



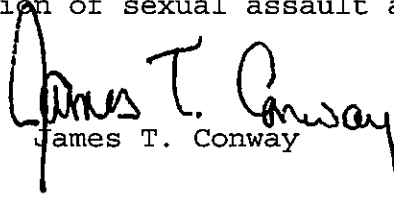
DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
3000 MARINE CORPS PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20350-3000

IN REPLY REFER TO:
CMC-CL
AUG 25 2009

From: Commandant of the Marine Corps
To: All Marine Corps Judge Advocates

Subj: SEXUAL ASSAULT GUIDANCE TO OUR LEGAL COMMUNITY

1. Our Marines are our most precious resources. They are the building block of our small units and the greatest asset the Corps brings to our Nation's battles. Sexual assault tears at small unit cohesion, splitting units by breaking the bonds of trust that hold us together as Marines.
2. Addressing allegations of sexual assault is a leadership issue and a commander's responsibility. Your expertise is essential to assisting the commander in formulating the command's response to allegations of sexual assault, to include investigation, protection of the accused and the victim, dealing with reporting procedures, and making those decisions that are the sole preserve of the commander.
3. As our Corps' legal specialists, you are uniquely situated to advise our commanders in preventing and responding to sexual assault. I expect you to proactively and aggressively carry out your duties in these cases. This letter is not intended to influence the outcome of any particular case or class of cases. Rather, it is to emphasize the importance your role as administrators of our legal system in processing these unique and sensitive cases.
4. I charge each of you with ensuring allegations of sexual assault are handled properly and efficiently and that our commanders have the best advice from which to base their decisions. To assist you in this duty, I have tasked my Staff Judge Advocate to implement annual training in processing sexual assault cases for each Marine serving as a Marine Corps judge advocate.
5. Marines, you have proven yourselves essential in accomplishing our recent wartime missions of preserving order and rebuilding societies around the world. I expect each of you, whether defending or prosecuting our Marines or advising our commanders, to gain and maintain the proficiency necessary to maximize your contribution to the fair and complete administration of sexual assault allegations.


James T. Conway