

**ISSUES AFFECTING FAMILIES OF SOLDIERS,
SAILORS, AIRMEN, AND MARINES**

HEARINGS

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON PERSONNEL
OF THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

UNITED STATES SENATE

JUNE 2 AND OCTOBER 7, 2003

AND

JOINT HEARINGS

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON PERSONNEL
OF THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

AND

SUBCOMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
OF THE

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION,

LABOR, AND PENSIONS

UNITED STATES SENATE

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ISSUES AFFECTING FAMILIES OF SOLDIERS, SAILORS, AIRMEN, AND MARINES

MONDAY, JUNE 2, 2003

U.S. SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON PERSONNEL,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Warner Robins Air Force Base, Georgia.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 1:00 p.m., in Building 1500, the Museum of Aviation at Warner Robins Air Force Base, Senator Saxby Chambliss (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Committee member present: Senator Chambliss.

Majority staff member present: Richard F. Walsh, counsel.

Minority staff member present: Gerald J. Leeling; minority counsel.

Committee members' assistants present: Clyde A. Taylor IV, assistant to Senator Chambliss.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR SAXBY CHAMBLISS, CHAIRMAN

Senator CHAMBLISS. Good afternoon. The subcommittee will come to order. The Subcommittee on Personnel meets today to receive testimony on issues affecting families of soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines.

As we are getting started here and before I get into my opening statement, I want to, first of all, acknowledge a few folks that are here and make a couple of comments about where the idea for this came from and what we hope to achieve over the next several weeks with respect to a couple of hearings, two of which are being held today. One will be held in Nebraska, another one will be held back in Washington, DC, and possibly even some others after that.

We are just coming off a very difficult conflict in Iraq where our military personnel have performed just amazing feats. All of us as Americans, particularly those of us who are closely connected with our service personnel, could not be prouder of our men and women who serve in uniform and the job that they did liberating the people of Iraq. But just as important as the men and women who serve in the Armed Forces, are the spouses and the family members of those men and women.

It is critically important that we make sure that we make life as easy as possible for our spouses and our children because the last thing that we want a family member doing while they are serving on active duty is being concerned about what is going on back home. We want them to be able to take comfort in the fact that,

first of all, their spouses are well prepared to take care of all the family business and that they have the appropriate professional help at each of our military installations to make sure that happens and that they get whatever assistance they need.

Second, that the children of those military personnel continue to have the opportunity for a quality education, both while the spouse is at home as well as while they are deployed, and that those children are adapting to Mom or Dad being gone at frequent intervals and being placed in harm's way and that they, again, are receiving whatever appropriate professional needs and services that they might need while their moms and their dads are gone.

I would note that my colleague, and I will refer to it in my formal remarks, Senator Lamar Alexander who chairs the Subcommittee on Children and Families of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, is holding a hearing similar to this today. We talked about the idea of doing this several weeks ago, and it was unusual that both of us have shared this same concern, and the concern on my part was raised once again when I visited the spouses of a number of our deployed personnel at Hunter Army Airfield over in the Savannah area. He had done the same thing at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, which is on the Tennessee-Kentucky border, and that is where he is holding his hearing today.

Interestingly enough, there is one other individual who shares the same concerns that we do who has been very vocal about that. That is First Lady Laura Bush. At the First Lady's luncheon a couple of weeks ago she made specific mention of our children of military personnel and making sure that, or we want to make sure, in her words, that we are doing what is necessary to provide the quality education that these children need and also to provide them with whatever professional services are needed while their parents are deployed, particularly at this very difficult time in the life of those families.

I want to borrow something from her comments that were made at that luncheon that day where she quoted a sixth grade student. Her name is Kiara. She is a sixth grade student at Belle Chasse Academy in Louisiana. Kiara wrote a poem. She is the daughter of a military father. This is what she said. Her poem was titled "I Serve Too," and it reads as follows:

"I'm a military child, I stay strong when my dad goes away. If there's a war and my dad is detached, I will help him fight back. With my braveness and courage I can stay strong, my family's support helps me carry on.

"Whenever we move, I start over again, I have to go to a new school, and make new friends. Even though people think I'm a military brat, I just don't quite see it like that.

"My daddy helps defend our country, so we can live in peace and harmony. So all the military children help their mothers and fathers because we serve too, we're their sons and daughters."

I think that sums up the feeling of a lot of us who over the years have become close to these kids and have seen these children attend schools on base, off base, having, in some instances, critical problems that have to be dealt with in a little bit different way from what some of our other children have to deal with. I know we

have some folks here today who know a lot more about it than I do, and I really do look forward to hearing from them.

It is essential that the subcommittee take advantage of every opportunity to visit military communities and receive firsthand the views of those whose professional and personal lives so directly involve the well-being of the men and women of the Armed Forces and their families. No State is blessed with more outstanding representatives from the Armed Forces than Georgia, and it is fitting that the subcommittee's first field hearing of the 108th Congress be conducted here in Warner Robins.

I want to thank the Director of the Museum of Aviation here at Robins Air Force Base, Paul Hibbits, and all of his staff for hosting this event, and to General Wetekam and his team here at Robins Air Force Base for their support. These folks have been great friends of mine over the years, they do a terrific job, and I am just very pleased that a lot of folks from around our State are having an opportunity to visit this museum today. I hope you will take the time to look around because it truly is a great institution and a real jewel of our military assets here in our State.

Before we get started I would like to note for the record my appreciation of the strong advocacy of Senator Ben Nelson of Nebraska, the ranking member of the Personnel Subcommittee, on behalf of the men and women of the Armed Forces. The Committee on Armed Services has a strong tradition of bipartisanship, and that tradition could not be stronger in the Personnel Subcommittee.

Senator Nelson could not attend today, but he is represented by Gary Leeling, his staff member from the Armed Services Committee, and we thank Gary for being here. Thank you, Gary. Senator Nelson has a prepared statement that I will include in the record. [The prepared statement of Senator Ben Nelson follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY SENATOR BEN NELSON

Thank you, Senator Chambliss.

I am delighted that you called this hearing to explore issues that are important to the families of our military personnel.

We ask a lot of our military families. I think it is entirely appropriate that you conduct this hearing here in Georgia to hear from officials responsible for family support and from family members themselves about family life in the military.

The young men and women serving in our Armed Forces are prepared to lay down their lives in service to our Nation. We must ensure that their families are well taken care of—that they receive quality medical care, their children receive a quality education, and that their spouses and children have a quality of life that is at least comparable to what they would experience in the civilian world.

I want to thank our witnesses for appearing here today. I am most anxious to hear their concerns and learn what we can do to make their lives better.

Senator CHAMBLISS. I would also like to thank Senator Lamar Alexander of Tennessee who is a member of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions and chairs its Subcommittee on Children and Families.

Today, Senator Alexander is presiding at a subcommittee hearing at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, focusing on military families. Later this month we intend to hold a joint hearing of our two subcommittees. We plan to work closely together to identify areas in which we can cooperate in improving the quality of life for military families and share lessons with civilian communities about matters in-

volving family support, education of dependent children, spousal employment, and improved housing and healthcare.

Military families have been placed under tremendous stress in recent years. Even before September 11, 2001 and the global war on terrorism, the high tempo of operations for a significantly smaller military was a source of great concern for the personnel of our All-Volunteer Force. Since September 11, our active duty, Reserve, and National Guard personnel have performed superbly throughout Operations Noble Eagle, Enduring Freedom, and Iraqi Freedom, and have responded magnificently to the President's call to be ready for all contingencies. However, the sacrifices by military personnel and their families, the separations endured and the problems that must be addressed have only increased.

My expectation today is that we will gain insight into initiatives taken by the Services in the formulation of policies at the headquarters level, and also in the implementation of those policies at Fort Stewart, at Moody Air Force Base, and Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay in providing support for individual members and their families.

I would note that the first question I raised was, since we are here at Robins Air Force Base, which has a special place in my heart, why do we not have testimony from folks from Robins, but I understand that the Services chose the people to come testify. We have great experts, we have experts here at Robins, too, who could also shed a lot of light on this.

We have three panels of witnesses who will testify this afternoon. First, we will hear from Peter Isaacs, Deputy Director for the Army's Community and Family Support Center; Rear Admiral Select Marc Purcell, United States Navy, Assistant Commander for Personal Readiness and Community Support; Colonel Gerald Yanello, United States Marine Corps, Deputy Director of the Personnel and Family Readiness Division; and Ms. Barbara Murray, Chief of the Force Sustainment Division, United States Air Force.

Our second panel will consist of key family support managers from Fort Stewart, Moody Air Force Base, and from the Navy's Southeast Region, which includes Naval Submarine Base, Kings Bay. They will be followed by a third panel composed of spouses of active duty military personnel stationed at each of those installations.

I welcome the members of our first panel. Your written testimony will be entered into the record, and in just a minute I am going to ask that you proceed.

First of all, I hope all of you saw me take my Blackberry out because if I do not take it out of this holster it will be dinging all afternoon. If you would please make sure that your Blackberries, cell phones are turned off so that we are not interrupted during the course of this hearing.

There are a couple of other folks that I would like to recognize. I mentioned Gary Leeling from the Democratic side of the Armed Services staff. I also have my staff on the Personnel Subcommittee, Dick Walsh, who is here. A couple of my local staff members, Greg Wright from my Atlanta office, my State director, Bill Stembridge who a lot of you here from the Robins area knows who is from my Macon office. We have Jared Downs from Senator Miller's office.

Jared, thank you very much for being here. Senator Miller and I have an extremely close working relationship, and I promise you I will share the information taken today with Senator Miller. I also have Clyde Taylor from my Washington, DC, staff who handles my legislative matters in the Armed Services area.

With that, I would like to turn to our first panel. Mr. Isaacs, you are on our left and we will start with you, and, Admiral Purcell, we will move down with you immediately following any comments in the form of an opening statement by Mr. Isaacs.

Again, thank you all very much for being here. We look forward to hearing from you.

**STATEMENT OF PETER F. ISAACS, DEPUTY DIRECTOR,
COMMUNITY AND FAMILY SUPPORT CENTER, USA**

Mr. ISAACS. Senator Chambliss, it is my pleasure to appear before you today at this field hearing to discuss the Army's commitment to soldiers and their families and the programs designed to support them. I have submitted my statement for the record which details these initiatives and I have just a few brief comments.

I want to emphasize our senior leadership's philosophy that dictates that soldiers are the centerpiece of our formation. Our soldiers and their families deserve the same quality of life as the citizens that they are sworn to defend, period, non-negotiable.

In that regard we recognize the unique pressures placed on military families. The Army continues to demonstrate that we can rapidly deploy forces whenever and wherever they are needed in the world. A key component of that success is our Family Readiness Program which assures that soldiers and their families are well cared for so that the soldier can stay focused on the mission.

Experience has taught us that planning for reunion is as important as preparing for deployment. Our Army Community Services Programs provide programs to smooth that often difficult transition from the deployment to the reentry into family life.

While attending to the issues surrounding deployment, we can't ignore the day-to-day challenges of raising and educating soldiers' children. Army child care remains a model for the Nation. Programs provide child care options designed to reduce the conflict between a soldier's parental responsibilities and their on-the-job mission requirements.

We have recently established school liaison services to mobilize and use community resources to reduce the impact of the mobile military lifestyle on military children and youth; to implement the predictable support services to assist with relocation, life transitions, and academic success.

These programs provide parents, children, schools, commanders, and communities access to a wide range of resources that facilitate school transition.

To address these concerns we listen to our soldiers, their spouses, and commanders as we develop policies, programs, and support systems. Our greatest challenge is to continue to meet our standards for delivering programs within available resources. With your continued support, we will fully embrace, resource, and support the programs that meet the needs of these spectacular and special families.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will be happy to address any questions you may have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Isaacs follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY PETER F. ISAACS

Senator Chambliss, it is a pleasure to appear before you today at this field hearing to discuss our families and children.

The Chief of Staff of the Army in a recent address to Arlington Ladies 30th Anniversary Luncheon said and I would like to quote: "We are proud beyond measure of each of our Army families and their gifts and sacrifices are unique, but never more so than during a war. Through the strength and devotion of Army families, soldiers can focus on the tough missions that we give them. We ask a lot of our families—families who soldier along with their soldiers. They are always the most generous people I know. They constantly reinforce the truth of the proposition soldiering is an affair of the heart a quotation also attributed to General Creighton Abrams. So it is, so it will always be an affair of the heart."

Over the past several months, the leadership of the U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center (USACFSC) has visited numerous installations in the United States and overseas. On each visit the leadership paid particular attention to family readiness. We held discussions with garrison staffs, senior leaders, and spouses regarding organization and effectiveness of Army Community Service (ACS) centers, Family Assistance Centers (FACs), and Child and Youth Services (CYS) facilities. Principal observations were:

- Family members are phenomenally strong, but many are concerned about Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and other contingency operations and how long their spouses will be gone.
- The spouses agree they are better prepared now than they were for Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm (OP DS/DS) because the Army supported and strengthened Family Readiness Groups (FRGs), ACS programs, CYS programs, and incorporated lessons learned from previous deployments including OP DS/DS.

FAMILY READINESS

The Army places a high value on both military and personal preparedness and is committed to providing a full range of essential support and services to soldiers and their families throughout the entire spectrum of operations: pre-deployment, deployment, and redeployment. This commitment is implemented by caring leaders at all levels of command, from the first-line supervisor to the senior military and civilian leadership of the Army.

Both Active and Reserve component soldiers and their families attend classes and briefings and receive written instructional materials through ACS and Reserve Component (RC) Family Program Coordinators. Ensuring family readiness is a command responsibility. The ACS and RC Family Readiness Coordinators provide commanders with The Army Leaders' Desk Reference for Soldier/Family Readiness. It contains battalion readiness plans, guidance for conducting battalion level pre-deployment briefings and for operating successful FRGs. Additionally, rear detachment commanders (those that remain behind to process necessary paperwork) maintain regular contact with the commander at the mission location, coordinate with American Red Cross regarding emergency information, and provide vital information to the FRG. As such, they are important elements of the entire family readiness support system. Establishing lines of communication between families, deployed soldiers and units through rear detachment commanders, family readiness groups and family assistance centers is crucial to reducing anxiety and sustaining soldier and family morale. Through technology (internet, e newsletters, video teleconferencing, phone cards) soldiers are able to stay in touch with their families. A FAC is a building or location that becomes a central hub where professional staff coordinate services and resources a family will need during a deployment such as ACS, ID card processing, medical registration and insurance, legal assistance, emergency financial assistance and crisis intervention. Community support and outreach are essential during deployments. In some cases, the community in which the installation is located considers the soldiers to be "their own" and is as concerned about them as those remaining on the installation. ACS personnel support mobilization and deployment efforts by participating in the Soldier Readiness Processing Centers, talking with soldiers, reviewing Family Care Plans, and identifying any family concerns that may keep soldiers from focusing on their missions. Pre-deployment briefings,

FRG instruction, and Rear Detachment Commander training are conducted. They also assist Guard and Reserve units to prepare for deployment.

The Army National Guard (ARNG) has capabilities to operate 400 FACs. They've activated 387 so far with at least one at every State Area Readiness Command (STARC) Headquarters for the State National Guard. Typical services provided by ARNG FACs include information and referral services relative to the local community and follow-up services. The Army doctrine that governs mobilization does not require the U.S. Army Reserve to have FACs. Instead, they receive support through the ARNG FACs. However, the Regional Support Commands conduct pre-deployment briefings for family members prior to units deploying. Briefing materials are mailed to those families who cannot attend the briefings. U.S. Army Reserve Command Family Program staff make monthly telephonic follow-up with all family members of Individual Ready Reserve soldiers, and the Rear Detachment operations cell makes monthly calls to all families in the unit. USAR Rear Detachment Operations is a new concept implemented since the beginning of current deployments. In addition to the active FACs and those established for the NG, the Surgeon General established three operational FACs at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Landstuhl and Brooke Army Medical Center to support families of the injured.

Eleven FACs were activated at Forts Benning, Bliss, Bragg, Campbell, Carson, Hood, Lewis, Riley, and Stewart; and Vicenza, Italy; and Wiesbaden, Germany. The FACs provide a full range of family support program services and emergency assistance.

The ACS has fielded a comprehensive set of resource materials for use to guide families, leaders, and staff through deployments. Known as "Operation Resources for Educating About Deployment and You" (Operation READY), these resources include personal checklists for families and unit commanders to ensure that deployments and reunions are successful. This training program assists commanders in meeting family readiness objectives. Modules include: Army Leaders' Desk Reference for Soldier/Family Readiness, The Army Family Readiness Handbook, Pre-deployment and Ongoing Readiness, Homecoming and Reunion, Family Assistance Centers and Children's Workbooks and videos. Operation READY is available through ACS, RC Family Program staff and is on-line at Virtual ACS, www.goacs.org. The Operation READY materials have been revised based on lessons learned from recent deployments. The Leader's Guide and the Family Member Deployment Survival Guide were distributed in June 2002. The remaining modules were distributed in October and November 2002. Three modules have been translated into German, Spanish, and Korean. Those modules are Pre-Deployment, Post-Deployment, and The Family Readiness Group Leaders' Basic Handbook. Feedback from Commanders, staff, and soldiers and their families indicates Operation READY has been invaluable in helping prepare for deployments.

All Army component soldiers (Active and Reserves) who are single parents, and dual military couples with family members, are required to have a "Family Care Plan." This is the means by which soldiers provide for the care of their family members when military duties prevent them from doing so. The Family Care Plan includes proof that guardians and escorts have been identified and thoroughly briefed on the responsibilities they will assume for the soldier as well as the procedures for accessing military and civilian facilities and services on behalf of the soldier's family members. This ensures family members will be well cared for while single parent and dual military couples are fulfilling their military obligations. While Family Care Plans are required for single parent and dual military couples with children, all married soldiers are encouraged to complete and maintain a Family Care Plan.

