliation experienced by victims who report rape and sexual assault in the military.

Students at the Yale Law Clinic took the lead in analyzing the available data on retaliation. POD President, Col Christensen, served as a critical resource and advisor to the students. Don connected students with survivors in POD's network, whom the students interviewed as part of their research. He also provided insights and feedback on their report, based on his experience at POD and as a senior leader within the military justice system; Don served as trial counsel, defense counsel, or a military judge for every year of his 23-year military career and as Chief Prosecutor for the Air Force from 2010 through 2014.

Don vetted and provided feedback on the students' proposed policy solutions and supported them in drafting their report and presenting it to members of Congress. Senator Richard Blumenthal and Representative Jaime Herrera Beutler took the lead, ultimately passing legislation to aid survivors of military sexual assault, enhance the military records corrections process, and improve military whistleblower protections. (*See Policy Reform section*).



THE COST OF REPORTING SEXUAL ASSAULT

A third of victims are *discharged after reporting* typically within 7 months of making a report

77% of retaliation reports alleged that retaliators were *in the reporter's chain of command*

Victims receive harsher discharges with 24% separated under less than fully honorable conditions compared to 15% of all service members

1 in 4 women and *1 in 15 men* (129,000 service members) faced severe and persistent sexual harassment or gender discrimination

POLICY REFORM

DESPITE THE PREVAILING GRIDLOCK IN WASHINGTON, PROTECT OUR DEFENDERS LEVERAGED ITS KNOWLEDGE, ADVOCACY, AND EARNED MEDIA COVERAGE TO ACHIEVE SIGNIFICANT POLICY REFORMS.

IN 2017, CONGRESS:

Required the military to create pilot programs for JAG career justice tracks.

Required the Government Accountability Office to conduct an independent investigation regarding racial disparity in military justice.

Made "revenge porn" a crime.

Enhanced appellate rights for victims.

Required the Department of Defense to report ways to prevent retaliation and improve treatment of victims and whistleblowers.

Mandated that civilian spouses and family members assaulted by service members be tracked and reported.

Creation of JAG Career Justice Tracks

ENHANCES TRAINING FOR JAGS TO IMPROVE THE MILITARY JUSTICE SYSTEM

To improve the quality of military justice outcomes, **Protect Our Defenders (POD) worked with members of Congress** to help them understand the urgent need for more experienced judges, prosecutors, and defense counsels. Sexual assault cases are the most complex and require experienced professionals to ensure the greatest likelihood of achieving justice.



Sen. Joni Ernst



Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand

Senators Joni Ernst and Kirsten Gillibrand introduced language in the FY18 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), requiring the services to create pilot programs for career military justice tracks for JAGs. Traditionally, military attorneys frequently cycled through positions in disparate fields of law. As a result, very few JAGs were able to develop the experience needed to expertly prosecute, judge, and defend criminal cases. The creation of a litigation career path will increase the quality of prosecutions and provide a fairer and more impartial justice system for victims as well as those accused. Despite Pentagon opposition, the legislation overwhelmingly passed.

Criminalizing Revenge Porn

ADDRESSING THE CULTURE OF DEGRADING BEHAVIOR AND ATTITUDES TOWARD WOMEN

In March 2017, a national scandal erupted when it became known that a private Facebook group, “Marines United,” had compiled and distributed, without consent, thousands of nude and explicit photos of servicewomen, along with **obscene comments, sometimes even calling for the rape of the women.** On many occasions, the women were identified by name and military branch. Many of the profane and abusive comments were made by members whose Facebook accounts brazenly included their names, ranks, and duty stations.

In response, POD Executive Director Miranda Petersen testified before Congress.

“[Marines United is] simply a modern manifestation of a longstanding culture within the military that sexualizes and denigrates female service members under the guise of camaraderie and tradition. This toxic culture has been tacitly condoned and allowed to persist by military leaders who have consistently ignored evidence of this behavior and have opposed reforms to improve the climate at almost every turn.” – POD Executive Director, Miranda Petersen

Congresswomen Jackie Speier and Martha McSally, along with Senators Joni Ernst, Claire McCaskill, Elizabeth Warren, and Dan Sullivan, filed legislation criminalizing the nonconsensual distribution of nude photographs and prohibiting online sexual harassment. The legislation was passed as an amendment in the FY18 NDAA.





