



In a potentially significant shift in the debate over combating sexual assault in the military, the nation's top general says he is dropping his opposition to a proposal to take decisions on sexual assault prosecution out of the hands of commanders.

Gen. Mark Milley, chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, stopped short of endorsing the changes recommended by an independent review panel. But in an interview with The Associated Press and CNN, Milley said he is now open to considering them because the problem of sexual assault in the military has persisted despite other efforts to solve it.

"We've been at it for years, and we haven't effectively moved the needle," he said. "We have to. We must."

The comments by Milley, as arguably the most influential officer and as the senior military adviser to Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and to President Joe Biden, are likely to carry considerable weight among the service chiefs and add to momentum for the change.

Austin, himself a former senior commander and former vice chief of the Army, has not publicly commented on the review commission's proposal, but it is his creation and thus its recommendations are seen as especially weighty. Lawmakers are also stepping up pressure for the change.

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