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Team created to eliminate sexual offences in Canadian Forces



By Ernst Kuglin, The Intelligencer/Trentonian
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Ernst Kuglin/The Intelligencer Rear Admiral Jennifer Bennett, Director General Canadian Armed Forces Strategic Response Team on sexual misconduct and Brig. Gen. Robert Delaney, Canadian Forces Provost Marshal and Commandant Canadian Forces Military Police Group, announce the launch of Sexual Offence Response Team Tuesday at CFB Trenton.

CFB TRENTON - An 18-member Sexual Offence Response Team (SORT) has been set up to help wipe criminal sexual offences from the Canadian Armed Forces landscape.

The team was announced Tuesday by Canadian Forces Provost Marshal, Brig. Gen. Robert Delaney.

The team's formation comes at a time when senior military leaders say the CF has seen a "22 per cent increase in incidents reported to military police" in 2016. But many of those, they say, predate Operation Honour.

Delaney made the announcement after meeting with members of the Canadian Forces National Investigation Service (NIS) who were at CFE Trenton for a training conference.

Also at the press conference was Rear Admiral Jennifer Bennett, director General of the CAF Strategic Response Team on Sexual Misconduct.

SORT is a component of the 125 member NIS.

"Their role will be to investigate criminal sexual misconduct within the CAF. That will be their sole focus in the coming months and years," said Delaney.

The 18 new investigators will be spread across the country at CAF bases in Victoria, Edmonton, Borden, Ottawa, Valcartier and Halifax.

Delaney said the team will be receiving advanced training in investigating sexual offences.

Team members have spent the last three days with experts from the International Association of Chiefs of Police, and Russell Strand from the American Military Police Academy.

Delaney said investigators are being trained using forensic experiential trauma intervention, an emerging technique which recognizes victims of traumatic events, such as sexual assault, often have difficulty recounting exact details of the trauma.

"Some of the techniques that our investigators have learned is a recognition that not all victims are not able to fully recount what they experienced," said Delaney. "Those techniques will allow us to better support victims when complaints of sexual misconduct come forward and are reported to NIS."

Delaney said the ultimate goal is eradicating sexual misconduct from the CAF.

Bennett said the response team is part of Operation Honour, now in place to eliminate harmful sexual behaviour within CAF ranks.

"To achieve this objective we are taking short and long term steps. In the short term we must support victims more effectively and respond more decisively to incidents, and in the long term we must change our military culture to ensure all members are treated with the respect and dignity that is their due."

Bennett said the CAF will develop and implement prevention strategies to ensure CAF members understand inappropriate sexual behaviour any form is not acceptable.

"We will be vigilant in rooting out this insipid behaviour," said Bennett.

"More effective victim support and decisive leadership will help create an environment that encourages incident reporting. This in turn helps to build a leadership culture that is more supportive and responsive to the needs of our members."

Bennett said the new response team will enhance the capacity of military police to support victims of inappropriate sexual behaviour.

"Our military police are on the front line of providing that support when it is needed most and this requires specialized training and understanding of the impact of sexual related incidents of not only victims, but families, colleagues and our institutions," said Bennett.

Bennett said about half of the 22 per cent increase in incidents reported to military police are older cases that predate Operation Honour.

"This demonstrates to us that some of these victims now trust their leaders. The close interaction between our Sexual Misconduct Response Centre and NIS through a designated military police liaison officer has meant a single point of contact for victims and more consistent liaison and coordination with both the centre, the Provost Marshal and the NIS," said Bennett.

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