



Presentation

Before the House Armed Services Committee,  
Subcommittee on Military Personnel

*Hazing in the Military*

Statement of

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UNITED STATES SENATE

Chairman Wilson, Ranking Member Davis, and distinguished members of this subcommittee, I am honored and humbled to have the privilege to represent the more than 500,000 Airmen serving in active duty, Reserve, and Air National Guard capacities who comprise the finest Air Force in our great Nation's history.

Each year our Airmen become more educated and better qualified to conduct the complex missions our service demands of them. While many consistently leave family and friends behind to deploy in support of combatant commanders in remote locations, others directly affect the battlespace each day from their home station. Regardless of where they serve, none of our Airmen can complete the mission alone; each of us needs a Wingman to help make sure the job gets done.

The Air Force values each and every one of its Airmen. To create and promote a culture of respect and dignity, we expose Airmen to human relations training early and often, starting with accession and continuing through the many stages of career progression. This training defines and discourages inappropriate behavior and provides a clear path of recourse for those who may be victimized. It is my belief that this culture of respect discourages negative behaviors -- including those that could be classified as hazing -- and makes it known that they will not be tolerated.

An enlisted Airman's career-long immersion in this culture of respect begins at Basic Military Training (BMT). During the first week of training, BMT squadron commanders convey to trainees that maltreatment and hazing are not tolerated. Commanders define hazing as behavior that causes another person to suffer or be exposed to activity that is cruel, abusive, humiliating, oppressive, demeaning or harmful. Airmen are told that secret initiation rites are forbidden. They are informed that BMT is their only indoctrination into the Air Force and the profession of arms. Further, they are encouraged to immediately report any instances of maltreatment or inappropriate training to the military training instructor, section supervisor, training superintendent, first sergeant, operations officer, commander, chaplain or base inspector general.

Airmen are provided with a wide variety of human relations lessons over the course of their careers. Department of Defense, Department of the Air Force, Air Education and Training Command (AETC), and localized definitions, guidance and policy on subjects like sexual harassment, religious tolerance, and hazing are covered at regular intervals as well as at major career milestones. These include BMT, technical training, First Term Airman's Center, at installation newcomer's orientations at each permanent change of station move, monthly or quarterly commander's calls, and at each level of professional military education.

As they earn greater leadership roles, Airmen are held responsible for deeper levels of comprehension of the conditions they must set to create healthy working environments for those they supervise. We believe it is a leadership responsibility to ensure Airmen can come to work without fear of being mistreated, and to ensure that any violation of regulations is met with a swift, appropriate response.

One additional initiative we've started is Bystander Intervention Training. This course encourages situational awareness and peer conflict avoidance and resolution. Airmen who have this training know how to defuse situations before inappropriate behavior occurs.

As our workforce is a sample of individuals from our society, we expect to encounter some of the same issues that affect our society at large. However, as a military organization, and the world's greatest Air Force, we hold our Airmen and our leaders to a higher standard.

While we cannot declare the Air Force is exempt from hazing, all indications are that our current efforts to prevent and respond to incidents of hazing are effective. Our comprehensive approach to career-long human relations education is rooted in concern for the safety and prosperity of our most valuable resource -- our Airmen -- and we are committed to providing education and guidance to eliminate hazing by making clear that it will not be tolerated.

Thank you for your continued support and concern for our brave Airmen and their supportive families.