Colonel Don
Christensen, USAF
(ret.), President,
Protect Our
Defenders

Mandating a Government Accountability Office (GAO) Investigation into Racial Disparity in Military Justice

HOLDING MILITARY LEADERS ACCOUNTABLE

Last June, Protect Our Defenders released its groundbreaking report, *Racial Disparities in Military Justice*. The report detailed a decade of data showing that black service members were significantly more likely to be prosecuted than white service members. The report, which received widespread media coverage, including the front page of USA Today, confirmed black service members were up to two times more likely to be prosecuted than white service members. **Within six weeks of releasing the report, Congress passed language requiring the GAO to investigate** and report to the House Armed Services Committee on how the military tracks convictions based on race, provide recommendations for improving data collection, and to assist the Committee in determining whether there is a racial disparity in the prosecution of cases in the military.

Enhanced Appellate Rights for Victims

PROTECTING A VICTIM'S PRIVILEGED MENTAL HEALTH RECORDS AND PRIOR SEXUAL HISTORY

This year, Congresswoman Jackie Speier successfully sponsored an amendment to the FY18 NDAA that gives victims an explicit right to appeal rulings by a military judge that violate their rights. Victims now have the ability to appeal such rulings to the highest military appellate court, the Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces (CAAF). **POD President, Col Don Christensen, testified about the need for such reform in 2016 before the Department of Defense Judicial Proceedings Panel.** Prior to this reform, victims whose rights under Article 6b of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) were violated – including protections guarding a victims' mental health records and limiting questions about prior sexual history – had no recourse because of a ruling by CAAF that closed the door to victims seeking to challenge those decisions.

Congresswoman
Jackie Speier



Mandated that the Department of Defense (DOD) Track and Report Data Regarding Domestic Abuse by Service Members

IMPROVES TRANSPARENCY BY ENSURING VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE ARE COUNTED IN DOD ANNUAL REPORTS

Every year, as required by Congress, the DOD releases a report on the status of sexual assault and harassment in the services. The report includes statistics regarding all reported incidents against service members, but omits assaults committed by service members against their civilian spouse or other family members. Therefore, sexual assaults have been underreported and misrepresented in the DOD's annual reports. **POD informed lawmakers of these gaps.** In 2017, Congress mandated that civilians assaulted by military members be tracked and incorporated into the annual reports of military sexual assault, increasing accuracy and transparency.

Required the DOD to Report Ways to Prevent Retaliation and Improve Treatment of Victims and Whistleblowers