The Army Family Liaison Office (AFLO) maintains a toll-free information line that is available within the Continental United States Monday thru Friday, during normal duty hours. The purpose of the toll free number is to provide a mechanism for family members to get answers to routine questions on all aspects of military family life, including family readiness and benefit eligibility. The toll free number is published monthly in newsletters from the Well-Being office and the AFLO, and is also available on the AFLO Web site at www.aflo.org.

To accommodate the increased demand of Operation Iraqi Freedom, we expanded this to a 24-hour toll-free Family Assistance Hotline (FAH) on March 21, 2003. Primary function was to provide referrals and information to the families of deployed or activated soldiers. The FAH was intended for use by family members of soldiers on active duty as well as those in the Army National Guard and the Army Reserve called to active duty. It was a 'safety net' for those who had exhausted all other resources. After hearing a short, recorded message, callers were able to speak to hotline staff members with access to extensive reference materials. In addition to local and Army-level assistance via telephone, family members could find answers to

many routine questions about family readiness, ACS, and deployment support resources online at the ACS Web site, www.goacs.org.

The FAH operated 24/7 from March 21, 2003 to May 19, 2003. The mission has now returned to AFLO based on the level of demand. During its 8 weeks of operation, the FAH received over 8,000 telephone calls. Primary areas of caller concerns were locating a soldier, accuracy of media information, delays in mail, exact dates of deployments and returns, how to contact a soldier's unit, and casualty notification information. Family members of single soldiers connected neither through rear detachments nor family readiness groups made up the greatest number of callers.

Equally as important as support provided to soldiers and their families during deployments is the post-deployment help they need to readjust after returning home from combat. In addition to its on-going reunion training, typically provided by ACS and chaplains, the Army recognizes the need for a proactive program to be up and running prior to soldiers redeploying from Operation Iraqi Freedom. In response to this requirement, the Army has implemented the Deployment Cycle Support (DCS) plan. DCS operations begin in theater/area of operations, continuing at home and/or Demobilization station, and through the sustainment phase at home station. DCS taps wide-ranging resources including medical, mental health, chaplain, schools, and family support staff. The Army's goal with DCS is to standardize the process of providing our forces with the proper psychological screening, debriefing, and most importantly, identify those "at-risk" personnel that may require immediate attention. Soldiers, Department of the Army civilians, and family members are provided information that will educate them on the need for individual reconstitution. The plan calls for returning soldiers and civilians to remain with their unit or organization through mandatory medical and mental health screening, as well as reunion training designed to ease soldiers' move back into family relationships. Unit leaders will use a new "tip card" to help screen soldiers for any personal problems. Family members will be offered reunion training. The Army will implement a toll free employee assistance program that includes telephonic information and referral assistance and up to six face-to-face counseling sessions. The toll free line, Army One Source, is anticipated to be available when the first soldiers return, in early June. This is particularly important for the Reserve component where units may be hundreds of miles away from an armory or support system. It allows significantly more privacy for those concerned that mental health assistance may negatively impact their careers.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The ultimate aim of the Army child care system is to meet 80 percent of the demand of the Objective Force in the outyears. Only through a well-resourced strategic mix of different child care delivery systems (on post centers, family child care homes, and local community partnerships) can the Army ensure its system remains "a model for the Nation."

The Army currently has a DOD-assigned goal to meet 65 percent of the potential child care demand in the field. Fiscal year 2002 was a challenge in that the Army was only able to meet 61 percent of demand and, for fiscal year 2004, we anticipate a loss of capacity to serve another 2,800 (equating to meeting only 59 percent of demand).

The Army Child Care Program is experiencing high turnover and staff shortages because current salary levels do not match other positions with common labor pools (e.g., local public schools, fast food and retail establishments, etc.). Workforce issues were a key factor in the decline of Army child spaces to 61 percent and are a major element in some Army child care centers losing their accreditation status this fiscal year.

Army Child and Youth Services (CYS) fielded a CYS Mobilization and Contingency (MAC) Plan Workbook that gives installations support materials to develop and monitor their CYS MAC Plans. The workbook includes briefings, procedural guidance, planning references, on-line resources, and "lessons learned" from Operation Desert Storm, Bosnia, and other contingencies. The detailed checklists and worksheets allow the installation staff to customize their CYS mission support. One chapter of the workbook specifically addresses how to identify signs of stress in children and provides coping strategies for dealing with it.

In addition to the MAC Plan, several ongoing CYS outreach efforts are aimed at geographically isolated Active component soldiers as well as Guard and Reserve members. A pilot Memorandum of Agreement with the General Services Administration (GSA) permits active duty patrons in Minnesota, New York, Georgia, and Washington to apply for subsidized child care in accredited GSA centers. Walter Reed Army Medical Center in the National Capital Region established a pilot pro-

gram to support monthly weekend drill for a Reserve unit—with the concept, once validated, capable of being expanded to additional sites. Finally, cooperative programs between Army CYS and the Boys & Girls Clubs of Miami, Florida; Killeen, Texas; Tacoma, Washington; Silver Spring, Maryland; and Dale City, Virginia, have opened opportunities for military youth not living on installations to be served in the local community. We are encouraged by these successes and continue to seek further partnerships.

The value of this CYS focus on preparing to meet the challenges of extraordinary contingency conditions, to include actual wartime deployments, is being validated in practice. Indeed, the Army addresses the needs of soldiers and their families by offering extended hours at many of its facilities. The CYS makes arrangements for on-site child care sessions where CYS takes the program to a site rather than parents bringing children to a specific location like a child development center. In the family child care program, providers agree to provide care during evenings, weekends, and rotating shifts and round-the-clock care for up to 60 days in long-term care homes.

To this point in fiscal year 2003, through its different initiatives, CYS impacted nearly 10,000 families with more than 20,000 children by delivering 231,400 child care hours beyond “normal” operations. Soldiers requiring this extra child care are not asked to pay more for it. The additional costs are being covered by supplemental funds received from the Department of Defense.

The impact of these Child and Youth Services initiatives on Fort Stewart/Hunter Army Air Field has been: 11 on-site sessions; 844 children served; and 22,243 child care hours. Please note that the high figure for child care hours reported by Stewart/Hunter reflects the large number of long term care [overnight] hours provided in family child care homes.

Communicating via email with parents who are deployed is an essential factor in maintaining well-being in the lives of our children and youth. Youth computer labs located in Army CYS programs provide controlled access for youth to use internet to stay in contact with deployed parents. Because technology continually changes, the need to replace computer labs on a 3-year replacement schedule that keeps pace with the industry standard is becoming more evident if we are to attract and keep young people involved in our programs. The Youth Computer Labs are the primary implementation strategy to meet the statutory requirement for the Youth Sponsorship Program, which also supports youth education transition initiatives.

SCHOOLS/EDUCATION TRANSITION

Significant progress has been made since the initial Army Education Summit held July 2000. The School Liaison Services (SLS) mission was established to mobilize and use community resources to reduce the impact of the mobile military lifestyle on military children and youth; implement predictable support services to assist children and youth with relocation, life transitions, and achieve academic success; and provide access for parents, children/youth, schools, commanders, and communities to a wide range of resources that facilitate school transition. The SLS provides the following baseline services: School Transition Support Service, Partnerships In Education (PIE) Initiatives, Installation/School Communications, Home School Linkage/Support, and Post-Secondary Preparation Opportunities.

A School Liaison Officer serves as the “point person” for facilitating the delivery of quality school transition and education support services and assisting parents to ease the impact of the military lifestyle on the academic success of military children and youth. The Army has funded 117 School Liaison Officers at the both the installation and Installation Management Agency (IMA) Regional level to support commanders, parents, and youth with school transition issues that were highlighted in the groundbreaking Secondary Education Transition Study (SETS) Report.

As a result of The Army Education Summit 2002, School Transition Specialist positions have been established at the IMA Regions and at Army headquarters. The School Transition Specialists work with local school superintendents to build on the successes, share promising practices, establish a system to provide feedback to superintendents, and to continue to build on the success of the SETS Memorandum of Agreement (MOA).

The Army CYS supports youth education transition initiatives through coordinating the Youth Education Action (YEA) Working Group and monitoring the SETS MOA. As of May 16, 2003, the SETS MOA had 123 signatories representing 127 school districts. Signed by school superintendents, it addresses reciprocity of specific youth education procedures (e.g., the timely transfer of records, improved access to extracurricular activities, grading standards) that affect military youth as their parents move them from one school system to another throughout a military career.

Army CYS will undertake another coordination project to set up a July 2003 meeting of the National SETS Steering Committee (NSSC). The NSSC is being formed to enhance communications among superintendents and promote expansion of the SETS MOA process in school systems supporting military installations. We expect superintendents will use it to strengthen reciprocal practices.

MWR SUPPORT AT HOME STATION

Recreation programs support mobilization and deployment in multiple ways. Installations use recreation and physical fitness facilities as mobilization staging areas. For example, Fort Hood, Fort Campbell, Fort Riley, and others processed deploying personnel and equipment in their gymnasiums and recreation centers. Program managers adjust operating hours to meet increased demand and community support requirements. Normal recreation programs such as those at Fort Stewart provide non-deploying units and family members with opportunities to participate in both self-directed and organized activities designed to increase social interaction and individual resiliency. Individual installations offer special programs to meet local demand. We furnished 49 Small Unit Recreation Kits to Reserve and National Guard units activated for force protection at remote stateside posts.

CONCLUSION

Today, our Nation is supported by the best trained, best equipped, and most technologically sophisticated Army in the history of the world. These volunteer warriors, who sacrifice so much to serve their country, are unequivocally sustained by loyal, dedicated families who, themselves, sacrifice much in fulfilling their vital role in the lives of soldiers. Never has this dedication been more evident than in the global challenges the United States faces now. Our soldiers and their families are the Nation's best. They deserve the best we can give them. Every day, Army MWR and ACS fulfill this sacred obligation with programs and services delivered around the world, wherever soldiers and their families might be. While duty to country calls them in an uncertain world, America's promise to them must be one of gratitude demonstrated by opportunities for a quality of life comparable with that afforded to the citizens they pledge to defend. Army MWR and ACS answers that call. We know our success would not be possible without your committed and steadfast support. Thank you.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thank you, sir.
Admiral Purcell.

STATEMENT OF REAR ADM. (SEL.) MARC L. PURCELL, USN, ASSISTANT COMMANDER FOR PERSONNEL READINESS AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT, NAVY PERSONNEL COMMAND

Admiral PURCELL. Thank you, Senator. I would also like to say I appreciate the opportunity to be here today to discuss the Navy's personnel programs that are directed to families and sailors. I have submitted a written statement for the record, and if I may I would like to share a few highlights with you before taking your questions.

We feel frequent deployments are an integral part of life in the Navy. Not just during war, but even during normal operations, and with over one-third to one-half of all naval personnel deployed at any one time, our first mission has always been to support those deployed personnel.

Right behind that is the priority placed on supporting our families and our personnel ashore. We deliver the support at sea and shore through both Fleet and Family Support Centers and Morale, Welfare and Recreation programs. Our 65 full-service Fleet and Family Support Centers had over 3.7 million client contacts in 2002 and are on track to exceed that figure substantially in fiscal year 2003.

Our Fleet and Family Support Centers offer a large variety of programs to support Navy families, but I would like to focus my comments primarily on some key deployment readiness programs.

During Operation Iraqi Freedom, Navy Fleet and Family Support Centers conducted 1,600 pre-deployment, mid-deployment, and Reserve mobilization briefings for over 35,000 sailors and their families.

In March 2003, a significant effort was focused on helping families, schools, and community groups deal with the stress and impact of combat operations and the continuous news coverage of the war. Fleet and Family Support Centers conducted a record 158 training sessions for over 950 teachers and counselors and over 4,000 students. Attendance at the Fleet and Family stress management classes quadrupled. Requests for individual counseling for families and children also increased.

In the war's post-deployment period, family centers are also focusing on preparing sailors and family members for homecoming by providing professional guidance on reestablishing relationships and readjusting family roles.

Training teams are offering special programs on stress and anger, combat stress, and identifying post-traumatic stress symptoms and treatment resources. Packages of materials and resources for reservists, including resources and links to the nearest Family Support Center in their local community are also being provided.

Full service support for all Reserves regardless of service continues for up to 120 days after their release from active duty.

On the home front, preceding the return of deployed sailors, family centers are also offering similar briefings to spouses and families through family support groups. These include discussions on dealing with post-traumatic stress. Family centers are also helping ombudsmen or family groups prepare for homecoming activities and are scheduling wellness days and resource fairs to represent local support agencies in regional communities.

The Morale, Welfare, and Recreation program also continues to work aggressively to serve both our sailors and their families at shore and afloat. Navy child development and youth programs have continued to expand to meet the needs of Navy families in providing quality child care for over 45,000 children. This year we also implemented a pilot program to provide child care services around the clock for families in Norfolk and Pearl Harbor regions to help meet the needs of night shift workers.

Last year, we implemented new teen summer camp scholarships, outdoor adventure camps, and teen employment opportunities, and these programs are providing positive recreational outlets for Navy teens and creating positive feedback from our families.

We have also improved our E-mail connectivity in many of our youth centers making it easier for teens to communicate with their parents when deployed.

Mr. Chairman, as you see, the Navy is fully committed to supporting the health and welfare of our families. I would like to thank you and your committee, obviously, for the personal commitment and ongoing support that we receive for these valuable programs.

I look forward to answering any of your questions, sir.

[The prepared statement of Admiral Purcell follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY REAR ADM. (SELECT) MARC PURCELL, USN

OPENING REMARKS

Mr. Chairman and subcommittee members, thank you for this opportunity to update you on the Navy's efforts to support our sailors and their families. Our two primary means for delivering this support are our Fleet and Family Support Centers (FFSCs) and our Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) programs. The mission of these two programs is to ensure that both our sailors and their families receive whatever support is necessary to maintain the Navy as an effective fighting force.

Frequent deployments are integral to life in the Navy. Over half of all naval personnel are assigned to ships, overseas bases, or Special Forces units. While our primary mission has always been to support those deployed personnel, we also believe our sailors will only maintain their readiness if they are secure in the knowledge that their families are continually receiving the support they need before, during, and after deployment.

In order to meet this challenge, we have focused our efforts in the following broad areas:

FLEET AND FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAMS

Fleet and Family Support Centers are located at all major Navy installations and deliver services at 65 full-service sites worldwide. Many centers also operate satellite or part-time offices at other work and housing sites to provide better access to sailors and family members.

FFSCs had 3.7 million client-service contacts in fiscal year 2002 representing a 15-percent increase over fiscal year 2001. These included information inquiries, counseling, advocacy contacts, and class participants. FFSCs experienced a 196-percent increase in deployment and mobilization services in the first 6 months of the current fiscal year.

Beginning in fiscal year 2003, all Navy FFSCs receive a formal inspection assessment of performance and quality standards in each of their basic service programs. This rigorous review process ensures quality and standardization of programs and services Navy-wide.

FFSCs offer three categories of basic services:

- Deployment and Readiness Programs
- Crisis Response Programs
- Career Support and Retention Programs

Deployment and Readiness Programs

These programs directly support deployment and mission readiness by preparing service and family members to anticipate and understand the demands associated with the Navy lifestyle and operating tempo. These programs include:

- Relocation Assistance Program (RAP) offers pre-move planning and post-arrival settling-in services for permanent change of duty station moves. Sailors and family members are provided workshops, briefs, and relocation counseling on an individual basis.
- Life Skills Education Program offers general educational programs on such issues as stress management, couples communication, relationship skills, and parenting skills.
- Information and Referral Program provides assistance in identifying available resources within a local military or civilian community. These include information, such as educational resources and community social services, that may be useful to service members and family that have moved to a new location.
- Repatriation Program is the Navy program for assisting and tracking Navy family members who have been evacuated from overseas areas. FFSCs ensure families are provided a personalized point of contact for information regarding entitlements and benefits. FFSCs also coordinate any assistance offered by other agencies. This year, FFSCs have assisted families evacuated from "hot spots" in Indonesia, the Ivory Coast, Bahrain and other Middle Eastern countries.
- Ombudsman Program coordinates the training of ombudsman volunteers who provide a vital link between the commanding officer and family members in the command. Ombudsmen are married to a member of the command and provide information directly to and from the commanding officer

to command families regarding local command and Navy policies, military and community social service assistance, deployment schedules and assistance to spouses when the service member is deployed. All Navy commands, including shore activities, have an ombudsman assigned. FFSCs provide ongoing support to ombudsmen in areas such as coordination of training for new ombudsmen, establishment of ombudsman support groups, provision of information and referral resources when individual family problems are presented to the ombudsman, and maintenance of area ombudsman rosters.

- Deployment and Mobilization Support Program provides services in pre- and mid-deployment. This year the program was particularly busy supporting the mobilization for Operation Iraqi Freedom. Navy FFSCs conducted 1,600 sessions of deployment and mobilization briefings and related activities for a total of 35,000 customers from January through March of this year. Homeport briefings included programs for children as well as sailors and spouses, and often included the fiancés and parents of single sailors. Special attention was focused on coping with the suddenness of many deployments and the significant increase in reservists' departures. Ombudsmen training and support group services began increasing simultaneously with this pre-deployment period.

FFSC staff provided consultation and briefings for Command Family Support Groups, and organized local support groups when command groups were not available. In March, additional efforts were focused on families with school-aged children as the stress and impact of Operation Iraqi Freedom and its news coverage affected students and schools. Requests for teacher/counselor and student briefings reached an all-time high with 158 sessions conducted for 947 teachers and counselors, and 3,996 students. Attendance at stress management classes quadrupled from 628 in February 2003 to 2,602 in March 2003 and requests for counseling services more than tripled from 240 to 849 sessions during the same period.

