NEWS RELEASE
Representative Tillie K. Fowler

Florida's Fourth District

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ARMY MOVING AGGRESSIVELY TO ADDRESS SEXUAL MISCONDUCT, SAYS FOWLER
NATIONAL SECURITY COMMITTEE WILL CONTINUE TO MONITOR SITUATION

Washington, D.C. -- Rep. Tillie Fowler (R-FL), a member of the House National Security Committee, today said she was pleased that the Army has initiated action to address accusations of sexual misconduct at Army training facilities in Maryland and Missouri. Her comments came after a briefing for members of the Committee given by Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs Sara Lister and senior Army officials.

"We demand a great deal from our men and women in uniform," Fowler said, "and in return, they deserve our commitment that they will be the best-equipped, best-trained military in the world. In order for them to be the best-trained, however, it is imperative that they have confidence in their superior officers. The allegations of rape and sexual misconduct at Aberdeen Proving Ground Ordnance Training Center and Ft. Leonard Wood are deeply disturbing, both because of their criminal nature and because of the breach of trust involved. Service in the military and effectiveness in the field require a high level of trust between service members and their commanders, and it appears this trust was violated by one or more individuals at these facilities."

"After today's briefing, however, I feel better that the Army has made a good start in addressing this situation appropriately," Fowler continued. "Since the system which is in place service-wide to prevent sexual misconduct appears to have broken down at Aberdeen and Ft. Leonard Wood, Army officials are looking for other instances in which the system may not have performed properly. I am pleased they are pursuing the most recent allegations, as well as those made on a hotline which was established for this purpose. They are also reviewing their sexual harassment awareness programs and policies, and working to ensure that anyone who has been a victim of criminal activity is provided with appropriate care and counseling."

"During our meeting," Fowler continued, "I noted to Army officials my view that a permanent hotline and the appointment of ombudswomen to deal with sexual misconduct and harassment at training facilities were desirable things the Army ought to look at very closely. I also intend to work with Rep. Jane Harman, the senior Democratic woman on the Committee in the 105th Congress, to pursue these issues. We have already discussed travelling to Aberdeen to review firsthand the Army's training policies and practices."

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Fowler affirmed that the Committee would continue to exercise its oversight responsibilities on these matters. "This is a situation of the utmost seriousness, involving violent crime, and the House National Security Committee will be monitoring it closely in the coming months. I am confident that if we are not satisfied that all appropriate actions are being taken to address these issues, the Committee will hold hearings and take such further action as is necessary on the subject."

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