COLLABORATED WITH YALE LAW CLINIC TO EDUCATE MEMBERS OF CONGRESS AND SUCCESSFULLY ADVOCATE FOR REFORM

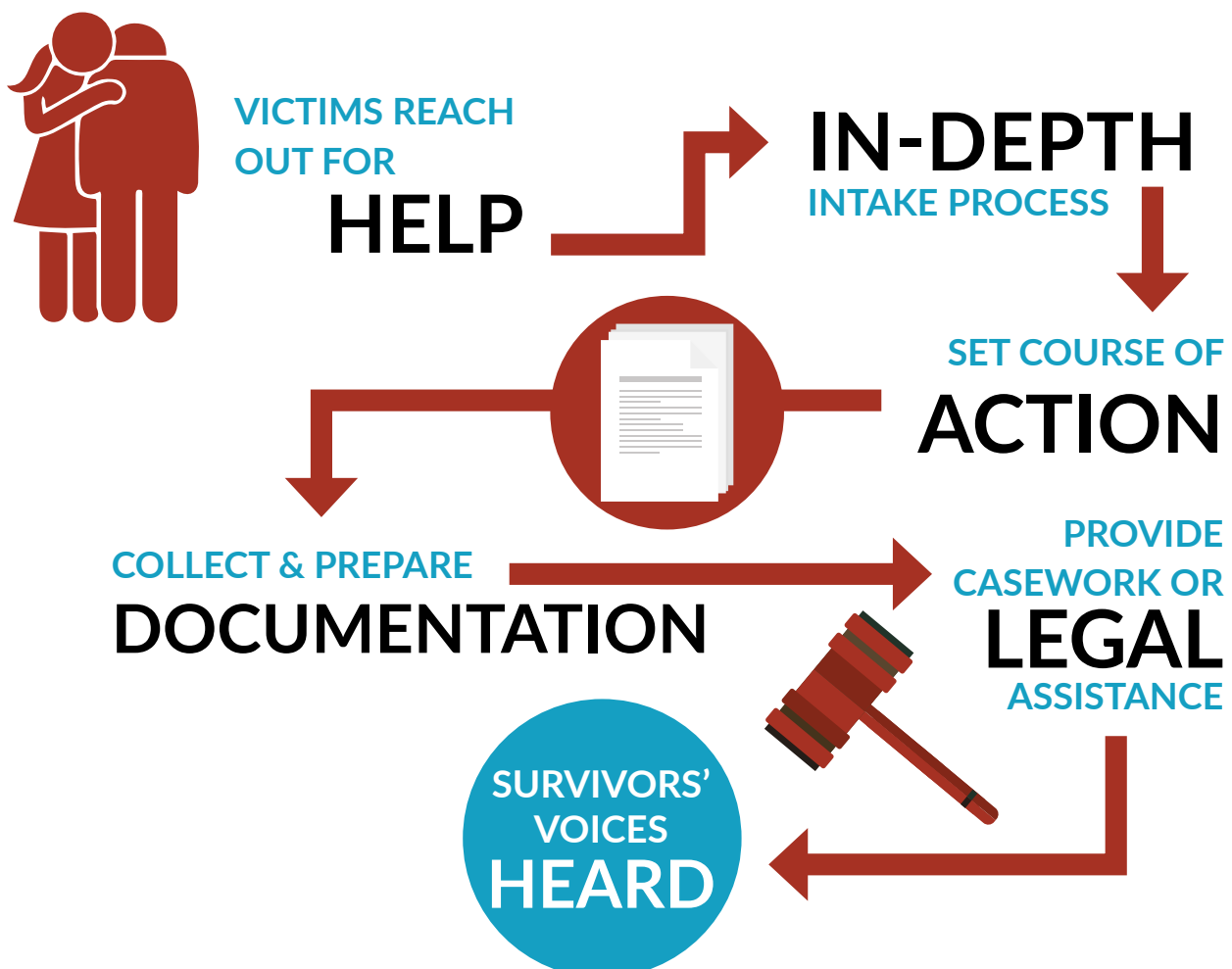
Knowing the adverse impact of retaliation and the lifelong consequences for service members who suffer from Military Sexual Trauma (MST), **POD President Col Don Christensen traveled to Yale to work with law students** researching this issue. Don and the students met with a number of Congressional offices to educate members about the practice of retaliating against service members who report sexual assault by downgrading their performance evaluations. The students proposed legislative solutions. Senator Richard Blumenthal and Representative Jaime Herrera Beutler sponsored legislation directing the Secretary of Defense to report measures that can be taken to prevent retaliation. The law repealed the statute of limitations on requests for review of veterans' discharge status. And, it required Discharge Review Boards to publish information regarding the discharges of survivors of military sexual assault. This legislation was included in the FY18 NDAA and became law.

LEGAL SERVICES PROGRAM

Supporting Survivors

*P*rotect Our Defenders (POD) has the only national program solely dedicated to providing legal referrals and casework support for victims of Military Sexual Trauma who are dealing with issues such as protecting their rights and fighting retaliation for reporting.

Since founding the Pro Bono Network of attorneys in 2013, POD has provided legal referrals and case assistance to over *800 survivors*. Attorneys in our Network donated *\$5,872,087 in legal services*.



Leveraging Our Legal Services to Reform the Military Justice System

CHALLENGING RETALIATION ON INDIVIDUAL AND STRUCTURAL LEVELS

The issues faced by survivors who come through our program help focus our agenda, and the survivors' stories lead to meaningful changes in the law.

MATT'S CASE

Matt was drugged and raped by someone in his chain of command. After filing an unrestricted report for the rape, he immediately faced various forms of aggression and retaliation. Finally, his chain of command gave him an unsupported Notice of Elimination, disregarding Matt's stellar, decades-long military career. Matt reached out to POD for assistance, and POD helped him find pro bono legal help through our partner, The National Lawyers Guild.

