



## NAVY OFFICE OF SPECIAL TRIAL COUNSEL

# NEW MILITARY JUSTICE REFORMS

### What is Military Justice?

It is the legal system of the U.S. Armed Forces. It is founded upon the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), or the body of laws for service members. The system ensures **good order and discipline**.

### What Has Changed?

At the end of 2023, **major reforms** to the military justice system were enacted. They include:

- Creation of the Office of Special Trial Counsel (OSTC)
- A new court-martial sentencing system
- Randomized selection of court-martial panels (or juries)
- More appellate court access for the accused
- More notification rights for crime victims
- More resources for defense counsel

Also, as of Jan. 1, 2025, sexual harassment has been designated a covered offense under the jurisdiction of OSTC.

### What is the OSTC?

It is the Navy's new, worldwide military justice organization that prosecutes "covered offenses," or alleged crimes involving serious personal violence, including sexual assault. It reports directly to the Secretary of the Navy. It is staffed by Special Trial Counsel (STC) – expert, specialized, and independent judge advocates. STC decide – **independent from a service member's chain of command** – whether to bring a covered-offense case to court-martial.

#### Covered Offenses

They are violations of the following Punitive Articles of the UCMJ:

- Article 117a (Intimate Visual Images)
- Article 118 (Murder)
- Article 119 (Manslaughter)
- Article 119a (Death or Injury of an Unborn Child)
- Article 120 (Rape and Sexual Assault)
- Article 120a (Mail, Deposit of Obscene Matter)
- Article 120b (Rape and Sexual Assault of a Child)
- Article 120c (Miscellaneous Sex Offenses)
- Article 125 (Kidnapping)
- Article 128b (Domestic Violence)
- Article 130 (Stalking)
- Article 132 (Retaliation)
- Article 134 (Child Pornography)
- Article 134 (Sexual Harassment)

### What Do YOU Need to Know?

- Sexual assault reporting procedures have **not changed** (see below).
- Military justice decision **authority has shifted**.
- These changes **will not interrupt** any military justice proceedings.
- These changes **increase force readiness**.

### Resources for Information and Support

- [Navy OSTC website pages](#)
- [Sexual assault reporting procedures](#) (via Department of Defense (DoD) Sexual Assault Prevention and Response)
- [DoD Safe Helpline](#) (877-995-5247)
- The [Navy Victims' Legal Counsel Program](#)