



Memorandum

U.S. Department of
Transportation

Office of Inspector General

Subject: **INFORMATION**: Audit Announcement –
Effectiveness of USMMA’s Sexual Assault
Prevention and Response Program
Department of Transportation
Project No. 17S3007S000

Date: May 31, 2017

From: Calvin L. Scovel III 
Inspector General

Reply to
Attn. of: JA-30

To: Secretary of Transportation

In 2008, Congress passed the Duncan Hunter Act aimed at creating an environment free of sexual assault and harassment at the United States Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA or the Academy).¹ This act required the Department of Transportation (DOT) to direct USMMA to prescribe a policy and conduct an annual assessment to determine the effectiveness of its policies, training, and procedures with respect to sexual assault and sexual harassment. The act also required the Secretary to direct the USMMA Superintendent to develop action plans and report to Congress on its progress. While the Department and USMMA have complied with the act’s requirements, the Academy has faced challenges in following through on plans and addressing issues concerning its culture.

Our 2016 review of USMMA’s 2014–2015 action plan found that the Academy had not completed 15 (34 percent) of its 44 planned actions.² Furthermore, in June 2016, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) issued an accreditation warning to USMMA partly based on the Academy’s ongoing challenges in combatting sexual assault and sexual harassment. Subsequently, DOT selected the Logistics Management Institute (LMI) to conduct a cultural assessment of USMMA.

¹ Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009, Pub. L. No. 110-417 § 3507, October 14, 2008.

² *USMMA Follow-up Letter To Congress* (OIG Controlled Correspondence No. CC2016011), August 11, 2016. See also *Better Program Management and Oversight Are Required for USMMA’s Efforts To Address Sexual Assault and Harassment* (OIG Report No. ST-2015-004), October 23, 2014, and *USMMA’s Efforts To Address Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment*, testimony before the Senate Appropriations Transportation, Urban Development, and Related Agencies Subcommittee (OIG Testimony No. CC2017011), April 5, 2017. OIG reports and testimonies are available on our Web site: <http://www.oig.dot.gov>.

LMI concluded in December 2016 that, although the Academy had taken actions to address sexual assault and harassment, the underlying climate contributing to these issues remained. LMI made several recommendations and in response, USMMA published a “Culture Change Action Plan” in January 2017, listing over 50 actions to be completed in fiscal year 2017.

The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017³ mandated that we issue a report by March 31, 2018, describing the effectiveness of USMMA’s Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) program.⁴ Specifically, our objectives will be to assess (1) the SAPR program’s policies and procedures; (2) the Department’s and Academy’s progress and challenges in prioritizing and addressing recommendations from past studies and current action plans, including the 2017 “Culture Change Action Plan;” and (3) the Department’s and Academy’s responses to reports of sexual assault or harassment involving members of the Academy.

We plan to begin the audit immediately and will contact your audit liaison to schedule an entrance conference. We will conduct our work at the DOT Headquarters in Washington, DC, and at USMMA in Kings Point, NY. If you have any questions, please contact me at (202) 366-1959 or Barry J. DeWeese, Assistant Inspector General for Surface Transportation Audits, at (202) 366-5630.

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cc: DOT Audit Liaison, M-1
Maritime Administrator
MARAD Audit Liaison, MAR-392

³ Pub.L.114-348 (December 23, 2016).

⁴ USMMA’s Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) program includes efforts to address sexual harassment.