"I didn't expect to be completely rejected by the leadership in my unit. Even after the Criminal Investigation Command confirmed my report of assault was credible—no one cared. The mental and emotional support POD provided has been critical to my medical care and treatment and the overall wellbeing of myself and my family."

HALEY'S CASE

Haley was a Navy recruiter when she was sexually harassed and raped by her direct supervisor, and she suffered retaliation for reporting. POD got Haley the help she needed.

"After serving almost 17 years in the Navy, I received a [temporary] medical retirement, which stemmed from my rape and the years of retaliation I faced after reporting my rape. In January 2017, the Navy went against their own doctor's recommendation to permanently medically retire me, and I lost all retirement benefits, including my entire family losing Tricare medical benefits."

After reaching out to Protect Our Defenders and Human Rights Watch, I was able to obtain legal representation through Protect Our Defenders' [Legal Services Program]. The team of attorneys handled my case with sensitivity. They spent months preparing in order to ensure I was represented fairly. Without this representation, the injustices from the Navy and Department of Defense would have continued."

Sadly, I know that I am not the only survivor facing these hardships and hope others reach out for help and assistance. I am forever grateful for the services and connections provided to me by Protect Our Defenders. Thank you."

POD President, Col Don Christensen, brought stories like Matt and Haley's to the students at the Yale Law Clinic. Survivor stories provide qualitative data about the military's practice of retaliating against service members who report a sexual assault. The students studied the stories along with quantitative data and worked with POD to educate Congress, which led to important changes in the law. (See *Policy Reform* section).

MILITARY JUSTICE SYSTEM FAILS TO DELIVER JUSTICE

4,591 reports of sexual assault were made to law enforcement

Of those, commanders only charged 619 cases

Of those, commanders only tried 389 cases

Of those, the military justice system was only able to deliver 124 convictions for sexual assault



Statistics from the 2016 DoD SAPRO Annual Report and its appendices/annexes

www.rand.org/nsrd/projects/rmws/publications.html
and www.sapr.mil/index.php/annual-reports

Expanding Our Services to Include Civilians, Bystanders, and Whistleblowers

In 2016, **POD expanded its Legal Services Program to include civilians who were assaulted by military members.**

KAREN'S CASE

Karen, a civilian, was sexually assaulted by a man in Special Forces whom she had met during a night out. Her assailant gagged, raped, and tried to drug her. The next day, Karen went to the civilian police to file a report. The military began its own investigation as well and eventually assumed control of the case. They found sufficient evidence for a court-martial, but because Karen was a civilian, she was unable to receive any legal assistance through the military. Karen reached out to POD in 2017 and received an attorney to represent her at the court-martial.

"Your organization helped me when no one else would... The attorney I was provided with was outstanding... Not only did he fight for my rights, he found me additional legal help, provided emotional support, and has continued to be a source of hope and change after the trial."

Cases like Karen's inform our work. POD educated Congress regarding the gap in reporting domestic abuse cases and successfully advocated to include these civilians in future Department of Defense reports.

In 2017, POD expanded its services to bystanders and whistleblowers who also experience retaliation after coming forward to help victims. This experience will further increase our knowledge and provide more data to support our efforts to increase transparency and accountability in the military justice system.

Honoring Advocates: Protect Our Defenders' 2017 Justice Award

THIS AWARD IS GIVEN ANNUALLY TO LEADING ATTORNEYS IN POD'S PRO BONO NETWORK



POD's Legal Services Program would not exist without the dedication of pro bono attorneys. In May 2017, POD was proud to recognize Ryan Guilds and the firm of [Arnold & Porter Kaye Scholer](#). They have been tireless advocates for survivors seeking to have their voices heard. In addition to representing survivors, they help build the skills of other legal advocates by hosting Protect Our Defenders' Victims' Rights training seminars.

"POD is a singularly unique source of support for military sexual trauma survivors. Every day, POD fights on the front lines against the scourge of sexual violence plaguing our armed services. I am proud to work side by side with them as they work to address the systemic failures of the military justice system to protect and defend the rights of survivors." - **Ryan Guilds**

The attorneys at Arnold & Porter Kaye Scholer have helped numerous survivors, like Adrian's daughter.

