

May 19, 2004- Statement on Sanchez Amendment on Military Sexual Assault

Rep. Sanchez Speaks on Sanchez Amendment on Military Sexual Assault

Today, Congresswoman Sanchez continued pushing her amendment to the Defense Authorization bill regarding sexual assault laws in the military. She made the following statement:

You may also click [here](#) to watch the Congresswoman on the House floor....

"Mr. Chairman— I rise today to talk about what I believe is the most sensible, conservative legislative initiative in the defense authorization bill this year— a measure that would have made it easier for the military to prosecute sexual assault offenses in the armed services.

"The Majority PROHIBITED me from offering an amendment that would have made a vital change to the Uniformed Code of Military Justice.

"It would have replaced the WOEFULLY outdated statute currently being used by the military to prosecute sexual assault with a version of Title 18 — the federal statute that is not only being used in 37 states, but was approved by this body 18 years ago!

"The current military mechanism for prosecuting sexual assault was written in the 1950's and DOES NOT REFLECT TODAY'S REALITY.

"My bill would have emphasized the acts of the perpetrator rather than the reaction of the VICTIM during an assault, which is an all-too-common complaint within the military justice system.

"It would have expressly provided for cases involving voluntary and involuntary intoxication of the victim, which are common fact patterns in military sexual assault cases.

"It would have expanded the definition of sexual abuse to include a broader scope of sex acts.

"And it would have also included a provision which specifically relates to sexual abuse of a prisoner, unlike the current UCMJ. This provision is particularly timely given the tragic incidents which occurred in Abu Girab prison.

"We ARE facing a sexual assault crisis within our Armed Services. Our women and MEN are getting raped in Iraq — the Army is currently investigating more than 110 counts of sexual abuse in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"Some have attributed this to combat-related stress, but the facts point to the contrary.

"In March of this year, the Air Force reported that it was investigating 92 reports of rapes among the some 40,000 troops stationed throughout the Pacific Rim. Those troops are not in combat.

"In a report released by the Department of Defense just last week, it is reported that across the DoD, there were 901 reported cases in 2002 and over 1,000 in 2003. I think that is a problem. The Pentagon thinks that is a problem. This was our opportunity to enact positive change on this issue.

"It is our job as Members of this Congress to provide oversight of the executive departments of this nation. It is our responsibility to provide assurances to men and women in uniform that they are safe and that when crimes are committed, our laws assure that justice is served. I am disappointed that my amendment was refused consideration, and I believe we have done our men and women in uniform a great disservice."