

BARBARA A. MIKULSKI, MARYLAND, CHAIRWOMAN

PATRICK J. LEAHY, VERMONT
TOM HARKIN, IOWA
PATTY MURRAY, WASHINGTON
DIANNE FEINSTEIN, CALIFORNIA
RICHARD J. DURBIN, ILLINOIS
TIM JOHNSON, SOUTH DAKOTA
MARY L. LANDRIEU, LOUISIANA
JACK REED, RHODE ISLAND
MARK L. PRYOR, ARKANSAS
JON TESTER, MONTANA
TOM UDALL, NEW MEXICO
JEANNE SHAHEEN, NEW HAMPSHIRE
JEFF MERKLEY, OREGON
MARK BEGICH, ALASKA
CHRISTOPHER A. COONS, DELAWARE

RICHARD C. SHELBY, ALABAMA
THAD COCHRAN, MISSISSIPPI
MITCH MCCONNELL, KENTUCKY
LAMAR ALEXANDER, TENNESSEE
SUSAN M. COLLINS, MAINE
LISA MURKOWSKI, ALASKA
LINDSEY GRAHAM, SOUTH CAROLINA
MARK KIRK, ILLINOIS
DANIEL COATS, INDIANA
ROY BLUNT, MISSOURI
JERRY MORAN, KANSAS
JOHN HOEVEN, NORTH DAKOTA
MIKE JOHANNIS, NEBRASKA
JOHN BOOZMAN, ARKANSAS

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6025

<http://appropriations.senate.gov>

CHARLES E. KIEFFER, STAFF DIRECTOR
WILLIAM D. DUHNKE III, MINORITY STAFF DIRECTOR

May 8, 2014

The Honorable Calvin L. Scovel III
U.S. Department of Transportation
Office of Inspector General
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.
7th Floor
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Mr. Scovel,

On March 27, 2014, the Secretary of Transportation released the 2011-2012 Academic Year Biennial Survey and Report on Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault at the United States Merchant Marine Academy. The findings in this report are very disturbing and demonstrate a need for greater oversight and reform at the Academy. From the 2009-2010 to 2011-2012 academic year surveys, the estimated rate of sexual assault more than doubled, and the estimated rate of sexual harassment increased by more than 500 percent. The failure to demonstrate measurable progress suggests the reforms the Academy began implementing in 2011 are inadequate. Even more troubling is the fact that, once again, none of the incidents in the latest report were formally reported.

In the previous survey released to Congress in November, 2011 midshipmen reported that 11 assaults and 21 sexual harassment incidents occurred during the 2009-2010 academic year. In response to these findings, the Secretary developed an action plan to improve prevention, awareness and training. Academy policies against sexual assault were revised and updated; a Sexual Assault Response Coordinator was hired; procedures were changed to improve reporting; and, protocols and additional training were developed to specifically target the at-sea training year, where over half of the incidents were reported to have taken place.

Despite these steps, conditions at the Academy have gotten worse. The most recent survey estimates that 25 assaults and 136 incidents of sexual harassment took place during the 2011-2012 academic year. While we recognize that changes in the methodology between the 2011-2012 and 2009-2010 surveys may have affected the results, the dramatic increase in the number of incidents makes clear that the actions taken following the first survey did not have the desired effect on behavior or student safety. We strongly believe the problem requires further attention beyond the steps the Department initiated in 2011.

We understand you are currently engaged in an audit of this issue. We ask that you consider the findings of the most recent survey as you evaluate the implementation of policies and programs designed to prevent sexual assault and harassment at the Academy. In addition, please examine the roles that senior leadership at the Maritime Administration and within the Office of the Secretary played in overseeing and expediting the implementation of the action plans. Finally, we respectfully request a meeting with you as soon as possible to discuss your work on this audit to date. We expect the findings in your report will support the Committee's oversight of the United States Merchant Marine Academy.

Sincerely,



Patty Murray, Chairman
United States Senate
Subcommittee on Transportation,
Housing and Urban Development
and Related Agencies



Susan Collins, Ranking Member
United States Senate
Subcommittee on Transportation,
Housing and Urban development
and Related Agencies