Adrian's seven-year-old daughter was molested by a Marine Colonel for whom her husband worked. The Colonel had a history of bad behavior, which was not taken seriously by the Marine Corps. Even after he was under investigation for child abuse, he remained free and subsequently raped a civilian.

"When our family was faced with overwhelming difficulties after our daughter was sexually assaulted, Ryan and his team from Arnold & Porter Kaye Scholer descended on us like guardian angels in our time of need. Ryan and his team fought for information regarding our case, provided sage legal advice, and worked tirelessly to ensure our daughter received justice. They are Heroes of the highest caliber, and we are forever grateful for their work." - Adrian

Adrian and her family have become vocal advocates for legislative reform of the corrupt military culture, which put their daughter in the path of a known predator.

Adrian urges Congress to support the Military Justice Improvement Act, which gives military prosecutors rather than commanders the decision to prosecute.

From left Senators Martin Heinrich and Mazie Hirono, Adrian, Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, and POD President Col Christensen





GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY

SURVIVOR NETWORK: A COMMUNITY OF HEALING AND ACTION

Survivors often come to Protect Our Defenders (POD) for emotional support, legal support, and to connect with others who've had similar experiences. Many find that the opportunity to educate the public and advocate for change is a profoundly healing and empowering experience. Their voices are pivotal in creating policy change.

SURVIVOR ADVOCATES

Protect Our Defenders supports survivors to speak with the press, their members of Congress, and at local events across the country. POD works with an ever-growing community of survivors, families, and civilian advocates to develop and disseminate calls to action and materials that educate and engage the civilian and military communities about the need for reform.



Rally at the Pentagon, Jan. 8, 2018. Photo by @KStewartWTOP

In response to TIME magazine naming the #MeToo movement as its Person of the Year for 2017, POD and Service Women's Action Network sponsored a #MeTooMilitary Rally at the Pentagon and engaged with 3,000 survivors throughout the country to lead a social media campaign. These efforts drew media attention to sexual assault and harassment among service members, an often-overlooked group of survivors. Service members are legally silenced, giving up their freedoms to protect ours.

POD Advocacy Committee member, Annie Kendzior, testified before Congress in May 2017 about her experiences at the US Naval Academy and how the Academy mis-handled her case.

"The leadership had no issues allowing rap-ists to continue their time in the Navy while I needed to be rushed out. Instead of won-dering why my performance and behavior took a turn for the worse, the administration turned their back on me and never took me seriously about the rapes. They didn't care about me. The military found it easier to la-bel me as having a personality disorder than to treat me for the trauma of being raped."
-Annie Kendzior, POD Advocacy Committee



HONORING SURVIVOR ADVOCATES



POD Advisory Board member, Heath Phillips, spoke at an Army Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP) Summit in April 2017 at Fort Bliss.

Heath received a Certificate of Appreciation from the Army for his outstanding performance in speaking at the Summit. The Army states of Heath, "Your willingness and ability to share your insight into the world of male victims truly enhanced the understanding, and the need for improved support and action from all members of the military community."



POD Advisory Board member, Stacey Thompson, was named Veteran of the Day by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) on February 4, 2017. Stacey's story – including her service in the Marine Corps, sexual assault by a senior Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO), and retaliation she faced for reporting the assault – was featured on the VA's blog.

POD Advisory Board member, BriGette McCoy, was awarded a Quilt of Valor. These handmade quilts are given to veterans to thank them for their service. This quilt was made by Rosemary Spatafora for BriGette, who founded the Women Veterans Social Justice Network, to not only honor her military service, but also the important work she does in fighting sexual assault in the military.



STITCHED TOGETHER: A STORY OF UNITY AND SUPPORT AMONG SURVIVORS



Survivors in our network connect with and support one another in many ways. Some share their stories through social media, and others meet in-person at local VAs, support groups, and advocacy events. By supporting one another in their healing, survivors find hope.

In 2017, survivor Sandy Peterson created beautiful hand-made quilts and generously donated them to POD, so that we could give them to other survivors to provide comfort as they move through their healing process. We provided these quilts to **POD Advisory Board member Terri Odom**, a survivor herself, who has handed them out to other survivors in need at the St. Louis VA Health Care System where she works.