FFSCs have been providing deployment support services for the past 23 years. The Navy has shared lessons learned, counseling information, training materials and procedures with the other Services as requested. Informational material developed by family centers in Hampton Roads for the training school administration personnel was distributed throughout the Department of Defense.

In post-deployment, the challenge is to prepare commands, sailors and family members for return and reunion, which involves both reestablishing relationships and readjusting family roles. This became a larger than normal challenge as three Battle Groups returned home nearly simultaneously. FFSC staff at the primary homeports of Everett, San Diego and Yokosuka, Japan formed Return and Reunion Teams, augmented by trained staff from other FFSCs, to ensure proper coverage of all the ships in each of the first three returning Battle Groups. Funding was made available from the FFSCs and Regional Commands to fund these first teams.

For all returning Navy units, special programming is being provided on stress and anger management and on combat stress. For Command Leadership, we also provided tailored training in identifying post-traumatic stress symptoms and treatment resources.

Packages of materials and resources for reservists including resources and links to the nearest military Family Support Center in their local community are also being provided. Reservists of all Services are eligible for full use of Navy FFSC resources, at no cost, for up to 120 days after release from active duty.

At the same time, FFSCs are offering similar "reunion" briefs for families and support groups at home, with discussion on normal stress reactions and resources (such as medical) to contact about post-traumatic stress. FFSCs are assisting family groups and ombudsmen with preparations for homecoming activities by providing homecoming planning assistance for ombudsmen, updating their local homecoming guides, and scheduling family wellness days or resource fairs with representatives from local and regional support agencies.

FFSCs are also providing expedited or priority appointments to returning service members and their families to ensure prompt assistance if problems develop. A new pocket guide on stress management for sailors entitled "Thriving on Stress" has also been distributed.

In addition, the new required Navy Training on Suicide Prevention is now available through our FFSCs. This training was a joint project between Naval Education and Training Command (NETC) and the Chief of Navy Personnel's Suicide Prevention Program. It provides sailors with response strategies to reduce suicide risk among both shipmates and family members. The Navy suicide rate is currently about 50 percent below the civilian rate when matched to Navy demographics, and within the Navy is now down 22 percent overall since 1998. This new Navy suicide

prevention video was awarded a production industry standards award (Bronze Telly), achieved by only 12–14 percent of the 10,000 annual video industry entries.

Crisis Response Programs

The second major category of basic services offered at Navy Fleet and Family Support Centers is Crisis Response. Crisis Response programs provide professional and paraprofessional assistance to sailors, family members, and commands in response to both personal and community emergencies. Program services run the gamut from assistance resources for personal and positive life-changing events like those offered in the New Parent Support Program, to services offered in the midst of tragedy such as those provided during casualty and disaster response, family violence counseling, or in the aftermath of a sexual assault. The following services are included in Navy's FFSC Crisis Response Programs:

- Casualty and Disaster Response. These emergency response services most commonly include provision of critical incident stress debriefing to commands and the Navy community in response to small-scale events, such as suicides within the command, or larger events, such as natural disasters.
- Crisis Intervention. These services include providing emergency assessment and, in most cases, referral for sailors/family members, such as those who present a danger to themselves or others.
- New Parent Support (NPS) program is a military community-based child abuse prevention program funded by DOD through the Family Advocacy Program. While all the services have an NPS program, specific implementation varies. Navy NPS is available to any family in the military community with infants under the age of 4 months, regardless of branch of service. It is a voluntary service available to all expectant/new mothers and fathers, not just first-time parents.

This program aims to reduce the risk of child abuse and neglect by enhancing parenting skills and positive parent/child interactions, promoting healthy childhood development, and increasing access to prenatal and general healthcare.

NPS provides two levels of service. All families receive systematic screening and assessment. NPS Standard provides links with community resources, as well as educational programs on childbirth, growth, development and newborn parenting. The second level of service, NPS Plus, is available to those parents screened as most in need. This level includes home visiting services by a nurse or social worker and may continue for up to 5 years with parental agreement. The Navy NPS program provided assistance to 16,600 new parents in fiscal year 2002.

- The Family Advocacy Program (FAP) is a DOD-mandated and funded program responsible for prevention, identification, reporting, intervention, and follow-up in cases of alleged child and spouse abuse.

Since 1997, there have been two levels of response to alleged incidents of child or spouse abuse. Incidents assessed to be of low risk or low severity, as determined by licensed and credentialed FAP case managers are diverted from the FAP process to the Families In Need of Services (FINS), through which families are offered voluntary services. Once referrals for those families wanting support services are made, FAP involvement ends. Command involvement in FINS incidents is minimal. The Defense Task Force on Domestic Violence endorsed adoption service-wide of a process similar to Navy FINS.

Incidents assessed by a FAP case manager to be of moderate or higher severity, or of moderate or higher risk (with or without a known history of abuse) are managed by FAP. Command involvement is required, and the recommended interventions for service member offenders will be enforced by the command. Incidents are professionally assessed on an individualized basis. FAP monitoring may continue for up to 1 year for substantiated incidents, and the command may discharge a member for treatment failure or repeated abuse.

FFSCs/FAP centers provide a range of prevention and education services for general military audiences, including child/spouse abuse awareness briefs to commands, families and community organizations. Classes and groups are also offered on parenting skills, anger management, couples communication, and stress management.

In addition to offering these prevention services, the Department of Navy's Family Advocacy Program leads the way in victim advocacy. The Navy and the Marine Corps are the only Services to provide fleet-wide domestic violence victim advocacy services. The Navy provides 31 paid victim advocates at 21 locations. Advocates pro-

vide safety assessment, safety planning, and a range of support services including assistance in securing civilian restraining orders or Military Protective Orders, accompanying victims to medical/legal appointments, securing shelter services, and more.

Navy Family Advocacy Program initiatives include:

- Training Initiatives:
 - Domestic Violence Video and Training Materials, in partnership with Naval Education Training Command, for mandatory fiscal year 2004 GMT.
 - Web-based, interactive domestic violence training for command leadership will begin in fiscal year 2004.
- Sexual Assault Victim Intervention (SAVI) program is also among the FFSCs' crisis response programs. Navy's SAVI program is unique and was established in 1993. The goal is to provide a Navy-wide comprehensive, standardized, victim-sensitive system to prevent and respond to sexual assault. Program components include awareness and prevention education, and victim advocacy and intervention. Awareness and prevention education classes include: preventing sexual assault; minimizing the risk of becoming a victim; responding to sexual assault incidents; and measures commands can take to ensure a safe environment for service members and their families. In addition, a new SAVI video is being released this month.

The victim advocacy and intervention component includes a highly responsive, volunteer victim advocate support system to provide immediate emotional support to sexual assault victims, even when deployed aboard afloat commands. SAVI coordinators also insure the availability of professional intervention services for victims, if desired, and act as a go-between for the victim with the legal system. Victim advocacy within the SAVI program complements and enhances the Victim and Witness Assistance Program already in place, and also provides a mechanism outside the chain of command to insure appropriate response to alleged sexual assault.

- Professional counseling services are also included among the FFSCs' crisis response programs. The provision of these services in military family and community support centers is unique to the Department of Navy. The Navy has provided these services since the establishment of FFSCs 23 years ago. Professional counseling services are available for all active duty, family members, activated reservists and their families, and to retirees and their families on a space available basis.

Mental health professionals, independently licensed to meet civilian standards, provide these counseling services. Either command or self-referrals are accepted. Brief (less than eight sessions), problem-focused counseling is provided to individuals, couples, families and groups. Services include assessment and counseling for commonly occurring life problems—e.g., marital, parenting, school or occupational problems. Individuals who are assessed or suspected to have a more significant, psychiatric diagnosis are referred for further assessment and intervention. Active duty members are referred to a medical treatment facility and family members are referred to the TRICARE network.

These professional counseling services are free and afford sailors and their families a great degree of privacy, as FFSC counseling information is not incorporated into the individual's medical record and rarely rises to the level of a command's "need to know". In fiscal year 2002, FFSC professional counseling services saved military families an estimated \$1.5 million in TRICARE co-pays or \$7 million in out-of-pocket expenses.

Career Support and Retention Programs

Career Support and Retention Programs comprise the third and final category of basic services offered at Navy Fleet and Family Support Centers. These programs are integral to increased service member retention and the planning of successful military and civilian careers for sailors and family members. This category includes the following programs:

- Transition Assistance Management Program (TAMP) prepares separating and retiring individuals to enter the civilian sector and pursue goals whether they are employment, education, or retirement.
- Personal Financial Management Program (PFMP) provides services to assist sailors and families to plan and manage their finances and financial future through education and training.
- Spouse Employment Assistance Program (SEAP). In 2001, the Navy Personnel Research Science and Technology (NPRST) Study, rated SEAP the highest-

ranking program in “exceeding client expectations.” Ninety percent of spouses agreed that SEAP:

- Improved their job search skills,
- Increased their opportunity for employment, and
- Positively impacted their family’s financial well being.

However, lack of employment portability remains a dissatisfier for many spouses. The Navy is addressing this through partnerships with corporations like Adecco (the world’s largest placement agency) and the Virtual Business Owners Program. As of March 2003, 937 Navy spouses have registered with the Adecco Career Accelerator Program, with a hire rate almost matching Adecco’s nation-wide rate of 34 percent.

MWR PROGRAM SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

Besides caring for the emotional, financial, and psychological needs of Navy families, we also provide a wide variety of MWR programs that directly support the leisure and childcare needs of families. Some of our MWR programs include the following.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

The Navy’s child development programs are among the most highly ranked and valued programs for our service members with children. Without these programs, many parents would not be able to balance the demands of work and family, particularly during times of deployment. These services are designed to ensure military children receive high quality developmental care at an affordable cost.

We use three delivery methods. Navy Child Development Centers provide high quality care in a facility-based setting. Our child development homes provide the same high quality care in a home-based environment, particularly appropriate for very young children and for those who need flexibility because of scheduling or work related demands. The Navy’s School-Age Care (SAC) Program provides before and after school care with activities that complement rather than duplicate the school day. The Navy SAC programs are affiliated with the Boys and Girls Club of America and offer programs focusing on five core areas: Character and Leadership Development, Education and Career Development, Health and Life Skills, the Arts, and Sports, Fitness, and Recreation. SAC programs actively provide services and special events that foster family involvement.

These three programs are the foundation of our support for families and are essential to our strategy of ensuring quality, affordable care to as many children as possible.

Navy childcare, as part of the military child care system, has been frequently recognized as a model for quality childcare. Our child development programs are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). This credentialing is consistent with the requirements of the Military Child Care Act and provides assurance to military families that their children are receiving top quality care that equals or exceeds the highest national standards.

In fiscal year 2002, Navy met 69 percent of the potential demand for childcare as defined in DOD standards, which was our highest percentage to date. By the end of fiscal year 2003, we will reach the 73 percent level. The Navy continues to work toward meeting the child care goals established by DOD to meet 80 percent of potential need. However, the funding outlook for fiscal year 2004 and beyond will make this challenging as the Navy has many competing operational demands for resources. We are exploring a variety of methods to enable us to maintain the program within the resources available to us. These include expanding Child Development Homes both on and off-base, partnering with local, State, and government programs, and improving our ability to manage waiting lists more effectively.

In support of contingency operations, we have developed a pilot project now underway in the Norfolk and Pearl Harbor regions to provide increased childcare availability to meet the extended hour care needs of shift workers and families of deployed sailors. Our Child Development Home Program team has offered increased subsidies to home care providers in these regions to provide expanded hours of in-home care. In addition, we are also adding overnight care services in each region accommodating 12 to 18 children whose parents work night shifts. The response from sailors and their families has been very positive. The child development homes have been operating at very high capacity levels since February 2003. The overnight facility in Pearl Harbor has just opened and the one in Norfolk will open in a few months but demand is also very high for those centers. Although this approach will not be sustainable in all areas, we believe it will be very useful in large fleet concentration centers where there are large numbers of deployed personnel and shift workers.

Childcare services are one of the centerpieces to the Navy's commitment to take care of our sailors and their families, particularly during times of long separation.

YOUTH PROGRAMS

One of the many worries our deploying sailors and their families face is ensuring that their teens have healthy outlets for their energies and opportunities to grow. In helping families meet this need, MWR has found a great opportunity for some creative programming ideas to reach out to these teens.

We continue to operate an extensive summer camp program, presently serving over 30,000 youth per year. We have expanded many of these basic summer camp programs to include Youth Outdoor Adventure Camps as well. These camps provide more adventure oriented recreation opportunities (e.g., rock climbing, surfing, kayaking) that meet the interest levels of today's teens and increase the availability of camp spaces. In fiscal year 2004 we plan to build on the popularity of Youth Outdoor Adventure Camps and expand them to include parents and family members. Our pilot Family Outdoor Adventure Camp project in fiscal year 2004 will combine teen and adult outdoor recreation experiences into a single program for a few days as a means of building family unity.

To ease separation anxiety for youth with deployed family members, the Navy used a portion of the supplemental funding provided by Congress last year to implement a Teen Scholarship Camp Program and a Teen Employment Program. These efforts have generated a lot of excitement and have a significant positive impact on many Navy teens. The summer scholarship program includes specialty camps, which emphasize extreme sports and life-skill development. A few examples include camps on Outdoor Leadership, Space Flight, Snowboarding, Sailing, Drama, and Photography. We awarded 122 all expense paid scholarships in fiscal year 2002 and project a 10-percent increase in participants this year. As you might expect, feedback from parents and teens was extremely positive.

MWR also focused in its own small way on the lack of teen employment opportunities that has been raised by teens and Navy Youth professionals attending Navy sponsored Teen Summits. A Teen Employment Program was piloted successfully in fiscal year 2002 to provide teens an opportunity to develop job and life skills that will be beneficial through their career. The aim of the program was not just to provide a job but rather to use the job as an opportunity to teach these teens the key skills they need to succeed in the working world. For most, it was their first such exposure. We have expanded this program by 45 percent in fiscal year 2003 to increase the number of employment opportunities for Navy teens. The results are most gratifying.

Our Navy youth are just as interested as our sailors in using e-mail to stay connected with their parents while they are deployed. Navy Youth "Operation Connect" has been set up to connect children with deployed/separated family members through Internet and digital photography Navy-wide. About 70 percent of our activities will be operating this service by the end of fiscal year 2003.

Saluting Sailors and Families

Sailors and their families make significant sacrifices. MWR wanted to do something a little extra to show our appreciation. Saluting sailors and their families is a series of central and regional contests that offers sailors and their families chances to win MWR sponsored "trips of a lifetime". Notable family events in fiscal year 2002 included a "Sand and Slopes" vacation where winners enjoyed a few days in a mountain setting and then were taken to a tropical beach resort for some relaxation in the sun. We hosted a group of winning Navy families in Orlando for a "Family Safari". A group of sailors and their families enjoyed a "Monumental July 4th" holiday in Washington, DC. Others were treated to a special New Year's Eve celebration in New York City. We have received excellent publicity from within the Navy and in the community at large from this program. The program has provided another positive incentive for promoting the Navy, as an employer of choice and letting families know their sacrifices are appreciated.

OTHER SPECIAL EVENTS

- To support families during homecoming events, Navy MWR has provided homecoming grants to ships and submarines returning from Operation Iraqi Freedom. These grants were used for welcome home celebrations that were designed to create a stress-free environment for the families by providing food, childcare, and other services on the day of arrival.
- MWR distributed phone cards during the holiday season to every sailor to help them stay connected with home. Several organizations partnered

with MWR to make this program successful. VFW and its corporate partners (Hallmark, Wal-Mart Good Works, and FedEx) provided the Navy with a gift of 200,000 60-minute prepaid telephone cards, which were distributed to overseas and deploying commands. Running parallel with the VFW initiative, Navy MWR, through a commercial sponsorship agreement with AT&T, secured 235,000 15-minute "Homeland" (CONUS) prepaid calling cards. These cards were distributed to all stateside active duty personnel and all reservists recalled to active duty.

- The Navy MWR Movie Program initiated a "Sneak Preview" program with showings of 26 first-run movies to over 330,000 sailors and their families in Navy theaters up to a week before commercial release. Many of the local MWR programs included free concession packages for patrons.

- The Navy MWR entertainment program has also been very active this year, bringing big name entertainers to deployed personnel and those assigned to overseas bases as well as families at home. While much of our focus has obviously been on satisfying requests from afloat units, we also supported numerous stateside events for families, including a summer concert series in the Norfolk, VA, Southern California, Great Lakes, IL, and Groton, CT areas.

NAVY FAMILY TEAM SUMMIT

Navy MWR hosted a summit of over 200 individuals from every segment of the Navy including spouses, active duty personnel, family members, Navy leaders, and single sailors. The objective was to engage this broad spectrum of naval personnel in identifying opportunities and empowering families to tell us how we could work with them to better support the Navy mission. Our focus was on identifying and developing realistic achievable pilot projects, which addressed their needs. They identified the need for expanded child care hours to assist in mission related circumstances and provided suggestions for refining teen programs to provide greater teen empowerment in programming.

In fiscal year 2003 we have been implementing the five most promising program initiatives from the Family Team Summit. These initiatives include improving the affordability of child care; providing extended hour child care for shift workers; improving the quality, accessibility, and timeliness of information about the Navy for families; seeking standard in-state tuition policies nationwide for military members and their families; and establishing a series of training sessions for families at key points in a sailor's career. All these innovations are either being finalized or already have been initiated. We will continue to maintain dialogue with sailors and their families by conducting another summit in July 2004. These summits have proven to be an effective way to include sailors and families in the improvement and development of Quality of Life Programs.

