



Alaska State Troopers



Alaska Justice Forum

Comments by
Alaska State Trooper Director Colonel Audie Holloway
regarding the “Descriptive Analysis of Sexual Assault Incidents Reported to Alaska State Troopers 2003-2004”
January 29, 2008

Thank you to University Alaska Anchorage’s Justice Center. This project would not have taken place without their time and expertise. Thank you to our funders: National Institute of Justice and Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (through a grant from the Office On Violence Against Women). Thank you to the Alaska Department of Law for agreeing to participate and allow UAA access to their data. In doing so this report is significantly more well-rounded and descriptive. Thank you to the prior Alaska State Trooper administration, Department of Public Safety Commissioner Bill Tandeske and Colonel Julia Grimes and especially retired Major Joe Masters. Without their foresight and willingness to critically examine this problem, we would not have this valuable information that may determine new directions and priorities for law enforcement.

We greatly appreciate the media being here at this press conference. We want to share this information and we want to take the time to make sure the information is received correctly and answer any questions that we can, but please realize, we do not have all the answers, but we are willing to look for them.

The issue of sexual victimization in Alaska is one that both warrants and needs the attention of the public as it is an issue that affects all Alaskans; urban and rural. Please pay particular attention to what we learned about the age ranges of suspects versus victims and you will see that this is not a race issue, it is more appropriately an age issue. You will also see that the suspects are not miles away from your neighborhood; they are in your neighborhood and in your house. The greatest numbers of these assaults are a form of domestic violence. Link these phrases together in your mind. Notice that some of our beliefs may need to be rethought. AST intends to take this information seriously and we will ask ourselves if we are concentrating our resources in the right areas. For example, look at the statistics on drug and alcohol use. If this is correct, then I submit to you that there is

less reason to be sympathetic toward offenders and we should label them as what they are – cold and calculated victimizers.

AST requested this descriptive analysis for a simple and honorable reason. **We wanted to know how and what we were doing so that we would know how we could improve our investigations.** Specifically, we wanted to know where we were doing well and where we had room for improvement. In the last several years, the UAA Justice Center has made itself available for studies such as this and law enforcement throughout the state has benefited from that objective partnership. An improved reporting and statistical ability would definitely make this process shorter, faster and more accurate. At AST we are working diligently to update our woefully inadequate and out-of-date technological status.

As you have heard, this descriptive analysis has provided us insight into certain areas in which we need to improve on specific to sex crimes investigations. I would like to comment on a few of those areas. But before I do so, **I would like to stress that I firmly believe AST and our troopers are doing well with the resources that we currently have at our disposal. Significant changes within AST are only going to come with significant additional resources.** AST is maxed-out. It is evident that “we” need to do more for victims of sexual crimes but we can not do what is truly needed with our existing resources.

The first area, specific to areas of improvement, is resource allocation. As stated the highest percentage of sex crime incidents reported to AST in the study period are from the Bethel Post (17%). Overall C detachment represents 48% of the total cases in the study. The next largest group of investigations was conducted by the Alaska Bureau of Investigation (Palmer ABI 8%).

- We intend to target more resources to C detachment and ABI to include staff, equipment and training.
- **However, it is extremely important to understand that to lower the overall rate of sex crimes in Alaska we can not only address the issue in one specific geographic location. We must address it statewide.**

Over 80% of our cases involved a victim under the age of 21 and 73% of our cases involved a minor (0-17 years of age). Look carefully at those numbers.

- We will target more resources to all AST that is specific to child sexual abuse training.
- While prevention has not been the primary mission of law enforcement, this data will provide some concrete information that can drive prevention efforts and will partner with those agencies that can help us educate.

One of the most glaring issues brought out in the report were the low percentages specific to evidence collection. There are myriad of legitimate reasons as to why evidence was not collected. However, these reasons alone do not account for the low percentages. When we first received the preliminary data, we decided this was an issue that warranted immediate attention. **We are currently working on project in C detachment to enhance evidence collection. This project includes purchasing of equipment and training on crime scene documentation. We hope to have this project completed by June 2008.**

Here are some of the reasons for no evidence collection:

- Timeliness of report. There may be no physical evidence left to collect. However, in “historical cases,” corroborative evidence should be collected. This issue really comes down to resources and staffing. There are instances in which our troopers do not have the



Dr. Andre B. Rosay, interim director of the Justice Center and co-author of the “Descriptive Analysis of Sexual Assault Incidents Reported to Alaska State Troopers 2003-2004” speaks to reporters about the study at the University of Alaska Anchorage campus on January 29, 2008. Seated at the table are AST Deputy Director Maj. Matt Leveque and AST Director Col. Audie Holloway. Katie TePas, program coordinator for the DPS domestic violence training program, sits in front to navigate a power point program while Rosay talking about the findings of the study. TePas also co-authored the study.

time to collect all of the necessary evidence.