*"[The quilts] are absolutely beautiful! I will be taking them to the VA...to give to some very deserving and brave MST survivors. I have been walking the healing journey of one particular woman veteran who suffers from MST... She has shown me humility, and **I am always humbled and stand in awe of the resilience and bravery of survivors.**" - Terri Odom, POD Advisory Board*

PROTECT OUR DEFENDERS' ONLINE NETWORK

The Internet is a critical place for survivors and allies to connect with one another to learn, receive support, and engage in advocacy.



84,000

*E-newsletter
Subscribers*



23,045

*Facebook
'Likes'*



1,012,000

*Online Video Views
(YouTube & Facebook)*

PROTECT OUR DEFENDERS' HIGH-PROFILE MEDIA PRESENCE RAISES AWARENESS AND DRIVES CHANGE

With the national spotlight on misogyny and sexual violence in 2017, Protect Our Defenders (POD) has made sure the epidemic of sexual assault and harassment in the military is part of this national conversation. Over the past year, **POD has worked with reporters at top-tier media outlets on investigations that led to numerous front-page stories exposing the military's inability to confront the crisis of sexual assault within its ranks.**

The New York Times

CNN

CBS NEWS

AP Associated Press

abc NEWS

WIRED

USA TODAY

The Washington Post

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

NBC NEWS

ESPN

msnbc

Los Angeles Times

REUTERS

VOGUE

GQ

POLITICO

San Antonio Express-News

In 2017, POD was featured in six separate USA Today front-page articles, two Washington Post front-page stories, a front-page piece in the Guardian, a New York Times front-page article, and a five-part investigative series on CBS News. We worked with reporters to break many of these stories and continue to be the go-to expert on the issue, providing statements and commentary in television interviews, local newspapers, and military trade outlets. Our organization has also been featured in hundreds of articles in major newspapers and broadcast news outlets. Throughout 2017, POD worked with reporters on investigative reports, exposing scandals, and diving deeper into cases that have brought the epidemic to light.

In addition to the news stories shared throughout this annual report, **POD's collaboration with the media has led to increased transparency and accountability of military leaders who too often protect their own and actively perpetuate a culture of misogyny and violence.**

CBS News Exposes Retaliation Against Survivors at the US Air Force Academy

POD worked closely with CBS News on a **six-month investigation** that found more than a dozen current and former cadets at the US Air Force Academy faced retaliation after reporting being sexually assaulted.

Protect Our Defenders President and former Chief Prosecutor for the Air Force, Col Don Christensen, **appeared on CBS This Morning** to discuss the investigation and respond to the Air Force Academy's new superintendent, Lt. Gen. Jay Silveria, who **swept the issue under the rug**, saying he didn't think "there are problems" with sexual assault or how the Academy handled the cases.

Col Christensen told CBS News Investigative Reporter Norah O'Donnell:

"He [Lt. Gen. Jay Silveria] never once talked about holding offenders accountable. That is a huge failure. You have to do more. Support is great, but when you have people out there who are being hurt, you need to make sure that somebody is holding those who hurt them accountable... Failing to do so denies this country women who want to serve. This is a retention issue. This is a recruiting issue. This is the ability for America to bring the fight to the enemy."

One of the cadets who was assaulted at the Academy was asked by O'Donnell if she regretted reporting her assault. The cadet said, "I regret it every day because of everything that came after. I just wish that I had never come forward. Because I never asked to be assaulted."



Holding Senior Military Officials Accountable

In October, with the help of POD, **USA Today broke a front-page investigative report** on the military's continued refusal to be held accountable for sexual abuse in their ranks. The report exposed at least 500 cases of misconduct, many of which were sexually based, among top military officials and the military's failure to take meaningful action to prevent, properly acknowledge, and prosecute these offenses.

Don was quoted in the article, explaining that consequences for lower-ranking troops are usually much more severe than those for generals and admirals:

"The phenomenon even has its own term in the military: 'Different spansks for different ranks.' The everyday troop is court-martialed for what a general officer is given a slap on the hand for."

