

## **Office of Special Counsel Finds Despite Progress, Peace Corps Lacks Certain Sexual Assault Prevention Measures, Encourages Clear Policies to Protect Volunteers**

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WASHINGTON, D.C./Jan. 5, 2018 – The U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC) concluded that despite significant progress, the Peace Corps has failed to implement certain sexual assault prevention measures. OSC also encouraged clearer policies and training to better protect volunteers. The conclusions came after the Peace Corps completed a report prompted by whistleblower disclosures to OSC.

“I have determined that while the report contains the information required by statute, some of the findings are not reasonable,” Special Counsel Henry J. Kerner wrote to President Trump. “I encourage the Peace Corps to establish clear, consistent, and effective policies to ensure the prevention of sexual assault and other crimes against volunteers, timely responses to safety risks, and the provision of adequate counseling services to volunteers who are sexually assaulted during their service.”

OSC sought a Peace Corps investigation of concerns brought to OSC by Kellie Greene, the first and former director of the Peace Corps Office of Victim Advocacy (OVA). She alleged that the Peace Corps failed to: (1) take appropriate action against volunteers who engage in sexual misconduct; (2) train host families and co-workers to prevent sexual assault; (3) take action to protect volunteers while traveling; (4) provide adequate counseling services to volunteers who are sexually assaulted; and (5) provide necessary updates regarding sexual assault cases to OVA.

While the Peace Corps reported that it has taken measures to ensure that volunteers who are victims of sexual assault receive adequate counseling services and has taken action to address risks to volunteers while traveling, OSC found key shortcomings with the report’s findings. One, the report confirmed that volunteers who have reportedly engaged in sexual misconduct, including sexual assault, have been allowed to resign or interrupt service without any documentation in their volunteer records. This has resulted in at least one case in which the Peace Corps rehired a volunteer who had been previously accused of sexual assault, Kerner wrote.

“This case is but one example that refutes the report's determination that the Peace Corps does not need to update its applicant screening policies,” Kerner wrote. “While the Peace Corps cannot prevent volunteers from ending their service while under investigation, the Peace Corps should note in the volunteer records that an individual resigned while under investigation for sexual misconduct.”

Two, the report stated that it has not identified a need for additional training for host families and co-workers, nor is the additional training required by current law. However, the report reflects that out of the 781 reports of volunteer sexual assault between 2011 and 2014, 16 percent of the assaults were allegedly committed by a host family member or co-worker, Kerner wrote. Greene, as head of OVA, identified the need for additional training and made that allegation to OSC.

“Given these facts, OSC finds it unreasonable to conclude that training would provide no additional value in the prevention of sexual assault, even if it is not required by law,” Kerner wrote.

In addition to submitting the report and Greene's comments to the President, OSC submitted the materials to the House Foreign Affairs Committee and the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. The documents also are publicly available [here](#) at [www.osc.gov](http://www.osc.gov).

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*The U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC) is an independent federal investigative and prosecutorial agency. Our basic authorities come from four federal statutes: the Civil Service Reform Act, the Whistleblower Protection Act, the Hatch Act, and the Uniformed Services Employment & Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA). OSC's primary mission is to safeguard the merit system by protecting federal employees and applicants from prohibited personnel practices, especially reprisal for whistleblowing, and to serve as a safe channel for allegations of wrongdoing. For more information, please visit our website at [www.osc.gov](http://www.osc.gov).*