- In 10% of the cases we did not have a known suspect and in other instances the suspect was not interviewed immediately (presumably we were unable to locate them and therefore we could not collect the evidence).

Twenty-five percent of victims had Sexual Assault Response Team exams or more importantly 38% of victims who reported within 72 hours had a SART exam.

- During the time of the study our bench mark for initiating a SART exam was if the victim reported within 72 hours of the incident. This bench mark has since been expanded to 96 hours. This will help us collect more evidence.
- An additional 12% of victims who reported after 72 hours had a SART exam.
- Generally speaking, victims have to consent to the SART exam (adults). Some do not consent to the exam.

Required victim notification was rarely documented in the report. This is clearly a room for improvement. At a minimum it is a report writing issue.

- Without question there are times when this was not done but not documented in the report.
- Not all sex crime cases are domestic violence cases and thus would not warrant the domestic violence notification.
- AST has developed and distributed a new victim notification booklet specific to domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking. This booklet includes Office of Victims Rights and Violent Crimes Compensation Board information.

As you saw from the data alcohol is not a factor in many of the cases in the report. This is a significant

finding. We often hear from the public that alcohol is to blame for sexual violence or that it is the causal factor in sexual violence. This is not true. **Sex crimes are premeditated and predatory behavior. This is calculated victimization.**

Something else that I would like you to take notice of in the study has to do with the minimal use of weapons during the assaults. **What I am suggesting is that this does not mean that a weapon was not used, but it was a weapon in form of a threat, a threat of harm to the victim, a threat of embarrassment, a threat of some type of harm to the family, a threat to withhold needed resources or affection and a threat of some type of retaliation. Words are just as much a method of control as a gun.**

A lack of a conviction or low percentages of convictions does not necessarily equate to system failure or neglect or more importantly that the victim was not believed. If a suspect is arrested, the trooper believed the victim. If the suspect is indicted the Grand Jury believed the victim and if DOL accepts the case, they believed the victim. It is extremely important that we send the message to victims that they are believed. It is equally important that this message be delivered to communities as the victim needs their support. **All of that said we want to increase our rates of cases being referred, cases being accepted and ultimately convictions.**

This analysis only deals with incidents that were reported to AST. National research indicates that 63-77% of female victims of rape or attempted rape do not report the incident to the police (U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Rape and Assault August 2002). Furthermore, 30% of our cases in the report were reported a month after the incident. We need to increase timely reporting and reporting in general. We need to build a system that the victims trust. We need to send the message to victims that it is okay to talk about the abuse. But to deliver this message, it truly needs to be safe for victims to report the abuse. The public needs to get the message that blaming victims is not tolerated. The responsibility belongs on the suspect. Again, sex crimes are calculated behavior.

Prevention: We need to look at this problem system-wide. Troopers need to partner up with Office of Children Services, with prosecutors, with advocates and with the media. We need to get the word out that this behavior will no longer be hidden and we will tell the world who you – **the perpetrators** – are and what you are doing to innocent victims.

In closing, sexual violence, which is clearly related to domestic violence, is probably the greatest criminal problem facing Alaska. You can also find this victimization on the Internet. We could have a team of investigators just working on on-line enticement of minor cases. Each of us has a role in ending sexual violence in Alaska. Each of us has a duty. I ask you, the public and the media to think not about what you have done to end sexual violence, not what you are currently doing to end sexual violence, but what are you going to do to end sexual violence. Think Prospectively. We lead the national in forcible rapes and have done so for AT LEAST the last 10 years. Clearly, what each of us have been doing is not enough. We need to do things differently and we need to do more!

For a copy of the complete “Descriptive Analysis of Sexual Assault Incidents Reported to Alaska State Troopers 2003-2004” go to the UAA Justice Center website at justice.uaa.alaska.edu. This site also contained a copy of Dr. Andre Rosay’s press conference presentation on the study.