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Army sacks six personnel involved with so-called Jedi Council for distributing demeaning sexual emails

Updated 15 Nov 2013, 9:15amFri 15 Nov 2013, 9:15am

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Six members of the Army have been sacked over a scandal involving the distribution of explicit emails that denigrate women.

Army chief David Morrison released a statement saying the six men had been part of the so-called Knights of the Jedi Council group.

KEY POINTS

- Six army personnel sacked over distribution of emails with demeaning sexual videos of women
- Sacked soldiers range in rank from sergeant to major and were part of the so-called Knights of the Jedi Council
- Three of the men have been subject of investigations by New South Wales Police
- Army chief David Morrison says those who fail to uphold the Army's standards will be held to account

Seventeen members of the group swapped footage of sex acts without the women knowing, and attached demeaning commentary.

Police say other members were challenged to try to have sex with the women.

Three of the sacked soldiers still face possible criminal prosecution by New South Wales Police, but it is unclear whether any charges have been laid.

A further 11 soldiers remain under internal investigation.

Lieutenant-General Morrison, [who warned troops in June to respect women or "get out"](#), says the six sacked men range in rank from sergeant to major and are from regular and reserve units.

Hundreds of emails were allegedly distributed and about 90 other people - predominantly Army personnel - have been implicated in the scandal.

Lieutenant-General Morrison says four have faced administrative disciplinary action, while Defence is considering the futures of several others.

He says more than 120 Army personnel have been discharged in the past year, mainly in relation to misconduct, inappropriate behaviour or prohibited substances.

DEFENCE SHOWN 'APPETITE' TO TACKLE ISSUE

Macquarie University professor Catharine Lumby, who works with the National Rugby League on gender issues, welcomes the zero-tolerance approach.

"Getting rid of these six people in this abhorrent Jedi Council's behaviour is fantastic," she said.

"I think it's great they're acting before we go through some kind of other legal process, because the evidence is there.

"We can't say we'll never see this kind of thing again, as awful as it is, but by getting rid of these guys, it sends a pretty strong message to any young man coming into the ADF who thinks this is OK."

Professor Lumby says it is important ADF leadership has publicly recognised the incident and has "shown a real appetite to take it on".

"I think that they've got a huge challenge ahead of them. The ADF is a very complex organisation with three separate elements to it, so I think it's a long road for cultural change," she said.

NUMBER OF SOLDIERS DISCHARGED NOT NECESSARILY LARGE NUMBER

The Defence Force faces questions as to why the affair took two-and-a-half years to come to the attention of the top brass, but Neil James from the Australia Defence Association says these things take time.

"There's a little bit of a witch-hunt mentality, where people say, 'why can't these people be thrown out straight away?', and, in most cases, the [process of law] takes a long time," he said.

But Mr James says the figure of 122 solders discharged over the past 12 months is not necessarily a large number.

"You'd have to actually look at the rate of administrative discharges from the Defence Force over a period, but it doesn't appear, on the face of it, unusual," he said.

"Because this includes drug offences and other disciplinary problems; it's not just the sexual harassment side of the house. I mean, it works out at about a quarter of 1 per cent of the total force annually, which, again, doesn't seem immensely huge."

The email scandal comes in the wake of the [so-called Skype scandal](#), in which consensual sex between two ADFA cadets was filmed and broadcast over the internet without the woman's knowledge.

The Defence Force has been attempting to change the culture in a program driven by top brass.

The program called Pathways to Change has brought new policies on alcohol, social media, recruitment, frontline combat roles and procedures for handling complaints.

Lieutenant-General Morrison says those who cannot uphold defence values will be held to account.

ARMY SCANDAL - EXPERIENCE LEVELS

Those sacked include commissioned and non-commissioned officers with years of experience and with dozens, or in some cases hundreds, of soldiers under their command.

Rank	Status	Level of Experience
Major	Commissioned officer	Usually between eight and 10 years service. Command a sub-unit (a company, squadron or battery) of 120 soldiers. Also employed in HQ staff roles.
Captain	Commissioned officer	Usually between three and eight years experience and 2IC of a sub-unit of 120 soldiers.

Rank	Status	Level of Experience
Warrant Officer	Non-commissioned	A Class One officer is senior adviser to a unit commanding officer, responsible for discipline of up to 650 officers and soldiers. Typically has 18 years of service.
Sergeant	Non-commissioned	Usually after 12 years service, depending on ability. 2IC of a troop or platoon of up to 40 soldiers. Advises and assists junior officers.

Source: army.gov.au

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