comparable to the occurrence in the Department of Defense. It is an indication that the rates of assaults are questioning the numbers and then military members, the focus turns to but not the one of most concern to our military profession.

I had this happen to a soldier in South Korea. The commanding officer’s response was to accuse the sergeant major of lying. When the truth came out (he confessed), the victim got moved, and the predator (a platoon sergeant) got put in charge of the new target. What kind of punishment was that?

— Ron Frampton

‘WE HAVE FAILED’
The general was here at Fort Riley, Kan., about a month ago (‘Odierno to leaders: We have lost soldiers’ trust,’ armytimes.com, June 10). Our leaders did not inform us that the general was going to hold a town-hall meeting here. Is it because our leaders do not want our voices to be heard? Our leaders made Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention training mandatory at the same venue where the general appeared. Nothing from nothing leaves nothing!

— Dave Tropp

Too many general officers are worried about making their next star to fix the problem. Most of these assaults occurred in the past 10 years, when every one of these GOs was either an O-7 or O-8. So, who do we hold accountable when all of these GOs are sitting in one room looking at each other? I wish Army leadership the best.

— Mark Lowe

If we want useless garrison uniforms, give them some class, like World War II-era uniforms. Army combat uniforms look like sloppy work and could still tell who was Army, Marines and Air Force by small design differences of the uniform.

— Doug Walsh

BAD DEEDS, BAD ‘WEEDS’
The May release of the Defense Department’s report on sexual assault in the military for fiscal 2012 continues to drive an understandable high level of attention and outrage from Congress and the American people. The increasing numbers of reported sexual assaults from calendar year 2004 to fiscal 2014 is a disturbing trend, but not the one of most concern to our military profession.

In conversations with senior military members, the focus turns to questioning the numbers and then debating the impact of encouraging victim reporting and contending that the rates of assaults are comparable to the occurrence in American society. These are all red herrings that deflect from the core issue identified in the report’s executive summary, ‘Sexual assault is a crime that has no place in the Department of Defense. It is an attack on the values we defend and on the cohesion our units demand and forever changes the lives of victims and their families.’

It is discouraging and disappointing that not much has changed in the incidents of sexual assaults as evidenced by the increased numbers of reports. It is equally discouraging that the number of estimated unwanted sexual contacts rose from 19,900 to 26,000 since last year’s report.

Thinking about how to frame Army leaders’ responsibility to address this phenomenon, I am reminded of an anecdote from the father of a college friend who had been director of public works at a large Army installation: ‘I got a telephone call from the post chief of staff. He said, “Colonel, there are too many damn dandelions on the parade field.” I responded, “Sir, how many would you like?”

Such is the case with sexual assaults when our military members contend that it is easy to say that any number represents too many, then accede that it is not possible to eliminate the occurrences. I hold that that contention is an abrogation of leadership within the profession of arms. We have current data that establish the circumstances of the preponderance of assaults — junior enlisted (E-1 to E-4) victims (73 percent) with junior enlisted and noncommissioned officer offenders (51 percent and 28 percent, respectively). Past analysis has identified assaults occurring within the first 90 days of unit assignment, on weekends, with alcohol involved and with a lack of leader presence.

This is metaphorically comparable to weeds on the parade ground. Dandelion seeds will blow in and, given the opportunity, germinate, grow and bloom. Responsible stewards of the field will fertilize the field, apply weed retardant, perform spot weed removal and nurture good grass. Army leaders at all levels have to provide their attention and actions such that weeds of bad behavior cannot take root.

The FY2012 DoD report cites the efforts of senior civilian and military officials to embrace policies and programs, as well as the upcoming revision of the DoD-wide Sexual Assault Prevention and Response strategic plan. Rather than lamenting the scrutiny and additional requirements of the Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention program, leaders within the profession of arms must remain focused to ensure their organizations’ deeds align with our institution’s words.

Having effective programs of education, applying resources to points of vulnerability and holding leaders accountable for the protection, nurturing and repair of the force is an obligation of stewardship. We should expect and demand respect for our service members by systemically eradicating behavior inconsistent with our professional values.

Surely this congressman has better things to spend taxpayers’ money on — for instance, balancing the federal budget.

— Dallas A. Powell, Jr.

While I understand that the common courtesy outside of uniform is the hand-over-heart method, I must have missed a regulation that says, “Saluting the flag while not in uniform is unacceptable.” This bill sounds redundant and a waste of time. If anything, can’t Gen. Dempsey/Odierno sign a policy memo specifically allowing this without question?

— RM Avila

1ST SGT., 1ST AMENDMENT
The military is not and never will be a democracy (‘1st Sgt. v. 1st Amendment? Facebook not for “volatile” topics,’ Outside the Wire, June 6). We defend democracy by not practicing it. Service members have all constitutional rights. We just have a few strings attached.

— Ron

While the first sergeant is correct on some points, soldiers are free to express their opinions on gun issues and on political and government issues. They are not allowed to publicly promote a political party or candidate nor criticize the chain of command, including the president and certain other government officials. The rules are laid out in AR 600-20 (especially Appendix B) and DoD Directive 1344.10.

— Colleen

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— Doug Walsh

STAND AND SALUTE
It is not a big deal, as many of our veterans have been saluting the flag in and out of uniform for a long time (‘Bill would expand hand salutes when not in uniform,’ armytimes.com, June 7).

When was the last time anyone got in trouble for saluting the flag in civvies?

— James Sullivan

GENERAL DRAWDOWN
When they decided they needed an officer for an officer to process things in the office, things got crazy (“Defense bill calls for reducing number of generals, flag officers,” Facebook, June 11).

I think cutting the top is the smartest thing the Army has ever done. Too often we see too many chiefs and not enough Indians, and then people wonder why the work isn’t getting done.

— Joe Griffin

COMMON CAMO
It’s a smart move, with budgets becoming tighter (“House panel’s proposal pushes services to wear common camo,” Facebook, June 10). It will save money and should allow services to add distinguishing characteristics to the uniform. There was a time when all of the services were olive drab green and you could still tell who was Army, Marines and Air Force by small design differences of the uniform.

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Col. Charles D. Allen (ret.)
Professor, Leadership and Cultural Studies, U.S. Army War College
Carlisle Barracks, Pa.

ALL-FEMALE INFANTRY UNITS
Some women can handle the male Infantry School, and could even do better than most men, but not in the amount that we need. So how about this: All-women infantry units that go by an upgraded women’s physical training test, harder training — but not so hard that they fail like the women in the Marine testing.

Pros: Women can now be in direct combat, more women join the military, better dating ratios, women don’t slow down the male Infantry School, reduced worry of rape or sexual assaults because you know adding a small number of women into all-male platoons cannot be a good idea. Cons: I can’t see one. What do you think?

Staff Sgt. Ryan Archuleta
Alhambra, Calif.