CREATING A WELCOMING MWR ENVIRONMENT FOR FAMILIES

Over the past several years with the support of Navy leadership and Congress, MWR has made substantial strides in training staff, creating, and outfitting facilities so that we create programs where the families of our deployed sailors feel comfortable. There is an often overlooked but very important sense of security for our families to know that there are high quality and familiar services available to them on base. These range over the entire spectrum of MWR services from name brand food outlets, to outstanding and well-equipped fitness centers. They include 10 new youth centers that we have completed in recent years and MWR employees who are now extensively trained to provide world-class customer service. Our sailors and families are not just customers. They own MWR and we want them to feel that way.

SUMMARY

Navy Fleet and Family Support and MWR programs remain focused on being a significant contributor to our guiding principal: "Mission First—Sailors Always". We thank you for the continued strong support of Congress in our partnership to ensure sailors and their families enjoy the benefit of wholesome and quality lifestyles as they lead the fight in our war against terrorism.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thank you, Admiral.
Colonel Yanello.

STATEMENT OF COL. GERALD L. YANELLO, USMC, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, PERSONNEL AND FAMILY READINESS DIVISION, HEADQUARTERS, UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

Colonel YANELLO. Good afternoon, Senator. It is a distinct honor to appear before you today to talk about the Marine Corps services and programs for families. I have submitted written testimony with specific examples of support, but I would like to highlight a few points specific to family support during deployments.

The Marine Corps is an expeditionary force by design, so it is a built-in part of our ethos to take care of marines and their families during deployments. Commanders are armed with the tools they need to ensure family readiness at all times, whether it be through detailed deployment guides they use for pre-deployment and on-deployment, and post-deployment briefings, or their ability to alter child care services during deployments as needed. Marine Corps bases from which the largest number of troops deploy are Camp Lejeune in North Carolina and Camp Pendleton in California. The Marine Corps base in Albany here in your great State is a logistics base and largely responsible for preparing troops to deploy. Out of the approximately 625 active duty marines assigned to the base in Albany, only a handful, approximately 15 to 20, were deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Five of them were from Marine Corps community services in support of exchange and MWR activities in country.

Overall, over 76,000 marines deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. Approximately 2,000 active duty marines and approximately 900 reservists list Georgia as their home State.

No deployment is without challenges in the family support area and we try to learn from them. One of the biggest challenges during Operation Iraqi Freedom was the so-called "CNN effect" and the immediate need for information. We rose to the occasion by establishing 24-hour family and community service call centers to provide information to families of friends and deployed marines.

Taking care of marines and their families is a critical point of pride for the Marine Corps. As I said before, it is part of our ethos. Our continuum of care begins with the yellow footprints at the start of recruit training and continues throughout the life of a marine.

Marines are marines for life. There are no ex-marines. There are only former marines. The legendary hallmarks of "Once a marine always a marine" and "Semper Paratus" prove our long-term commitment and provide convincing testimony for marines that they are forever changed and a part of a society that is sustained through self-perpetuation and a shared culture. Taking care of the families of marines during deployments is a vital part of that culture. Regardless whether we are providing pre-deployment briefings, providing assistance on family care programs, or adjusting child care services to meet the needs of the families with deployed marines, the Marine Corps takes great pride in taking care of the marines and their families every day.

Sir, that completes my comments, and I am open to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Colonel Yanello follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY COL. GERALD L. YANELLO, USMC

Chairman Chambliss, Senator Nelson, and members of the subcommittee: it is a distinct pleasure to have this opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the services that the Marine Corps provides to families of deployed marines. Taking care of our own is one of the Marine Corps' abiding principles and you can be confident that those responsible for "taking care of marines and their families"—at home or away—are not confused as to their mission or the importance of what they do—this is integral to the Marine culture.

As an expeditionary force, we are accustomed to providing extended support. Approximately 76,150 marines were deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), of this number 2,098 active duty and 893 reservists were from Georgia. While we are the youngest, most junior, and least married of the four military services, the Marine Corps has approximately the same number of family members as active duty personnel. The Marine Corps possesses a strong community support backbone that is well established at our major bases and stations to support these family members. We serve the needs of marines and families at home and away through an organizational construct that combines MWR, exchanges, family services, and voluntary education under a single leadership structure called Marine Corps Community Services (MCCS). MCCS is a combined arms community support organization that offers a diverse and expansive capability from which to draw personal and family readiness support. The single leadership structure of MCCS allows the commander to cut across previous program stovepipes. Removing the barrier and burden of stovepipes has allowed our commanders greater flexibility and encouraged development of true community-based interventions, programs or services. Installation commanders continuously gauge community service levels from which informed decisions are made to respond to changing needs. MCCS is easily adaptable to serve the mobility requirements of an expeditionary force.

Marine Corps Family Team Building within MCCS is the headquarters element that provides plans, policy, and resources for the programs executed on installations.

SUPPORTING MARINE CORPS FAMILIES

The challenges of the military lifestyle such as relocation, transition, and deployments are soothed by the comforts and familiarity of hometown, USA support. Our MWR activities provide that reminder of home and family, and wholesome fun. This is particularly important during periods of deployment when so much is uncertain and separation causes anxiety for the marine's family members. During deployments, marine families bear the burden of waiting but also the added responsibility of keeping the family together and functioning as normally as possible. This is a big job, but help is available.

At each of our bases or stations, the Key Volunteer Network (KVN) Program serves as the official communication link between the deployed command and the families. Additionally, the Lifestyle Insights, Networking, Knowledge and Skills (LINKS) Program is offered to new marine spouses to acquaint them with the military lifestyle and the Marine Corps, including the challenges brought about by frequent deployments. We are hearing great things from our deployed commanding officers as units begin to arrive home from OIF regarding the necessity of this family readiness support while they were away and as part of their homecoming. Other support that is offered to families of deployed marines includes assisting in developing proactive, prevention oriented plans such as family care plans, powers of attorney, family financial planning, and enrollment in the Dependent Eligibility and Enrollment Reporting System (DEERS). The Family Readiness Officer and the support structure within the Marine Corps Family Team Building team play a key role in this area. Additional services are provided to those who need assistance coping with separation or desire specialized support such as spiritual guidance, coping and social skills, or just a caring listener.

We are very proud to be the Department of Defense (DOD) pilot for implementation of an employee assistance program, which became available to the total Marine Corps force by February 1 and has been very helpful for families over the last few months. MCCS One Source is a 24/7, 365 day per year information and referral service designed to reach both active duty and Reserve families wherever they may be located. It can be accessed anytime via toll free numbers, email or the Internet. By offering round-the-clock information and referral services, we greatly expanded the support services previously offered aboard installations to marines and their family members, and particularly for Reserve families who are often located away from bases and installations. MCCS One Source support areas include parenting

and child care, education services, financial information and advice, legal, elder care, health and wellness, crisis support, and relocation. We're excited about the reality of extended support capabilities and how this contributes to the well being of marines and their families.

All Information All the Time. . .

One of the lessons that became quite apparent in the early days of OIF was the need for immediate information as a result of the so-called "CNN effect." With a 24-hour news cycle complete with embedded reporters, an immediate need for information became the expected norm. We realized that it was no longer sufficient just to provide updates to the "traditional" dependents such as the spouse through the 1-800 numbers or the Key Volunteer Network as we had in the past. The already-established East and West Coast 1-800 family assistance hotlines at Camp Lejeune and Camp Pendleton were expanded and operated 24/7 to provide information and referral services related to deployed marines. In April, Headquarters Marine Corps established the OIF Family Information Line to provide one phone number to concerned family members and the general public with the East and West Coast hotlines and weblinks to the Marine Corps and the MCCS Web site for the latest news about deployed marines. By mid-April, the east and west coast hotlines were receiving an average of 150-300 calls per day from spouses, parents, other relatives, and friends of deployed marines. In addition to these hotlines, special deployment support links were built on Marine Corps web sites, many deployed units had their own toll free numbers that the commander could update from the field with information for the families back at home, and Single Marine Programs at each installation were provided with templates on how best to keep the parents of single marines updated.

The Children. . .

One of the family members that can be overlooked during deployments is the child. The Marine Corps' Children, Youth, and Teen program provides installations with overall guidance in providing childcare and during deployments, helps them to meet the needs of spouses with expanded hours of care and other programs designed for children. In addition to the child care needs during a deployment, there are 1.5 million school-aged children of active duty, Reserve and National Guard families attending schools not affiliated with the Department of Defense. Skilled educators, counselors and mental health workers associated with the public schools attended by military children generally do not have an awareness of the lifestyle, issues or challenges of the military child. To be optimally effective, they must be trained in military child issues and appropriate interventions. The Marine Corps was pleased that the Department partnered with the Department of Education's Safe and Drug Free Schools so that the Services could work with the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (sponsored by UCLA, Duke University and the Department of Health and Human Services) to develop information booklets such as: An Educator's Guide to the Military Child During Deployment; An Educator's Guide to the Military Child During Post Deployment; and Challenges of Family Reunion.

Another family program that can be especially helpful during times of deployment is the New Parent Support Program (NPSP). The NPSP is a prevention program to enhance family readiness through education and support of families with children from newborn to 6 years of age. Parenting skill classes, home visits, support groups and referrals for additional services are provided. Classes and home visits for a new parent who is alone as a result of a deployment can be very reassuring. In fiscal year 2002, 19,000 parents attended NPSP classes, 11,000 families received home visitations.

The Marine Corps received \$700,000 in supplemental funding for children and youth initiatives in support of OEF and associated contingency operations. As of May 1, we have distributed approximately \$470,000 of those funds for respite care, extended child care hours, child care during deployment briefs, and deployment training materials geared for children. The Marine Corps is meeting DOD's intent for the supplemental funding and is aggressively pursuing further execution of the funds in support of marines and their families.

Community Support

Local communities outside our installations' gates are significantly impacted by marine deployments. Beyond expected sales and revenue declines experienced by local businesses, marines and family members often immerse themselves in the local community by volunteering as coaches, scout leaders, fire fighters, etc. For this reason, local businesses or community service organizations feel very connected to the marines and their families and want to help. At Camp Lejeune where over half of the troops were deployed at one time, MCCS is working with the Chamber of Commerce and the local community on Project CARE which seeks to match military

families with services in the local community. Project Enduring Families are partnerships between MCCS and the communities surrounding Twentynine Palms and Miramar that are working to help families maintain daily routines and stay connected to the community. Some other examples of MCCS activities during this current deployment include: provision of more varied and flexible child care options; respite care; special events for families; free postage and packing (up to 10 pounds) of gift items for deployed troops; and offering deployed spouses free tire repairs at the Exchange Service Station.

The Challenges of Providing Support

Perhaps one of the most challenging times to provide support to families is after the death of a beloved marine. As we worked with families to help them handle a death as a result of OEF or OIF, we realized that current policy sometimes was outdated and inadequate. The Department of Defense worked quickly with Congress and the Services to address needed changes as we became aware of the additional support these grieving families needed. Certainly one of the challenges we have faced during OIF involved the "CNN effect" and balancing the public's need for instant information with the military casualty assistance process and the family's needs. Mr. Chairman, as you are well aware and have addressed in S. 783 with Senator Miller, the process of applying and funding posthumous citizenship requests from the families of fallen marines was another issue for families like that of Corporal Jose Garibay and Lance Corporal Jose Gutierrez. In the absence of statute or policy that allowed for automatic application, our casualty assistance calls officers were provided with the information to help families that wished to apply for posthumous citizenship and Dr. Chu worked with other Federal agencies involved in the citizenship process to waive the required fees. A third area of increased support as a result of the war supplemental was the ability to pay per diem to those families traveling to the bedside of a marine wounded in OEF or OIF. We appreciate the willingness of Congress and the Department of Defense to quickly address issues such as these that help us better serve marines and their families in times of need.

RETURN AND REUNION

One of the most rewarding experiences program managers enjoy is the opportunity to work with marine families during homecoming preparations and celebrations. Deployments are a constant reality for marines, sailors, and their families and while homecomings are a time of love and joy, they can also present significant challenges for all, regardless of age, experience, or length of service. As marines return and reunite with their families, they require adequate preparation and support services to ease the transition from the battlefield to the home. As important as this transition is for the returning marine, it is equally important for the family members.

In recognition of the importance of the transition home for both marines and their families, the Marine Corps developed a standardized return and reunion program developed in coordination with MCCS personnel, health professionals, and chaplains. The program consists of a mandatory warrior transition brief for the returning marine, a return and reunion guidebook for marines and family members, a caregiver brief, and briefs designed for spouses. The Commandant recently outlined the steps in this important program for all marines in ALMAR #032/03 and to commanders in White Letter #03-03. Return and reunion presentations for family members are being made abundantly available and marketed to family members (spouses, children, and significant others) aboard receiving installations and at appropriate Reserve locations as early as 30 days prior to the return of units. The information used by command leaders, family readiness officers, and Marine Corps Family Team Building staff organizes the topics according to perspective: single marines and their significant others, married marines and their spouses, marines with children, single parent marines, and reservists going back to civilian jobs. In addition to the travel-size copy of the guidebook provided to all marines prior to their departure from the theater of operations, guidebooks are available on-line to installation staff and family members at home. Guidebooks cover issues like: return as a process requiring time and effort, managing expectations and staying flexible, reunion as a single parent, reunion and marriage, children, and work. Tips for a successful homecoming are also included.

Key Volunteer Networks are critical in passing the word regarding the availability and scheduling of return and reunion briefings for spouses, identification of supportive information and resources, and helping in making referrals for families for follow-on support as needed. The brief for caregivers, "Caring for the Caregivers", is available on-line for installation staff and command representatives to offer to Key Volunteers and spouses who have been particularly challenged in support of the

units during the deployment. This is a 3-hour facilitated discussion to decompress those who have remained strong to care for others in crisis.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Chairman, taking care of marines and their families is a cultivated, point of pride of the Marine Corps; it is part of our ethos. Our continuum of care begins with the "yellow footprints" and continues throughout the life of a marine. Marines are marines for life. Legendary hallmarks of "Once a marine . . . always a marine" and "Semper Paratus" prove our long-term commitment and provide convincing testimony from marines that they are forever changed and a part of a "society" that is sustained through self-perpetuation and a shared culture. Taking care of the families of marines during deployments is a vital part of that culture. Family readiness leads to mission readiness and is just one way that the Corps and the Nation say thank you for the sacrifices these families make.

We would like to thank this subcommittee and Congress as a whole for the unwavering support you provide to our men and women in uniform and their families. Marines and their families are worthy of your time and attention. They perform a great service for this Nation and deserve a quality of life that recognizes that commitment. Your ongoing support will make it possible for MCCS to continue to provide the type of programs and services for our marines and their families that make it easier for marines to serve our Nation in every corner of the world and for their families to continue to support them.

Subject to your questions, Mr. Chairman, this concludes my remarks.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thank you very much, Colonel.

Ms. Murray.

STATEMENT OF BARBARA MURRAY, CHIEF, FORCE SUSTAINMENT DIVISION, HEADQUARTERS, UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

Ms. MURRAY. It is a pleasure to be here this afternoon. I would like to start by thanking you and the rest of Congress for all of the wonderful things you helped the military families with in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2003. It has certainly made our job with family support a lot easier. We have seen a marked increase in commitment, the satisfaction level of our families, and in a host of other quality-of-life indicators as a result of what came from the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2003. My thanks on behalf of the Air Force and Air Force families for that. It was a tremendous support for all of us.

Senator CHAMBLISS. You guys are easy to work for.

Ms. MURRAY. Thank you, sir. Sir, I have prepared testimony, as everyone does, for the record, but I would like to focus not on the activities of our family support programs so much as a change in philosophy in the Air Force and how we approach family support as a whole.

We have historically focused on family centers and a list of programs and a list of activities for our families to support their needs and issues. One of the lessons that we learned in Operation Desert Storm from our families that came to us very loud and clear was it is not the formal activities we need as much, it is where we turn to for help. Where families go when they want something is to the informal network: to their friends, to their neighbors, and to their own family members.

We realized at that point that we had been focused primarily on building the most stellar formal programs that we could, on ensuring that we had leadership support connected, but that in a lot of ways we had not done the kind of support that we needed to ensure that our informal networks had the capacity to care for each other.

So we have changed the focus somewhat in the Air Force in terms of how we approach family support, and we are integrating all of our activities at the unit level with the hope that we can strengthen those informal spouse networks and provide the resources that they need so that they can manage and care for each other, and our leadership stands behind them in that care and support. So it is a bit of a different shift from what has been our historical focus on providing a litany of strong support programs.

While those are still available, we are focused more intently on that informal network and helping the community build their capacity for shared social responsibility. We have seen some tremendous stories as a result of that.

In conjunction with that we have entered into new partnerships in our communities. Three of them I would like to highlight. We have recently engaged with the national VFW, in a partnership that involves bringing the VFW members closer to what is going on in the local installations where they can come in as senior mentors for our young families, working with those families and working at the local level with local needs to help address our family and community issues.

On a national level, they have now opened their National Children's Home, which is probably one of the best kept secrets I have come across lately. It is a 660-acre campus in Lansing, Michigan, that has served VFW children and single parents with children since the early 1920s. They have now opened that to our active duty members in the event that there is some kind of emergency family care need with deployed members and the family care plan breaks down through no fault of their own. We now have a very safe, warm, and loving environment that is well ingrained in the military community that we can offer those children while the deployment takes place.

Another partnership that we have strengthened is that with our aid society. The Air Force Aid Society has stepped forward with tremendous resources and support for all of our military families, regardless of whether it was repatriating families that we had to bring out of theater, whether it was families here who were experiencing financial difficulties because of the deployment. Regardless of what the issue was the Air Force Aid folks were on the front line with us, shoulder to shoulder working our family support issues.