For decades, the military has claimed to be tough on sexual assault and harassment, and in a **follow up piece from USA Today**, top brass went so far as to claim a zero-tolerance policy. But POD exposed that all too often, the military not only turns a blind eye to sexual abuse, but actively perpetuates a culture of misogyny and violence. The **New York Daily News also covered the investigation** and profiled Don's experience as the Chief Prosecutor of the Air Force and why he ultimately decided to leave the military and join our organization.

MORE THAN 500 VIOLATIONS BY SENIOR OFFICIALS

Substantiated claims of senior official misconduct from 2013 to 2016:



SOURCE: Defense Department Office of Inspector General
Jim Sergeant, USA TODAY



Joint Chiefs Chairman Caught Protecting General Who Sent Racist and Sexist Emails

POD was also instrumental in another **USA Today front-page story** that the newspaper broke in March 2017, detailing how former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Martin Dempsey, protected fellow General John Custer from punishment, even after an investigation found that Custer had multiple inappropriate relationships, lied to investigators, and subjected his staff to racist and sexist emails. General Dempsey shamefully protected one of his own, all the while testifying before Congress that commanders need more authority, not less, to deal with these crimes. General Dempsey's actions demonstrate once again why the military cannot and must not police itself.



Don was **quoted in the article**:

"Racism and sexism strike at the heart of good order and discipline... And for Dempsey to look at that...and not immediately come down with all authority the Army has is inexcusable. That a general officer can send such a message, and ask how anybody could be offended by it? How clueless."

To view our full Media Report, visit www.protectourdefenders.com/media2017. Shining a bright light on the epidemic of sexual violence in the military, Protect Our Defenders leverages the public square to build pressure needed to effect policy change.

LEADERSHIP

Board of Directors

Nancy Parrish, Founder, Co-Chair
Davis Weinstock, Co-Chair

Col Scott Jensen, USMC (ret.), CEO
Col Don Christensen, USAF (ret.), Pres.
Paula Coughlin

Hon. George “Buddy” Darden
Ronald T. Gault
Russell H. Miller
Nicco Mele
Lilli J. Rey
Wendy C. Wolf

Staff

Chief Executive Officer

Colonel Scott Jensen, USMC (ret.)

President

Colonel Don Christensen, USAF (ret.)

Executive Director

Becky Burke

Senior Programs and Services Manager

Angela Lee

Programs and Services Manager

Adelaide Kahn

Communications Director

Brian Purchia

Communications Managers

Max Wertheimer

Galen Alexander

Communications Associate

Devonya Batiste

ADVISORY BOARD

Alan Alda

Kwame Anthony Appiah

Aaron Belkin

Spencer P. Boyer

Terry Brackett

Sherry Broder

Meredith Auld Brokaw

General Wesley Clark, US Army (ret.)

Ambassador Nancy Ely-Raphel

Jason W. Forrester

Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

Lt. Col Chris Gedney, USAF (ret.)

Ambassador Gordon Giffin

Ryan Guilds

Marcena Gunter

Lynn K. Hall

Earvin "Magic" Johnson

Lt. General Claudia Kennedy, US Army (ret.)

Diane Mazur

BriGette McCoy, US Army specialist, SCDV

Hon Pete McCloskey, Colonel USMC (ret.)

Lt. Col Terry Moore, USAF (ret.)

Terri J. Odom, US Army and Navy, SCDV

Colonel James S. Overbye, US Army (ret.)

Jane Pauley

Miranda Petersen

Heath Phillips, US Navy, SCDV

Stacy Schiff

Maj General Robert D. Shadley, US Army (ret.)

Commander Charles B. Sowell, US Navy (ret.)

Patricia Lee Stotter

Rose Styron

Stacey Thompson

Garry Trudeau

Sigourney Weaver

Former Congressman Vin Weber

To view Protect Our Defenders' financials, including budget and IRS filings, please visit <http://www.protectourdefenders.com/financials> .



Headquarters: 8000 Westpark Dr. Suite 410 McLean, VA 22102

info@protectourdefenders.com | 703-639-0396

www.protectourdefenders.com

Protect Our Defenders is a non-profit 501(c)(3) charitable organization. The IRS has determined that donations to PODF are tax-deductible for the donor as charitable contributions. There are no limits or restrictions on these donations.