

## **Sexual Assault Lawsuit and Documentary Highlighting Secret Problem in the Military**

Rape, sexual assault and sexual harassment are the subject of an eye opening lawsuit filed by eight female service members against the Department of Defense, Marine Corp and Navy. In the complaint, the female plaintiffs accuse fellow service members of gang rape, degrading sexual slurs, and physical threats that resulted in botched investigations and little to no punishment. Described as "One of America's most shameful and best kept secrets," sexual assault in the military is highlighted and exposed in an award winning documentary at the 2012 Sundance Film Festival titled *The Invisible War*,

which is scheduled to be screened in theaters this summer. Former Army JAG attorney Greg T. Rinckey

appears in the film to provide legal insight into the investigatory process or lack thereof. He said the reality is that while the statistics on sexual assault in the ranks are overwhelming, many of the incidents go unreported. "The film and this lawsuit are highlighting another problem occurring here, and that is the inaction of the military to investigate the claims effectively. There's a feeling by these victims that if they come forward and report this crime, they will be the one who is punished because often times there are repercussions and retaliation against them," said Greg T. Rinckey, managing partner of Tully Rinckey PLLC, a military law firm. "This publicity and exposure is going to force the military to severely change its policies when it comes to handling these types of claims and accusations." According to the Army's 2012 ("Gold Book") report on "Generating Health and Discipline in the Force Ahead of the Strategic Reset," violent sex offenses involving active duty Army soldiers have increased 97 percent over the last five years. Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta recently estimated that 19,000 sexual assaults take place every year across all military branches. Statistics supplied in the lawsuit filed in U.S. District Court in Washington makes mention of a Department of Defense estimation that "only 20 percent of service members who experience "unwanted sexual contact" report the matter to a military authority." "The exposure of this problem now has the military battling a war internally. They are getting flanked on all sides by more and more victims coming forward. It's creating a major crack in the military's moral and ethical foundation that needs to be sealed and not covered with a band aid," said Mr. Rinckey.