Finally, the third partnership I would like to highlight is that with our schools. We had Family Support Center personnel go into our schools and form liaisons with all of our local schools, helping the administration and the teachers understand the unique requirements and the unique issues of our children. They have partnered together to help focus on what are the needs for our children in the education systems that will support our families, issues those children come back home from school every day.

One of our heart-warming stories is we had a little guy, a third grader, and at school they had a mock-up deployment so the other children in the school could experience what the active duty member does as they move through a deployment process. Then all of those children collectively built what was called worry chains, where they all wrote their worries on links of chain and they united those links of chain into one chain for all of the students

in that class. That little guy went home and shared that with his mother, and she was in tears as she called us to let us know the tremendous support and what that did for her child in terms of acknowledging where the father was and what they could do and how they could engage with the rest of the community in strengthening their father, their hero, and that is one of the tremendous success stories we received daily.

I could go on for hours about all the wonderful things that are happening in our centers and in our community. I know you are going to hear testimony from some of our local Family Support Center staffs as well as from our spouses. This has been, in terms of the refocusing of how we approach family support in the Air Force, a tremendous success story for us, so I would enter that for my opening statements, and look forward to your questions, sir. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Murray follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY BARBARA MURRAY

INTRODUCTION

Senator Chambliss, it is a tremendous honor to appear before you to present our Air Force family programs that aid and support our dedicated men and women of the United States Air Force and their families. While we ask much of our military members, we also ask much of their families—especially as we deploy in increasing numbers.

Today, we are facing one of our greatest challenges. How we adapt to the new steady state of accelerated operations and personnel tempo while ensuring the well being of our personnel and their families. Throughout the Air Force we have a number of programs designed to focus on the member and his/her family to enhance their overall quality of life and help them effectively confront the demands of this new AF operational imperative.

One of the largest stressors on our airman and their families is deployment. To manage our deployment schedule, the Air Force developed the Air Expeditionary Force (AEF) concept which we have been refining and using since the late 1990s. While world events since September 11 and, more recently, Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), have forced us to deploy more personnel, the AEF construct has proved its flexibility and usefulness. Prior to 11 September, the Air Force had approximately 7,000 personnel deployed; following those events, the number jumped 25,000; and then with OIF we jumped again to almost 55,000.

As we continue to track tempo, we find that there has been a significant increase in tempo levels across the force when comparing levels from fiscal year 2001 to fiscal year 2002. For example, on average those who were away from home station were gone 38 days in fiscal year 2001 and 48 days in fiscal year 2002 (21 percent increase). Further, in fiscal year 2001 crews from only 6 of our 38 major weapon systems were away from home station above 25 percent of their available time. In fiscal year 2002, that number increased to 17. Throughout our recent operations, the Air Force has continued to proactively manage our force deployments and the durations for each and every airman. Even so, the toll on our families has been greater than we would like. But our families are resilient, and they have come through with shining colors. Much of our success in the area of member and family support is directly attributable to the significant support we have enjoyed from Congress, especially in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2003. The Quality of Life (QoL) Survey 2002 indicates our members' satisfaction with the Air Force has improved in large part based on the significant support from Congress.

We thank Congress for approving another significant overall pay raise to include targeting for our military personnel in the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2003. In addition, you improved the Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) rates effective 1 Jan 03, based on 7.5 percent out-of-pocket for the National Median Housing Cost for each grade and dependency status, continuing toward our goal of eliminating out of pocket expenses. The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2003 also authorizes increases in minimum caps on health profession special and incentive pays, increases to Reserve component prior service enlistment bonus amounts, and several additional travel and transportation entitlements that will continue our effort to re-

duce other out-of-pocket expenses for our military personnel. These critical compensation initiatives are keys to meeting our families' basic needs while improving the readiness of our force and contributes greatly to morale and retention.

The NDAA for Fiscal Year 2003 also provides many TRICARE initiatives designed to improve the quality of service for our beneficiaries. The fiscal year 2003 NDAA extends TRICARE eligibility to Reserve dependents residing in remote locations without their Reserve sponsors. Additionally, eligibility for the TRICARE Dental Program is expanded to surviving dependents, providing much needed dental benefits to surviving family members. It also approves the use of Medicare providers as TRICARE providers, expanding provider availability to improve beneficiary access to care. How our airmen perceive their quality of life directly and fundamentally impacts our readiness capabilities. We place intense demands on our mission-focused Total Force, and it is imperative that we provide our airmen and their families with the quality of life they have earned and deserve. We are reviewing our manning and workload to realign resources across the Air Force to alleviate stress on our high demand assets. We seek to improve workplace environments; provide fair and competitive compensation and benefits; provide safe, affordable, and adequate housing; enhance community and family programs; improve educational opportunities; and provide quality health care, as these have a direct impact on our ability to recruit and retain our people and sustain a ready force. Again the QoL Survey supports this by showing our airmen and AF civilians believe by over 90 percent that the Air Force is a good place to work. The survey also reflects families being over 80 percent supportive of the AF way of life. We will not stop looking for ways to improve, however we are happy to report the efforts on behalf of our AF personnel have made significant impact on our airmen and their families.

More specifically, as we look at deployment issues/concerns, we are pleased with the tremendous advancements we have made over the last decade in caring for our members and their families. As early as 1995, the Air Force placed Readiness NCOs in each of our Family Support Centers (FSC). Those NCOs are charged to take care of family issues during deployments, plane mishaps, and natural disasters. They have become one of our best success stories as they link leadership, members, families and community agencies maximizing resources to effectively handle the stresses of deployment and/or reunions. The Readiness NCO prepares, sustains and reunites members and families so they are able to meet today's mission requirements.

FSC Readiness NCOs are tasked with providing individual and family counseling prior to the deployment, to include administration of a pre-separation checklist of practical considerations. While this counseling is highly encouraged, the current AF Instruction does not make it mandatory for military personnel. Some installations require members to process through the FSC prior to deployment, but family counseling is not mandatory. Unit briefings are held at the discretion of commanders and are, in most cases, mandatory for the deploying military member. These briefings involve subject matter experts (including the FSC Readiness NCO) and cover family considerations, socio-political demographics at the deployment site, Chaplains' briefings, pay and entitlements, medical and legal concerns. Many FSC Readiness personnel occupy a formal position on the mobility processing line and, while this presence is an optional stop, most personnel stop to get support information for their families, pick up self-help booklets for children and spouses and register for free morale calls. At one Air Force Material Command installation, the FSC stop was combined with the Emergency Data (Form 93) stop. As members check their data, they can easily access FSC information as well. Air Force Reserve Command developed a standardized form to be filled out by the member at the deployment line. The purpose is to capture unique concerns just prior to the member's departure. The information cannot be captured at any other time and provides the member one last opportunity to share concerns about special family care needs (e.g. "my son and spouse were in a car accident a few days ago. They are fine but I would feel better if someone would call them and check on them.") It is the individual attention the Readiness NCO provides to the member and family that has truly made the difference for our families.

Following the departure of the military member, the FSC and the Readiness NCO continue their engagement with the immediate family and, in many cases, the caregivers of a single airman's children or a single member's family of origin. Support is provided in the form of morale calls, video phone calls, Hearts Apart support activities, free email via GI Mail, individual adaptation consultations, referral and follow up and access to AF's community Web site, AFCrossroads. Many installations publish newsletters that describe community activities, classes, volunteer opportunities, deployment "survival" tips and "need to know" information. Chaplains, FSCs, unit leaders, spouses and base agencies contribute to these newsletters or create base web pages for separated families. The VFW held a school supplies drive for

the 1,300 Air Force families who were evacuated from Incirlik Air Base, Turkey, before the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Of those families, 12 chose to go to Robins Air Force Base, 5 chose to go to Dobbins Air Reserve Base and 7 to Moody Air Force Base. They didn't have time to pack their personal items, said John Senk, the VFW adjutant general. This is one reason the organization collected the supplies. The VFW also provides free phone cards to deployed members and their families, and emergency relief funds to those who need it. The school supplies were sent to state-side Air Force family support centers and distributed to the families. Some of those supplies arrived in Georgia to support the families there in Safe Haven status from Turkey.

The military member's return is often the toughest part of a deployment. The member has to reenter the family, the work place and get back to day-to-day obligations. The FSC and the Readiness NCO work hand-in-hand with the unit prior to the member's return. All helping agencies participate in the successful reintegration of the member and the family. It is a community interest to support our members and families reunite and return to a balance between work and family. The Chaplains are an integral part of reuniting the unit members with their families by providing reunion counseling/briefings at the deployed locations.

Another tremendous success for the Air Force has been AFCrossroads, our official family and community Web site. The Web site offers information on each DOD installation, employment opportunities, information resource center, teens and youth forum, Eldercare, Family Separations and related Web site links to provide additional information to the AF family. Just to show how truly successful this Web site is, we recorded over 24 million hits for the month of April 2003 alone! The virtual community that has developed as a result of this Web site is now extending back to our physical communities where spouses, armed with the information they have shared/received via AFCrossroads, are energizing all types of programs/services at their base that only further respond to installation family needs.

Taking a more collaborative approach to community and family service delivery, we created the Community Action Information Board and Integrated Delivery System working groups at Air Staff, MAJCOM, and Installation levels. The Community Action Information Board brings together senior leaders to review and resolve individual, family and installation community issues that impact military readiness and quality of life. The Integrated Delivery System working group brings together all community and family agencies to ensure our military members and their families have access to the services and activities they need. Through robust research over the last decade, we know that communities that are the most equipped to respond positively to the unique demands of deployments are those communities where there is a shared competency among not just leadership and the formal agencies, but also among members of the informal networks. While we have historically focused our attention on strong leadership support and the excellences of formal agencies, we now know that the first place people seek help is from friends and family members by a resounding majority. With that documented preference, we have begun to focus our efforts much more heavily on strengthening the collective competency of our informal networks, building a shared sense of social responsibility, and ensuring that members of those informal networks have the resources to effectively respond to their own issues/needs. Nowhere have we seen the effects of that change more notably than in our suicides rates which have dropped dramatically over the last 7 years. Another resounding success in building community is a virtual community created via a spouse forum on AFCrossroads. Since its debut, we have seen a community of spouses form that exchanges encouragement, advice, and information with each other on a daily basis. With the onset of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the conversations turned to deployment needs and support. Subsequently we now see conversation addressing how to handle situations around reunions.

Programs like child development and youth programs are absolutely critical to readiness and family well-being. Troops who know their family is being properly cared for are better able to focus on the mission and deliver top results. The Air Force sets the standard in providing affordable, quality child-care in child development centers, school age programs, and family child-care homes. Air Force childcare centers and all of its before- and after-school programs for children 6-12 are 100 percent accredited. Over the last 2 years, the Air Force expanded its family child-care program so it can offer free emergency child-care for its members who have to work late, on the weekends, or who experience shift changes. This program also serves parents who are assigned to missile sites and need around-the-clock care. The most recent variation of this program, spurred by Operation Enduring Freedom, provides 16 hours of free child-care for members who are returning home after an extended TDY. Beyond these benefits, on-base programs are part of the non-pay

benefit system providing savings over the cost members would pay to receive similar services off base.

Across the Air Force, services squadron family member support flights actively support our deployed members and their families. For example, at Robins AFB, when Major General Wetekam, Warner Robins Air Logistics Center Commander, held two briefings for spouses of deployed members, on-site childcare was provided while he relayed vital deployment information. Functional experts from Family Member Programs, Family Support, the Chapel, Medical Group, Legal, the Housing Office, and the base school attended and shared the programs offered to assist families left behind.

Our extended partnerships with Air Force Aid Society (AFAS) and the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) have allowed us to even further extend our support to our airmen and their families. General Hap Arnold and his wife, Bea, started the AF Aid Society during World War II (1942) for the purpose of taking care of Army Air Corps members and their families. So we have a proud 61-year history of providing this support during all combat operations that have occurred since our founding. As the United States prepared to engage in the war with Iraq, while continuing to fight the war on terrorism and defending the homeland, General Mike McGinty re-emphasized to our Family Centers the commitment of AFAS to help our great AF troops (Active, Guard, and Reserve) and their families. Stating that they know what combat creates unique problems, concerns, stresses and worries, they committed the AFAS to help wherever and however they could. They repeatedly stepped in to respond to special cases and considered every request.

SUMMARY

The global war on terrorism has imposed a new steady state of radically accelerated operations and personnel tempo as well as a demand for unprecedented speed, agility, and innovation in adapting to unconventional and unexpected threats. While our tools and technology are impressive, it is our airmen who will fight and win the Nation's wars. Moreover, while they do that, it is incumbent upon us to care for them and for their families. We will continue to rely on Congress as we seek to improve and innovate our support mechanisms to meet the challenges of our "new steady state." Thank You.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thank you very much, and I know that each of you have your own success stories because you work hard at this issue.

One focus that we have had, particularly on the Senate side over the last several weeks as we have moved into Operation Iraqi Freedom, as well as moving into the authorization of the defense bill for 2004, has been trying to upgrade and equalize the benefits that our Guard and Reserve units have with that of our Active Forces, because we are calling on these folks more and more.

I know that the programs that your Services created to support active duty families are impressive, but what about the community support for the Guard and Reserve? Many of these individuals live far from bases where Family Support Centers are located.

I would like to ask each of you to take just a minute to talk about what your particular Service has done to open up the lines of communication with the spouses and children of deployed guardsmen and reservists and how much of this mission is supported by the Reserve components themselves and what kind of collaboration is needed between your office and the Reserve, Service Reserve chiefs.

Mr. Isaacs.

Mr. ISAACS. Sir, within the Army, as we deploy, we are very much depending on Reserve components. So we are very closely linked between the Active Force and Reserve components in all of these programs. In specific what we call Family Assistance Centers are those that are operated by the National Guard, the Army National Guard, in each of the States and territories, specifically to

provide assistance that would normally be provided for the active duty soldier on an installation within the State, particularly for those family members who are not proximate to an installation.

We work closely with both the National Guard and the Reserve component to make sure that the programs designed track with those that are in the Active Force, and some of that funding comes from the National Guard Bureau and some of it from the active component. We are working very hard to ensure that the services that we provide to the Active Forces is replicated in the Reserve component. This becomes critical to us as we see more of our Reserve components participating in our operational requirements.

So I would say that we have worked at it pretty hard. It certainly is something that we need to work harder at to make sure that we maintain the quality.

Admiral PURCELL. Senator, the same sort of services that we offered in terms of deployment, pre-deployment briefings, and readiness programs were provided for families of reservists and contact was made with those units. We usually deploy those as groups. Those same home port briefings, and pre-deployment briefings were also offered for the reservists. For folks that were outside of areas, those contacts were made through the Family Service Centers regardless of the geographical region.

Those services are also offered between all the Family Service Centers, and services are offered for the other services' folks, whether active or Reserve. So Army folks and Navy folks can go to an Army base or vice versa, or other local services, and those same kinds of support structures are going to be there for them. Between the sharing and the contact of deploying units and their preparations, particular emphasis was placed on assisting those folks who had to rapidly deploy, sometimes without much pre-notice, in terms of taking care of personal affairs, and giving briefings, and taking care of their families.

There was a significant effort made to address the concerns of reservists and make sure that they were brought into the same kind of pre-deployment briefings and provided with the same sort of services as those that were available to the active duty folks.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Before we move to Colonel Yanello, you mentioned the situation in which a reservist's or a guardsman's family lives in an area maybe not where there is an Army base, if they are Army, but where there is a Navy base. Is there any communication between the Army and the Navy about those guardsmen and reservists, so that you can take some overt action to make sure that they know what services are available in their community and can take advantage of them?

Admiral PURCELL. I will have to get back to you for the record about whether there is a specific formal link and what that link is. With the resources that we have, I would expect that we are going to refer them to the local agencies, phone numbers, and contacts and who they would need to go or call. What the level of formality that connection is, I will have to find out for you, sir.

[The information referred to follows:]

With respect to support of mobilized reservists (Navy and other Services), the following information is provided after talking with FFSC Directors at Mid-South and

Joint Reserve Base (JRB) Fort Worth, both of which provide service to a variety of Reserve personnel at local and remote sites.

Support services are provided by Navy Fleet and Family Support Centers for Navy and other Service Reserve, National Guard, and Coast Guard personnel and families through a variety of means:

- Army Reserve soldiers provide family contact information and the Army Reserve notifies nearest Navy FFSC when members activate and deploy. FFSC sends out letters with brochures or booklets describing FFSC services and how to access them locally or how to find information on nearest installation services from the SITES internet database (SITES lists detailed information for all DOD installations).
- FFSC assists local families to form support groups and maintains contact with these groups as needed.
- When mobilization started, FFSCs surveyed all area Navy and Marine Corps units to get lists of assigned Ombudsmen and Key Volunteers and offered training for all. This drew Ombudsmen and Key Volunteers from remote as well as nearby units.
- FFSCs use lists of Ombudsmen, Key Volunteers, Family Support Groups, National Guard, Army and Air force Reserve Family Assistance Officers as Points of Contact (POCs) for providing general contact information as well as information of interest to family members by email for further distribution within the units and groups.
- FFSCs use other community organizations such as American Red Cross, Veterans of Foreign Wars, etc. as well as area commands to distribute information to units and family members. A number of communities with large numbers of deploying personnel have hosted "Family Readiness Days" to draw families out and acquaint them with area health and social service providers including military organizations and family centers.
- FFSCs provide pre-mobilization/pre-deployment briefings to Reserve and NG units. FFSC at JRB Ft. Worth prepared a booklet entitled "Information and Referral for Isolated and Remote Units and Families" which was sent out to lists for all known units in Texas. Family Centers in Texas are members of an Inter-Service Family Assistance Committee (ISFAC) which promotes sharing of information and resources amongst all branches of service members to reach family members of mobilized troops.
- Headquarters programs for all Service Reserve and Army National Guard units have established 1-800 numbers and Web sites where service members and families can access reserve-specific information, such as on benefits eligibility, etc. These numbers and Web site addresses are widely distributed by FFSCs as well as Reserve, National Guard, and Coast Guard commands. Families may access and receive most services required (if available) or referrals from any of the Services Family Centers. Consequently, Navy FFSCs have been very proactive in trying to work with units and reach families in their geographic areas.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Colonel Yanello.

