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**Service Women's Action Network says White House Report on Military Families Falls Short on Addressing Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)**

*Report reflects "an inadequate understanding of the reality faced by many military families."*

**NEW YORK, NY** -- The White House report released today titled, "Strengthening Our Military Families" was applauded by the Service Women's Action Network, although the human rights organization founded by women veterans, went on to say that the report falls short on addressing one of the most harmful issues affecting military families, Intimate Partner Violence (IPV). Today's White House report details a strategic plan to address issues facing military families such as homelessness, mental health, substance abuse, childcare, job opportunities for military spouses, and education of military children.

"We are encouraged by this Administration's concern toward improving the lives of military families, but it is critical that Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is recognized as a major problem that is particularly harmful for women and children," said Anuradha Bhagwati, a former Marine Corps Captain and Executive Director of the Service Women's Action Network. "To not so much as even address this issue in the report is frankly a glaring omission, showing an inadequate understanding of the reality faced by many military families. Today's report is a step forward, but unfortunately not without a misstep on a major issue of importance for the lives of military families."

"Battered military spouses are often reluctant to report incidents of violence," Bhagwati continued. "Furthermore, military commanders are afforded too much discretion when it comes to deciding how cases of IPV are handled, and it is this discretion that often prevents justice from being served. Policy reform is desperately needed in order to ensure that military families are safe from domestic violence and today's report missed an incredible opportunity to take those first important policy-changing steps."

Although SWAN expressed disappointment with the lack of addressing IPV in the report, the organization acknowledged the report did address many important issues military families face, as well as applauded the report's efforts to address some of the key problems that disproportionately affect women. The stressors that trigger domestic violence, including homelessness, unemployment, substance abuse, and mental health problems, are exacerbated among the military and veteran population. Children in military families also suffer, as child abuse is twice as common in families where IPV occurs. The U.S. Government Accountability Office issued a report last year that was critical of the Pentagon's failure to implement its own Domestic Violence Task Force recommendations.

SWAN made headlines earlier last month after filing a lawsuit with the ACLU against the Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for their failure to

respond to Freedom of Information Act requests seeking government records documenting incidents of rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment and domestic violence in the military. The full press release on the SWAN/ACLU lawsuit can be read here: [http://www.servicewomen.org/userfiles/File/MST%20FOIA%20final%20press%20release\\_12\\_13\\_2010.pdf](http://www.servicewomen.org/userfiles/File/MST%20FOIA%20final%20press%20release_12_13_2010.pdf)

*SWAN is a national human rights organization founded and led by women veterans. SWAN's vision is to transform military culture by securing equal opportunity and the freedom to serve in uniform without threat of harassment, discrimination, intimidation or assault. SWAN also seeks to reform veterans' services on a national scale to guarantee equal access to quality health care, benefits and resources for women veterans and their families. You can follow Service Women's Action Network on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/servicewomen>, or on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/servicewomen>.*

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