Colonel YANELLO. Senator, what we have done is similar to the other Services. However, we also established what we called a Marine Corps Community Services (MCCS) One Source, which is a specific organization to take 1-800 number calls and because reservists live away from the major bases and stations that give the support services, they can call in at any time and talk to somebody live; it is not just a recording.

We also go out to the different Reserve stations and give briefs as the other Services do. But the MCCS One Source is a 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year service to all the marines and their families and also to the sailors that serve with us aboard the bases and stations and throughout the Marine Corps.

There is not only the service available in the continental United States (CONUS), but there is also a number for marines and their families to call who are outside of CONUS that would direct them to either the Services, the nearest station, and some of the things that they ask are basically as easy as "Where is my marine? What

are they are doing? I have a flat tire, I do not know how to fix it." Things like that, so that is the way we take care of, not only the active duty, but also the marine reservists who serve with us on active duty.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Ms. Murray.

Ms. MURRAY. Senator, we have had, since Operation Desert Storm, family readiness offices in our Reserve installations so that we have actual family support staff at our stand-alone Reserve installations as well as all our active duty installations.

The Air Guard has in the last few years also brought on line staff members to serve as family readiness officers for their Guard families. We have been total force in our family support centers on our active duty installations since before Operation Desert Storm. We will see our Reserve component members and their families even when they are not called up for deployment, when they are not activated; so at any time they can go in and take advantage of all of the programs and services there on the active duty installation as well.

Our readiness officers in our Reserve component are on pagers and 1-800 lines. They are available 24/7 around the clock for any of our Reserve component members who encounter any kind of issues or have special needs.

We also have a number of Web sites to keep our virtual community connected. Our Air Force community Web site, Air Force Crossroads, has gotten so popular that we enjoyed a full 24 million hits for the month of April alone from family members and members who were going out, seeking information about benefits, seeking information about how to stay connected to their deployed family members, how to get kids in school. There is a whole host of all of our support information on that Web site.

It has been a tremendous advantage to our Reserve component families who are truly isolated in some way from the active duty community by virtue of where they live, so they can jump right on there and get that kind of information.

We also have the capability to do feedback in terms of, "Hey, I need to know this, I cannot find it from the Web site, how do I get an answer?" We have a Web master who continually monitors the site so that we can provide that kind of information as well.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Each of you made reference in your written statement to surveys that you conduct to assess satisfaction with quality of life by soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and their families. In its report on the National Defense Authorization Act legislation, the Senate Armed Services Committee included a provision noting the importance of these surveys.

I would like for each of you to describe surveys of personnel that you rely on within your Service and how frequently they are authorized to use these tools and what are the most significant findings that have emerged in those recent surveys. I will tell you also that our last panel today includes some folks who have probably filled out those surveys, so we may get a different perspective from them when they get up here.

But if you will, again, Mr. Isaacs, let us start with you and let us talk about the surveys for a minute.

Mr. ISAACS. Yes, sir. We have really two ways to survey at the department level. We do a formal survey of soldiers and a separate formal survey of family members that addresses the totality of the Morale, Welfare, Recreation, and Family programs, and that is a formal survey that we do every other year that we run through the normal formal survey process. I do not have the exact number of how many surveys we send out, but we get back a statistically significant sample, and that helps us in formulating future programs.

I think the most effective system the Army has developed, and has been in place now about 20 years, is the Army Family Action Plan process, where at installation levels the whole population of an installation meets with the installation staff to identify issues of concern.

Things that can be fixed on the installation get fixed by the installation commander. Things that cannot be fixed get elevated to, in our context, the major command. Things that cannot be fixed at that level are elevated further. We meet annually, and a central committee chaired by the Vice Chief of Staff of the Army decides which of those issues that the Army staff should take on. In many cases, of course, it requires resourcing, and only our Vice Chief of Staff can determine that an issue is unachievable.

Over a 19-year period, we have had huge success, and all of that has emanated basically from direct feedback primarily from family members at installations. Some of it turned out to be kind of silly policy stuff that we all said, "Gee, how did that ever happen"? to major changes in benefits such as SGLI and dependent dental care and a number of other major initiatives. We think that is probably the most effective system we have in place.

Admiral PURCELL. Senator, we have a formal survey system as well. It repeats itself every 3 years from the MWR site. It covers civilian spouses, primarily, 1 year; surveying the MWR infrastructure itself another year, and sailors and users on the active side another year, and that repeats itself cyclically. That is the major survey that we use to keep in touch with personnel formally at the major organizational level. Those survey results have continued to be quite good, actually.

We also started last year what we have called a "Family Summit." The first one of those we have done, and it is going to be a biannual affair. We had 200-plus family members from all over the United States and overseas, active duty teens, spouses, and so on, to meet for a 2-week session to talk about issues, what their perceptions were, what was going well and what needed work. That effort has been formalized into a number of pilot programs, five of which are ongoing right now. That summit is also going to be repeated biannually.

Those are probably two of the biggest vehicles we are using right now to get hands-on feedback from folks who are actually using the systems and to determine whether they are satisfied with the service they are getting in the programs they are receiving or whether we have problems that need attention.

Colonel YANELLO. Sir, we have surveys. The ones we have are quality-of-life surveys. We had three in the last 10 years which talked about everything from housing to expectations over time. In fact, our Deputy Commandant for Manpower, Lieutenant General

Parks, has recently testified on the results of the quality-of-life survey.

In 2002, we did have our first spouse survey, and one of the biggest issues identified was separation from their serviceman.

Also, as I would expect with many of the other Services, the installation commanders also had open houses where we invited the participants, actually the people who were stationed aboard the bases and their spouses to come in and face to face talk to the commander about what they were or were not getting in the way of services on the installation. Thank you.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Ms. Murray.

Ms. MURRAY. Sir, we have three different formal survey processes, the first one being the Chief of Staff survey which is done every 2 years to ask the members what their issues and needs are.

Then we also have a quality-of-life survey that we do about every 18 months to 2 years that looks at our specific quality-of-life agenda items such as safe and affordable housing, quality healthcare, operations tempo, quality-of-life issues that we have built into the Air Force quality-of-life agenda.

Then our third survey that we do every 2 years is our community assessment, where we survey not only members but family members as well in terms of what are their family and community issues.

We have just finished the last quality-of-life survey, and it was a tremendous home run hit for the Air Force in terms of significant increases in members' intent to remain in the Service, what they considered fair and equitable pay and benefits and what their family perceives in terms of the Air Force being a good place to live and work. So a real home run hit for us. Again, I think a lot having to do with the support we received in the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2003.

We are in the process of doing our community assessment as we speak and hope to have those results finished by the end of this summer. But all three of those surveys have helped drive the agenda as we program and look for resources to support our members and families.

Then lastly, we have a process in the Air Force where at the installation, major command, and air staff level we have what is called a Community Action Information Board (CAIB) that is chaired by the commanders at each level. It is chaired by the Assistant Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force at the Air Staff level, and is made up of the senior leadership of each level of the organization. We start at the installation level, and family members as well as members of the leadership team on that installation, identify issues particular to that installation, and they work at that level to resolve them.

If they believe that an issue is more global than just that installation, or if there are changes needed in policy, in law, or in resourcing, they bubble that up to the major command. The same board structure looks at those issues that have come from the installation at the major command level. Again, if it is larger than that, they bubble it up to the Air Staff level where our Air Staff, our senior general officer leadership for the Air Force, address those issues.

We have had some tremendous successes in addressing financial hardship, in reducing our suicide rates, in looking at issues around domestic violence, and we think it is probably, of all four of our processes, including our surveys and our CAIB process, we think it is the one which bears the most fruit.

Senator CHAMBLISS. I know a lot of people get frustrated with these surveys, and the first thing they do when they see them is sometimes just throw them in the trash, thinking that decisions by your side of the table are not going to really matter, and are not going to be determined by what is contained in those surveys. But if I am hearing you right, is it a fair statement that these surveys do matter and that it is important for all personnel to fill those surveys out correctly and be careful because they do make a difference when it comes to your making decisions on quality of life as well as other issues?

Ms. MURRAY. Absolutely.

Mr. ISAACS. I would certainly say within the Army, sir, that we do pay attention to those surveys, and obviously the greater return on the survey, on those that get mailed out, the higher validity of the information. We work very hard to make sure, and a lot of it has to do in the process of how you mail things to an individual, as opposed to a different way in keeping up with accurate addresses, but absolutely, we pay attention to those surveys and the senior leadership reacts to the feedback.

Admiral PURCELL. I would just like to add, Senator, that I could probably agree with that. We are very concerned about the response rate, the return rate. We are making efforts to actually try to personalize this so that the people who participate in the surveys will get some kind of feedback after the survey is completed, and that there is a connection between what you put in and getting some kind of feedback on the results of what came out of the survey study overall. We hope to, by doing that, increase the successful feedback and increase the participation rate because people are going to do it and there is going to be some kind of response that says, "Thank you for participating. Here is what we found out, or here are the results," which we also hope that will increase the participation rate.

Ms. MURRAY. Senator, if I might add, we were a little concerned about them throwing surveys away too, so we web-based it so they cannot throw it away. We have actually gotten tremendous response rate. Our quality of life survey that we just finished, we sent out over 100,000 surveys and got a 45-percent response rate, which is up from the last two surveys that we have done; they were down in the 30 percentile, but at 45 percent, it is obviously much more than we needed for a statistically valid sample size. What it tells us is that our members are actively engaged, and they believe that something positive will come from their comments in that survey; otherwise, they would not have responded in the volume that they did. So we have been extremely pleased with the response that we are getting, both from our active duty and Reserve component members, as well as from our families.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Admiral, one of the findings that emerged from the tragic deaths at Fort Bragg last year was that the availability of marital and family counseling may be limited and the at-

tempts to access professional counselors in the civilian community may be impeded by the restrictions on the use of TRICARE.

In your written testimony, you note that the Navy is unique in providing professional counseling services in its Fleet and Family Support Centers, and I certainly saw this on a recent visit to Kings Bay last week. Would you please describe the services that are provided, including the relationship with the chain of command, and have you found that the Navy can provide adequately for demand for professional counseling with the number of employees you presently have?

Admiral PURCELL. Yes, sir, I will be happy to do that. We have a system that is based in the Fleet and Family Service Centers that offers professionally licensed counseling for a number of issues. Some of them we call life crisis issues, whether it is for spouses who are not getting along well or problems with teenagers. This also involves the FAP program, the Family Advocacy Program, which involves domestic abuse and child abuse counseling and treatment.

This system is not connected in the Navy to the medical department. It is not an issue for a sailor's service or medical record unless it gets to the level where the counselor is concerned for the safety of the individual, such as a suicidal issue and that kind of thing, which would be referred to a medical professional.

What this system allows us to do is to address day-to-day, life crisis issues, as well as more significant issues, family issues particularly, outside the medical and the formal chain of command, which we think allows families to make use of those services without feeling that these events are immediately becoming part of their medical record or becoming part of the official chain of command.

Unless an incident or a problem rises to the level that treatment is required, or formal counseling is required, or domestic abuse treatment is required, the chain of command would not be involved. We have found that this has been a very effective vehicle. We also believe that the services that those folks are getting in terms of life crisis-type counseling would only be available to them at fairly significant expense in the civilian community. It is not covered by TRICARE. We estimate counseling costs between \$50 to maybe \$100 an hour, depending on where you live, for that kind of counseling.

So from both respects, in terms of providing a value or benefit which we feel is not covered otherwise, and in terms of allowing us to get people into the program for assistance early on without stigma or the fear that it will be a reflection on their professional career, these are advantages of the program, and we are very happy with how this is working.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Colonel Yanello, I appreciate your reference to S. 783 in your written statement regarding posthumous citizenship for deceased, non-citizen service members and their survivors. The ultimate sacrifice made by Corporal Garibay and Lance Corporal Gutierrez, as well as many other instances of combat injuries has increased awareness and our appreciation for non-citizen service members who volunteer to defend our Nation.

I thought you identified an important issue in your written statement referring to the CNN effect. With embedded journalists submitting constant reports from Iraq and realtime coverage by CNN and all the news outlets, families of marines clearly needed assistance in understanding how it was affecting their loved ones. What were some of the typical questions that came to the Marine Corps as a result of the CNN effect?

Colonel YANELLO. Senator, as I said in the beginning, we had all kinds of queries from the families. What we had done, as a result, was we went ahead, and the Commandant authorized a 1-800 number for marines, and we have two basic call centers. We have Camp Lejeune on the east coast and Camp Pendleton on the west coast, and we have also set up call centers there staffed by volunteers. Once something appears on the news, right away that would spark a lot of interest in folks' family members and loved ones, and they would call with all kinds of questions such as, "Where is my marine? How is he? Do you know if it was him that was hurt or his unit?" So we take the calls and send them either to the east coast or west coast.

Now, with respect to the casualty response section, that kind of information we obviously are not going to let out to the press until the notification of next of kin is done. As far as the CNN effect, technology is a dual-edged sword, if I can say that. It helps to some extent, but I am sure the other Services may agree that it results in people wanting to know information right then and there. We have to respect the family's privacy before we can actually let information out to the press.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thank you all very much for your insight into these issues. I could spend all afternoon giving questions to each of you, but we have a couple of other panels here. Thank you very much for being here and for your statements and your participation in this hearing.

I would now like to ask our next panel to come forward. With us today is Ms. Linda Heifferon, I hope I am saying that right, Director for Community Activity and Services at Fort Stewart; Dr. John Kelly, Program Manager for Community Support for the Navy's Southeast Region; Ms. Ann Lukens, Director of the Family Support Center at Moody Air Force Base; and Technical Sergeant Jerry Thornton, U.S. Air Force, Family Readiness Noncommissioned Officer at Moody Air Force Base.

Thanks to each of you very much for being here. We have received your written statements, and we will be glad at this time to take any comments you would like to make before we submit some questions to you.

Ms. Heifferon, am I pronouncing that right?

Ms. HEIFFERON. You are pronouncing it exactly right, sir.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Good. With a name like mine, sometimes you never know, so I always like to make sure.

Ms. HEIFFERON. Thank you, sir.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Please proceed.

**STATEMENT OF LINDA HEIFFERON, DIRECTOR, DIRECTORATE
FOR COMMUNITY ACTIVITY AND SERVICES, FORT STEWART,
GEORGIA**

Ms. HEIFFERON. Thank you. Good afternoon, Senator Chambliss. It is indeed an honor and a privilege to be here today before you to discuss the focus and the emphasis the Army and, specifically, Fort Stewart and Hunter Army Airfield place on family readiness and taking care of soldiers' families and children. I have submitted my statement for the record, but would briefly like to highlight some of the Fort Stewart/Hunter Army Airfield successful programs and initiatives.

Sir, success does not occur in a vacuum. Without the support of Congress, the Department of Defense, and the Department of Army, Hunter Army Airfield and Fort Stewart would not be empowered to provide family members with the programs, services, knowledge, and resources to be self-reliant and successfully handle the many separations, planned and unplanned.

Supporting the soldiers and families through all stages of deployment, from pre-deployment through deployment and re-integration, has been a collaborate effort of the installation leadership, senior spouses, Family Readiness Group leaders, a dedicated workforce, and most importantly, a community which has been incredibly supportive.

The Army had a motto years ago that said "The Army takes care of its own." That motto has now evolved to "The Army teaches its own to take care of itself." To that end, our Army Community Services has had excellent attendance at pre-deployment briefings, at reunion briefings, Family Readiness Group and rear detachment briefings, and financial readiness classes. Additionally, on 25 March of this year, 2003, Fort Stewart/Hunter Army Airfield stood up its Family Assistance Center on a 24/7 hourly basis.

Installation initiatives that evolved as part of the challenges of deployment are a proactive mass media campaign encouraging spouses and families to stay at the installation. In conjunction with our Public Affairs Office, Army Community Services produced a video entitled "Stay at the Installation." The local communities of Hinesville and Savannah were also instrumental in promoting this. We also found that combined Family Readiness Group training along with rear detachment leaders training was very beneficial because it gave each group an idea of the role of the other.

One thing we discovered as a lesson from Operation Desert Storm: communication, communication, communication. We found that providing communications to our families had to be executed in a consistent way. Fort Stewart/Hunter Army Airfield provides various forms of communications, to include Family Readiness Group meetings, monthly deployment meetings, executive Family Readiness Group meetings, and installation battle brief meetings.

Lastly, we had the inception of a crisis support team comprised of Family Group volunteers, Army Community Service staff, and chaplains who provided practical, emotional, and resource assistance in the event of a family crisis.

In order for our spouses to function successfully, the provision of expanded Child and Youth Services is essential. Child and Youth Services at Fort Stewart/Hunter Army Airfield has always provided

quality child and youth programs to the military community. Through all the stages of deployment, Child and Youth Services has provided expanded hours of operation to accommodate Family Readiness Group meetings, weekly and monthly openings for spouses' day out and spouses' night out, backup family child care for emergency child care. Additionally, on-site child care was provided for many Family Readiness Group meetings and activities. These contingency services were provided at absolutely no cost to the families, and we gratefully acknowledge and appreciate congressional support and funding which allowed us to provide those expanded services. Thank you, sir.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Heifferon follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY LINDA A. HEIFFERON

Senator Chambliss, it is a pleasure to appear before you today at this field hearing to discuss families and children. Fort Stewart/Hunter Army Airfield is a power projection platform and has a heavy operation tempo. Deployment, training, and field exercises are frequent and numerous often occurring back to back. The optempo places stress on families and soldiers. The impact of these stresses can be: domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse, financial difficulties, suicides, fatigue, an increased divorce rate, and a lack of parental involvement and family cohesiveness. The Army and Fort Stewart/Hunter Army Airfield must continue to work diligently and be proactive to provide programs and services to address the issues of being a rapid deployment installation.

An issue of concern is the use of embedded media. Embedded media has both a positive and negative impact in relation to deployment. The positive aspect is the affiliation of the embedded reporter with the Division and the Units. This offers a positive image of the military and provides the Nation with a view of the soldier who is committed and dedicated to defending his/her country. The negative aspect of embedded media is the reporting of casualties by unit and/or division instead of utilizing a generic term such as coalition forces. The stress of watching and learning about casualties not only creates stress, but on occasion can incite panic in some of the family members.

The other issue involves Family Readiness Group (FRG) leaders. The FRG leaders feel strongly that a paid FRG liaison position should be established at Brigade and/or Battalion level to alleviate the stress currently placed on FRG leaders as a result of heavy operational tempo.

The 3rd Infantry Division (Mech) is comprised of eight brigades (one physically located at Fort Benning), and four separate Battalions, with 20,000 soldiers and approximately 33,000 family members. The 3rd ID is a highly deployable, power projection platform and the largest military installation east of the Mississippi River. In addition to the deployment of Active component soldiers, Fort Stewart has taken on an additional requirement of mobilizing and deploying National Guard and Reserve soldiers to various locations. More than 13,000 National Guard and Reserve soldiers have been mobilized and deployed since October 2.

The 3rd Infantry Division looked at lessons learned during the Bosnia, Kosovo, Africa, and Afghanistan deployments and began to prepare soldiers and families to prepare for the possibility of a large-scale contingency operation.

PREPARATION FOR DEPLOYMENT

All units, at Battalion level, coordinated with Army Community Service (ACS) for deployment briefings for soldiers and family members alike prior to deployment. ACS staff were accompanied by personnel from the Finance Office, American Red Cross and the Staff Judge Advocate and briefed soldiers and family members on the stresses of deployment, programs and services available, communications availability in the theatre, finance and money concerns, Red Cross Emergency messaging to the theater, legal requirements prior to and during deployments, tax affects of deployments, and mailing restrictions.

During Operations Desert Storm/Desert Shield many families left the installation and the support personnel were unable to assist and provide services to these families. As a result of this "lesson learned," ACS in conjunction with the Public Affairs Office (PAO), developed and deployed a mass media campaign to encourage the families to stay at the installation during deployment. Brigade and Battalion Command Teams were instrumental in sending that message to the families. The media cam-

paign included a video entitled "Stay at the Installation." The campaign to encourage families to stay in the local area was also promoted by the surrounding civilian communities. The partnership between the local civilian communities and the installation were instrumental in creating an environment in which the families felt truly supported.

Smart Books and Battle Books were developed for the FRG leadership prior to the deployment with in-depth information on support, services and how to resolve issues. It was a "Desk Side Reference Guide" for FRGs, and had all the written material (finance requirements, Red Cross message guidance, RDC numbers, how to assist a person in stress, etc.) in one book. The books were provided to FRG leaders providing them a ready guide for resource and referral.

ACS personnel conducted numerous trainings for FRG leaders and rear detachment personnel. These trainings included FRG basic leaders training for both FRG personnel and RDC personnel (to understand each others roles and responsibilities), and crisis team training. The crisis team was developed prior to the Kosovo deployment of 2000. The training was based on the assumption that deployments can result in deaths, and FRG roles in causality are unofficial. It was determined that FRGs and RDC personnel needed to be educated about the casualty notification process, stages of grief, and the FRG roles in casualty. ACS, AG casualty, and the chaplains provided this training. This information and knowledge was used during the Operation Iraqi Freedom combat, and has been essential in making the difficult process of supporting families during combat casualties easier for the FRGs. Training was heavily attended and made mandatory for the Rear Detachment Personnel. The combined training inclusive of FRG leaders and RDC personnel resulted in the participants connecting to each other early in the deployment process.

SUSTAINMENT DURING DEPLOYMENTS

Sustaining families through a deployment can be difficult. The Directorate of Community Activities and Services (DCAS) coordinated numerous activities for the families to include "Spouses Night Out", mom and youth aerobic classes, shopping trips, powder puff classes, Women's Expo, etc. In addition to Morale, Welfare, and Recreation programs being increased and geared to the families, the education staff refocused their efforts to the families by opening up the Leadership Skills Education Program (LSEP), which offers classes in time management, leadership skills, strategic planning, and computer skills to family members. Additionally, college class enrollments increased tremendously. Free and reduced childcare was provided after hours and one Saturday per month for families who wanted to participate in the MWR programs. One free night of childcare was provided to each battalion for the monthly meeting.

The Waiting Spouses group is a program for families whose soldiers are on unaccompanied or hardship tours, and is coordinated by ACS' Relocation Program. This group became critical in the support of families of the "Shelf Replacement Soldiers". Because shelf replacement soldiers were sent where they were needed, based on rank and MOS, the families usually had no idea what brigade or battalion the soldier was assigned to. The Relocation Program Manager at ACS took an aggressive approach in reaching those families and ensuring they were kept informed and supported by ACS programs.

For families, information is key to survival through deployments. FRG Leaders and Rear Detachment Personnel were provided constant information on current events, activities and programs available to the families. This information was disseminated in a variety of ways to include email, phone and media print. An Executive FRG consisting of Senior Level Spouses was formed for the purpose of disseminating information and rumor control. Fort Benning, via VTC, was included in the Executive FRG with the Senior Spouses and Senior Command chairing each meeting. This method of disseminating information proved most effective.

ACS became the conduit of in kind donations given to the soldiers and families of the installation. The outpouring was extremely large, and ACS developed a process to get the product to the families through the Brigade Rear Detachment Personnel. Donations came from individuals and corporations across America. Support from the local veterans groups, churches, businesses and general public was incredible. The local Military Affairs Committees developed a discount card for families of deployed soldiers to receive discounts of products and services, local business provided door prizes to FRGs, and billboards and marquees of most local businesses had "We support our Troops" messages.

Family care plans were validated and in order with primary guardians identified. There have been no major issues regarding children of single or dual military during the recent deployment.

REINTEGRATION PROGRAM

An extensive reunion program has been developed incorporating mental health professionals, social work professionals, chaplains and medical doctors. Family member briefings, soldiers briefings, couples classes, single soldiers classes, children classes, mental health check-ups, stress management and domestic violence classes are given prior to redeployment and during the reintegration phase. Additionally, soldiers will be required to report to duty (with liberal leave) for 10 days after redeployment for observation. Commanders will be fully trained for signs of stress and will utilize installation resources for referral. The family member redeployment classes have been initiated and have been heavily attended. Child and Youth Services (CYS) have provided free childcare for these briefings and the briefings have been well attended.

Schools

The two Department of Defense Domestic Dependent Elementary and Secondary Schools (DDESS) on Fort Stewart serve over 1,800 children in grades K–6. Both schools have a Pre-K program. The curriculum utilized at the schools was developed and directed by Department of Defense Education Activity (DODEA). The off post schools in Liberty County are more than 50 percent military affiliated students. The administration, staff, and teachers are sensitive to the military lifestyle. Graduation and curriculum requirements for off post schools are determined by the State Department of Education. Public middle schools (Grades 6–8) offer band, chorus, football, dance team, cheerleading, and other enrichment options as extra curricular activities. The Liberty County middle schools curriculum also supports the team teaching concept. Both on and off post schools offer a gifted and talented program, although the curriculums for both programs are approached differently. The off post schools also offer exploratory classes for middle school students (keyboarding, visual arts, etc.).

Both on and off post schools provide excellent special needs programs for students. Both the local and DODEA school systems go above and beyond to provide services.

The off post schools have adopted and implemented the No Child Left Behind initiative. Off post schools also offer additional tutoring after school and Saturday school for those students who are falling behind in their studies and need additional help.

School personnel tell us that military parents are significantly involved in the Parent Teacher Organizations in public schools. Parental involvement at schools, both on post at Fort Stewart and off post public schools supporting Fort Stewart and HAAF, has increased over the last several years due to parent education programs and information provided by the School Liaison Office (SLO) and other family support related programs on Fort Stewart/HAAF.

There are no DDESS schools on HAAF. Children residing on HAAF are zoned for Chatham County public schools. Four percent of the students enrolled in Chatham County schools are military-connected children. Like Liberty County, graduation and curriculum requirements for Chatham County schools are determined by the Georgia State Department of Education. Chatham County schools have a gifted program called SEARCH (Students Exploring and Reasoning for Creative Environments). Also unique to the Chatham County schools are the Options Academies. There are 15 academies in Chatham County. They are designated at specific schools offering rigorous academic and performing arts programs.

Partnerships have been developed with off post agencies to provide “tools” for parents in supporting their children in schools. One such partnership is Parent University, which is a non-profit organization operated by parents for parents. Prior to the deployment, parents were surveyed to determine what courses would be beneficial to them and their families. Courses were developed based on the parental responses which included Discipline and the Difficult Child, Preparing Children for Pre-School, Effective Homework Techniques, Stress Management, and other courses designed to enhance personal growth and increase parenting skills. A Parent University session was conducted at the zoned elementary school for HAAF in April. There was no cost for the parents to attend the courses and childcare and lunch were also provided at no cost.

Through the initiation of the School Liaison Program, continuity of education has improved greatly at Fort Stewart and HAAF. Over the past 2 years ceremonies were conducted at which the Secondary Education Transition Study (SETS) Memorandum of Agreement and Guiding Principles were signed and implemented by four school districts (Fort Stewart, Liberty, Bryan, and Chatham Counties). Local action plans were developed based on the findings of the SETS. As a result of membership in the Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC) the four school districts received

an Interactive Counseling Center with their membership. This teleconferencing computer system enables counselors from the losing school to communicate with the receiving school when a student is in transition. Copies of transcripts, course descriptions, and other records can be reviewed on screen and faxed to either school. This is an excellent tool for counselors when they are placing students in classes.

Professional Development is also provided to school counselors by the MCEC. The training is at the Transition Counselor Institute and is conducted in three phases. This training teaches counselors basic skills to assist students in transition. Subjects include military lifestyle, deployment, social and emotional issues, etc. Phase I and II of this training have been offered at Fort Stewart/HAAF for the past 2 years and will culminate with Phase I, II, and III training next year. All of these processes are in place and are working.

Another key to ensuring continuity and a smooth transition from school district to school district has been the Youth Action Council, which involves parents, school officials, and support agencies such as Child and Youth Services (CYS) and Army Community Service. This forum addresses the total well being of military youth and those issues that affect the student's academics as well as their leisure activities. An action plan was also developed addressing key transition issues, such as sponsorship, transition labs, transfer of credits, etc. The schools and school districts are very proactive when it comes to the transition issues and continuity of education for our military students.

What children see and hear about the war and their feelings about missing their mom or dad in uniform are genuine concerns. In August of 2002 the SLO and Army Family Team Building (AFTB) coordinator begin offering classes on the effects of deployment on children to installation and local area schoolteachers. The training was beneficial in familiarizing teachers with the impacts of deployment on children and youth, and acquainting them with the military support resources available to help build coping skills.

As the deployment progressed and the possibility of casualties was a reality, it became evident that a more comprehensive training would be necessary to address the impact of casualty on a child, and how the school administration and teachers would deal with a casualty and/or serious incident.

In the early stages of the deployment, the SLO and the Family Advocacy Program Manager met with the Crisis Intervention Team from the on post school at Fort Stewart to review their emergency plans and to identify areas where additional resources were required. From these meetings, an information paper was developed which outlined notification procedures and support for children during a tragedy. Follow up measures were taken to ensure the information reached school counselors and teachers. Throughout the school year, deployment related training was provided to teachers/school staff at schools both on and off post. This training was conducted by staff through Army Community Service, Social Work Services, and the School Liaison program. In addition, trainers from the Military Child Education Coalition provided workshops for school counselors and local Parent Teacher Organizations. Through these proactive steps, schools were informed and prepared for situations requiring student support and care.

CHILD CARE

Quality child care is vitally important to soldiers and families both during peacetime and contingency operations. The Army Leadership is aware that childcare and youth programs are a readiness issue. If soldiers are confident that their children are well cared for and engaged in enrichment programs, it allows them to focus on the mission. Congress and the White House have recognized the military's program as "a model for the Nation." To ensure high standards and quality service, Army Child Care and Youth Programs are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the National School Age Care Alliance (NSACA), the Family Child Care (FCC) Military Home Accreditation (MHA), and are certified by the Department of Defense (DOD).

Fort Stewart/HAAF CYS has done an excellent job in supporting Active Duty, National Guard and Reserve Component families during contingency operations. CYS programs have been recognized for their excellence and proactive posture in providing contingency related programs and activities to reduce the conflict between parental responsibilities and mission requirements during deployments. CYS is providing the following programs during current deployment operations:

- Expanded hours of operation for hourly care at the Child Development Center (CDC) for monthly Battalion level FRG Meetings.
- Weekly Friday night openings at the CDC for Spouses Night Out.

- Monthly Saturday openings for Spouses Day Out at the CDC and School Age Center.
- Expanded hours of operation at the middle school and teen center on Friday Nights.
- Back up Family Child Care (FCC) homes for emergency child care when existing childcare arrangements are insufficient to support mission requirements. Fort Stewart is a pilot for this program.
- Extended hours, evening, weekend, long term, and hourly care in FCC homes.
- Hourly Respite Care in facilities based or FCC homes for special needs children, stress related issues for parents, and other contingency emergencies.
- Enhanced enrichment programs and activities for middle school and teens to include boys and girls club activities, 4-H activities, and once a month family activities.
- Short Term Alternative Child Care (STACC) Sessions for deployment related activities. STACC sessions are on site childcare provided at facilities that have met health, safety, and fire requirements, and the parents are "on site" or in the same facility as the child.

The contingency support outlined above was provided at no cost to the families. We appreciate congressional support for the funding that allows the CYS program to provide expanded child care/youth supervision operations and request this kind of continued support.

The CYS Mobilization and Contingency (MAC) plan has been an excellent tool allowing the installation staff to customize their CYS mission support. The "MAC" plans include briefings, memorandums of instructions, after action reports, and planning guidance from previous deployments. A lesson learned from Operations Desert Storm/Shield was to ensure family care plans provided by the units for children in CYS programs were reviewed on an annual basis to ensure plans were current. During recent contingency operations there were few if any problems with family care plans being updated or incorrect. The support of installation leadership in ensuring that family care plans were a priority, was instrumental in CYS being able to provide contingency emergency care when needed.

The CYS contingency services provided during deployments provides soldiers and families with peace of mind, enhancing their well-being, and quality of life.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thank you.
Dr. Kelly.

**STATEMENT OF DR. JOHN KELLY, PROGRAM MANAGER FOR
COMMUNITY SUPPORT, NAVY REGION SOUTHEAST, NAVAL
AIR STATION JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA**

Dr. KELLY. Good afternoon, Senator. I have also submitted my written testimony, but I have a few additional comments I would like to make.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Sure.

Dr. KELLY. First, I want to start by thanking you and your subcommittee for inviting us to talk about the services that are available in our Fleet and Family Support Centers. These centers are located in the southeast region of the United States to support service members and their families.

As the program manager for the Southeast Region Community Support Program, I am responsible for supporting Navy leadership in achieving maximum mission readiness through services provided through Fleet and Family Support Centers. Our commands, sailors, and families can and do access a wide range of programs that focus on adaptation to the special demands of military career and military family life. Some of these demands include such things as frequent deployments, frequent relocations, and the need for rapid response to current world events.

The core program of the Navy's Fleet and Family Support system supports our mission of providing deployment support and readiness, crisis response, and career retention and support to Navy service members and their families. Under our core mission capabilities of deployment and readiness, we provide services and programs related to deployment, relocation assistance, information and referral, ombudsmen, life skill education, and new parent support.

Counseling services, family advocacy, victim services, mobilization, and critical incident intervention programs are offered in support of our mission to provide crisis response services.

Finally, we provide transition assistance, spouse employment assistance, and personal financial management in support of our career and retention programs.

In general, our FFSCs provide pre-deployment briefs for Navy service members and their families, mid-deployment programs for families and ombudsmen, and post-deployment services to commands upon the return of the squadron or unit. These services are also provided to members of the Army, Navy, Marines, and Air Force Reserve units in the local areas. Our centers also offer return and reunion programs to command while still deployed. These programs call for our personnel to actually meet the ship at some designated point and provide one-on-one counseling services and other skills for living training that we think are critical for service members' successful reunions with their families.

As an addition to our standard services, our centers have also initiated spouse support groups, developed and conducted highly successful Military Spouse 101 resource fairs, hosted family days events to provide interaction in families, and also information to make it readily available to our members and their families.

In direct support of our military children, our counselors have visited local schools to educate staff on working with military families. We are currently working with the Florida Inter-service Family Assistance Committee on a handbook. This handbook will be available to school personnel in working with children from military families. Some of the other products provided to our service members and their families that specifically relate to the hardships of deployment and reunions include such materials as Long Distance Couples, Long Distance Dads and Moms, Grandparents at a Distance, Children and Deployment, Kid Deployment Coloring Books, and Welcome Home Mom and Dad banners.

Our centers have also provided direct support to many of the reservists who have been mobilized in support of the global war on terrorism. We have provided relocation information and assistance to both individual and groups of mobilizing personnel. Similar demobilization services have been provided to members who are coming back off of active duty. Some of our centers serve as repatriation sites and have provided assistance to families returning to the United States as a result of family evacuations overseas.

The school district of Camden County has been very effective in partnering with our FFSC at Submarine Base Kings Bay. There are 12 schools in Camden County. All of these schools have been formally adopted by commands at Sub Base Kings Bay. The FFSC at Kings Bay provided educational materials on how to talk to chil-

dren about war and deployment. Local school counselors use this information to work with students to better understand the impact and implications of war.

Our FFSC psychologists and school counselors offer special counseling to students. Many of the schools put together displays with pictures of parents who were deployed and placed these displays in the hallways of the various schools in Camden County.

One teacher actually used her personal funds to purchase diaries for all of the students and had the students make entries into the diaries on a daily basis. This allowed the students to openly express their feelings and emotions in a non-threatening way.

There have also been many community partnerships in St. Mary's and Kingsland, Georgia. I will not go into all of those partnerships, but they have been numerous.

In summary, we have effective and various programs in place to ensure that the needs of our members and their families are met and most often exceeded. We continue to assess our capabilities and make continuous improvement to our programs and processes to ensure that we are ready to meet the future challenges encountered in both conventional and unconventional deployment situations.

It is for this reason, sir, that I stand proudly behind our motto: "Service to our fleet, both at home and at sea." I will be happy to respond to questions at the appropriate time.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Kelly follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY DR. JOHN R. KELLY

Thank you for inviting me to brief the committee on the provisions in place at our Navy FFSCs located throughout the southeast region to support family members of our deployed personnel. As the Program Manager for the Southeast Region Community Support Programs, I am responsible for supporting Navy leadership in achieving maximum mission readiness through services provided at Navy FFSCs. Commands, sailors, and family members can and do access a wide range of programs, focused on adaptation to the special demands of military careers and military family life, such as deployment cycles, frequent relocation, and the need for rapid response to current world events.

The core programs of the Navy's FFSCs support our mission of providing deployment support and readiness, crisis response and career retention and support to Navy service members and their families. Under our core mission capability of Deployment and Readiness, we provide services and programs related to deployment, relocation assistance, information and referral, ombudsmen, life skills education and new parent support. Counseling services, family advocacy, victim services, mobilization and critical incident intervention programs are provided in support of our mission to provide crisis response support. Finally, we provide transition assistance, spouse employment assistance, and personal financial management assistance in support of our career support and retention programs.

In general, our FFSCs provide pre-deployment briefs for Navy service members and their families; conduct mid-deployment programs for families and ombudsmen; and offer post-deployment services to commands upon the return of the squadron or unit. These services are also provided to members of Army, Navy, Marine, and Air Force reserve units in the local area. Our centers also offer return and reunion programs to commands while still deployed. This program calls for our personnel to actually meet the ships at designated points and provide one-on-one counseling services and other "skills for living" training that is critical to the service member's successful reunion with their families.

As an augment to our standard services, our centers have initiated Spouse Support Groups, developed and conducted highly successful "Military Spouse 101" resource fairs and hosted "Family Day" events to provide interactions with families and make information readily available. In direct support of our military children, our counselors have visited local schools to educate staff on working with military families. We are currently working in conjunction with Florida Inter-service Family

Assistance Committee on a handbook to be made available to school personnel in working with children from military families. Some of the additional products provided to both our service members and their families that specifically relate to the hardships of deployment and reunions include materials on "Long Distance Couples," "Dads at a Distance," "Grandparents at a Distance," "Children and Deployment," "Kid's Deployment Coloring Books," and "Welcome Home Mom/Dad" banners.

Our centers have also provided direct support to the many reservists who have been mobilized in support of the global war on terrorism. We have provided relocation information and assistance to both individuals and groups of mobilizing personnel. Similar demobilization services have been provided to members who are coming off active duty after their activation period. Some of our centers serve as repatriation sites and have provided assistance to families returning to the United States as a result of family evacuations overseas.

The school district of Camden County has been very effective at partnering with our FFSC at Submarine Base Kings Bay. There are 12 schools in the Camden County district, all having been formally adopted by commands at Submarine Base Kings Bay. The FFSC at Kings Bay provided educational materials on "How To Talk To Kids About War and Deployment" and local school counselors used this information to work with the students to better understand the impacts and implications of war. Our FFSC psychologists and school counselors offered special counseling to students. Many of the schools put together displays with pictures of parents who were deployed and placed these displays in the hallways of the school. One teacher actually used her personal funds to purchase diaries for all of her students who had parents deployed so the students could openly express their feelings and emotions in a non-threatening way. There have also been many community partnerships established in St. Mary's and Kingsland, Georgia, to include partnerships with the Humana Tricare Office, local child and family services agencies, the Camden County Tribune Newspaper, the tourism councils of St. Mary's and Kingsland, the Georgia State Department of Tourism, and many local real estate offices. These outreach efforts provide vital information to service members and their families living in the Camden County area of Georgia.

In summary, we have an effective and varied program in place to ensure that the needs of our service members and their families are met or exceeded. We continue to assess our capabilities and make continuous improvements to our programs and processes to ensure that we are ready to meet future challenges encountered in both conventional and unconventional deployment situations. It's for these reasons that I stand proudly behind our motto of "Service to the Fleet, Both at Home and at Sea."

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thank you, Dr. Kelly.
Ms. Lukens.

**STATEMENT OF ANN LUKENS, DIRECTOR, FAMILY SUPPORT
CENTER, MOODY AIR FORCE BASE, GEORGIA**

Ms. LUKENS. Good afternoon, Senator, and thank you for the opportunity as well to speak to you. I am known for succinctness and getting to the point, so I am going to do that.

First of all, I feel a great weight on my shoulders to be representing so many of my fellow colleagues in the family support business. There are so many things that we do that even with my many years in the field, I just cannot simply remember all of them. I think to summarize it all, we are a purple service at Moody Air Force Base. When I say purple, I mean that there is no uniform color other than that person coming in the door and that was an emphasis that began in the Air Combat Command many years ago.

Being in south Georgia, we are very often a surprise to people who are either retired or reservists or guardsmen that want to find some place to go. For that reason, we have had to learn a lot of different systems. Our motto at Moody is "Mission first and people always," and I think that really does sum it up very succinctly.

We have our success stories. They are probably very small compared to my sister services here, but we are blessed to have an ex-

tremely active integrated delivery system which is the final component of the system that Ms. Murray described in her testimony. That is where the rubber meets the road. That is where the agencies all work together to take care of our people, and we have done a splendid job in that area.

We are known to be out at all times of the day and night. We say goodbye to our folks with hot dogs and hugs. Then we are there when they come home again, whether it is 2 o'clock in the morning or 2 o'clock in the afternoon. So we always, sir, welcome any kind of support for our people because without our military, we are not going to enjoy the freedoms that we do. Thank you, sir.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Lukens follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY ANN LUKENS

Good afternoon, Senator Chambliss. I'm honored to appear before you today and to have the opportunity to present information that will spotlight Moody Air Force Base's family programs and services that aid and support our dedicated men and women of the United States Air Force and their families.

The mission of the 347th Rescue Wing is to organize, train, and employ a combat-ready force consisting of approximately 4,500 military and 400 civilian employees. The Wing executes worldwide peacetime and Combat Search and Rescue operations in support of humanitarian and U.S. national security interests. Moody also hosts and supports Air Education and Training Command's 479th Flying Training Group and the 820th Security Forces Group that provides contingency response support around the world.

Currently, Moody has a total population of approximately 2,000 spouses of military members and 1,800 dependent children. The Family Support Center also serves the needs of approximately 15,000 military retirees and their families, as well as a small cadre of Guard, Reserves, Navy and their families.

Moody personnel have been deployed to Southwest Asia since the end of the first Gulf War in support of Operation Northern and Southern Watch and other contingencies. A focus on personal and family readiness is the cornerstone for unit, group and wing readiness. The reality is that families of personnel assigned to our installation are expected to be ready to function without their sponsors at any time, with as little as a few days notice, and for as long as 179 days. The challenge for the Moody Family Support Center is to assist airmen and their families in meeting the highest possible level of individual and unit readiness. As of 30 Apr of this year, 58.6 percent of the 820 Security Forces Group; 44 percent of the Operations Group; 38.7 percent of the Mission Support Group; 30 percent of the Rescue Wing staff; 29.1 percent of the Maintenance Group; 9.5 percent of the Medical Group; and 9 percent of the 479 Flying Training Group were deployed away from home station. Additionally, for several months Moody has been supporting seven families who were part of the State Department ordered departure from the Middle East after hostilities began. It goes without saying that our total focus in the Family Support Center at Moody has been on family readiness issues and supporting the needs of those families who are separated by the current contingency.

The Air Force established Family Support Centers in the early 1980s to meet the needs of families. For nearly 22 years, the Moody FSC has sought to do just that through various types of needs assessments targeted to help us understand our community, consultation with leadership on community issues, individual contact with customers, educational programs and services, and as the advocate for military families both on-base and off. Like our military and our families, the Moody FSC and all other Air Force Family Support Centers have been an evolving, flexible agency. We believe that it is this flexibility that has made us strong enough to adapt to the new steady state of accelerated operations and personnel tempo.

One of the largest stressors on our airman and their families is deployment. Responding to increasing deployment cycles, the Air Force established the Family Readiness Program in our Family Support Centers. When we talk about readiness, often people have a difficult time seeing how we—the Family Support Center staff—have anything to do with what “they” conceive as readiness—launching planes, bombs on target, search and rescue, etc. However, research shows that there is a very direct link between “mission readiness,” our ability to go to war, and personal and family readiness. Personal and family readiness refers to our people and their families being equipped with the skills they need to deal with the day-to-day de-

mands of military life—whether they work on the flight line or in supply. People who have financial, family, or other concerns are just not as well equipped to perform their duties as people who are not experiencing these kinds of problems and anxieties. With 45 percent of our airmen in the 25 years or younger age group, most are definitely dealing with the issues associated with young relationships, young children, low finances—exacerbated by frequent moves, underemployment of a spouse, and most certainly separation of the family unit because of extended deployments. The programs provided by the Family Support Center help to relieve the airman from some of the “tug” back and forth between the Air Force requirement for “Service Before Self” and the family needs for “service to us first.”

The Family Readiness program has grown tremendously at Moody under the leadership of the Family Readiness NCO, assigned in Oct 1997 and charged with making it work (TSgt Jerry C. Thornton seated here with me). Readiness is made up of three components—the pre-deployment, sustainment, and reunion cycle; family disaster preparedness; and casualty assistance.

Since June 2002, and particularly since January of this year, predeployment briefings and outreach efforts have increased to provide a safety net for Moody families, as Operation Enduring Freedom became Operation Iraqi Freedom.

- 5,500 individual calls were made by TSgt Thornton and other FSC staffers to ensure spouses, parents, significant others and children were aware of the many services available and how to access help no matter the time of the day or the day of the week
- 473 family members attended 16 daytime, evening and weekend pre-deployment briefings
- 1,868 Moody personnel received hugs and hotdogs and cold drinks during at least 35 Personnel Deployment Function lines
- FSC staff planned and executed an old-fashioned BBQ for 43 Army Guard personnel assigned to backfill for deployed security forces personnel

The poet John Donne stated that no man is an island. Efforts to support the community required the commitment of an entire team of helping professionals—the Moody Integrated Delivery System. The cumulative expertise and dedication of a team composed of Family Advocacy and Mental Health specialists; First Sergeants; Health and Wellness specialists; Chaplains; Childcare and Child Development experts along with FSC staff ensured success. Every effort was made to empower Moody spouses so they felt more in control of their lives.

- The Extended Duty Care program provided 275 hours of free childcare monthly.
- The staff of the Moody Child Development Center (CDC) provided free childcare so spouses could attend Town Hall Meetings hosted by our Wing Commander.
- The Give Parents a Break program provided monthly free child care to more than 50 children at the CDC and 30 children at the Youth Center during OIF.
- Family Advocacy Outreach provided 278 interventions in the form of support groups, lunchtime seminars, and parenting classes.
- Mental Health professionals made themselves available at anytime to talk with stressed family members.
- The Chaplains spearheaded monthly deployed family suppers attended by more than 329 spouses and children.
- 2,721 Hearts Apart family morale calls were placed through the Moody switchboard by spouses, children, parents, and significant others.
- FSC staffers were available on a 24-hour basis; kept spouses company while hospitalized for tests; wrapped holiday presents so every deployed family had presents under the tree; talked with children having a hard time with parent's absence.
- IDS agencies played key roles in the annual Parent University Program conducted in concert with the local school systems; a workshop on preparing and supporting children during parental separation and in cases of trauma was very well-attended.

The Family Support staff and IDS members were particularly visible during redeployment festivities during the duty day, in the evening, and on the weekends. Reunion is presented as the opposite side of the pre-deployment coin and is often the most difficult part of the process. Research has shown that education for the family and the airman on what to expect after a long deployment has a positive affect on the reunion process. More than 200 individuals attended 9 reunion briefings during the past 12 months. ACC has developed a very useful Return and Reunion CD that is provided at many of our deployed locations, as well as to our family members at

briefings. We hope that you enjoy reviewing a copy of this CD also, Senator. We have also provided you with some of the education materials that we give to family members when they attend our deployment or return and reunion briefings and programs.

During all this activity, we were also deeply imbedded in the welcome home support process for seven families who been stationed with their military member in Turkey or in Saudi. All these families were personally met at the airport by our staff. After meeting them, we did an initial needs assessment of the family status to see the type assistance they would require, helped with school issues, ensured they knew what their Safehaven benefits would be and that they understood who various points of contact were for issues/concerns, made at least weekly visits with each family, and reported weekly accountability and status stats directly to Air Force on each family. We are currently assisting each family return to their duty station now that the State Department has terminated the Authorized Departure for those areas. We are processing waivers for a few families to remain at Moody until the end of the school year. The services provided in a Safehaven effort is just other example of how the Family Support staff support the needs of our Air Force families so that the member is relieved to focus on the steady state of accelerated operations at a forward location.

In addition to supporting Parent University in our civilian community, immediately upon declaration of OIF, we contacted the offices of both local public school superintendents to provide information on dealing with separation anxiety for their guidance counselors. The Moody School Board Liaison Committee works tirelessly to address any issues that can affect the welfare of military students. We personally met with Valdosta City School System counselors to discuss specific needs and problems associated with deployment anxiety of our students.

Senator Chambliss, we would also like you to know that the Moody Mental Health Clinic data shows a 16-percent decrease in maltreatment incidents for the last 12 months. Everyone is striving to prevent domestic violence that results in needless and tragic headlines. We are hopeful that the education processes we have in place at Moody are beneficial in this reduction.

The greatest test of the Moody family support system came on 23 March 2003. On that date, six members Rescue Squadrons answering to the call sign of Komodo 11 made the ultimate sacrifice while on a humanitarian mission to rescue two Afghani children. The crash and loss of all souls on-board hit every heart in the Moody community. Under the leadership of Major Nancy Weingartner, the MAFB Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Team mobilized to be present in every corner of our community. We closed ranks around six family units while they awaited the official word about their loved ones. We cried with them; we listened to memories recounted by parents and friends; we prayed with them. We are still there for them. No family is left behind at Moody!

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thank you very much. I understand, Sergeant, you are not going to make an opening statement.

Sergeant THORNTON. No, sir.

Senator CHAMBLISS. We are pleased that you are here with us, though.

Sergeant THORNTON. Thank you.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Dr. Kelly, you mentioned the availability of your services to the Guard and Reserve on a local basis and inter-service availability of those services on a local basis. You heard my question earlier to the previous panel about whether or not there is any communication to the Guard and Reserve community. Do you know whether or not, with regard to the Navy, whether there is communication to the Guard and Reserve about the availability of these various services?

Dr. KELLY. Yes, sir, there is communication with those units. In fact, in many of our communities we have partnered with local television stations to run public service announcements (PSAs), where service members and family members, as well, can get information on services that are available in our Fleet and Family Support Centers. For Navy reservists who are coming on active duty, there is a mobilization process. Those individuals actually come through

the Family Service Center and get a formal brief. They bring their spouses with them. We give them all of the information that is available for our regular active duty service members. To reach out to those that are coming from other services, we have partnered with local television stations to run PSAs to get the word out about what services are available and how they can access those services.

Senator CHAMBLISS. You all have extremely important jobs that are often very challenging, especially given the tempo of operations in the military over the past several years. You certainly have a unique perspective regarding what programs work well and which programs do not work well. You may be in the best position to know what needs to be done better regarding family support, and I would like to start by asking you what in your view are the most important needs of families and what are the things that simply have to be done right for our families in times of deployment. Ms. Heifferon?

Ms. HEIFFERON. Sir, I think that in terms of family support, one of the most important things is personal preparedness. We need to do this through training, Family Readiness Group training, through communication, through providing classes on encouraging personal responsibility. We need training classes in stress management. We need training classes in child management and family relations. We need support groups, which we have already established, for waiting spouses and international spouses. Volunteerism in the community, and involvement in the community are imperative.

We need Morale, Welfare, and Recreation activities to support the recreational needs, the personal growth needs, and also the spiritual needs of our spouses and their families. When I speak of personal growth, I am talking about education also, and an example I would like to use is that of our educational center. What we did was we opened up to the spouses classes in leadership and leadership development and technology. Any courses that they indicated, anything that would promote personal preparedness for them. Also one of the things we emphasized was family activities to bring them together as a family to encourage that family readiness.

Dr. KELLY. Sir, there are several things that I would allude to. First, the ability to communicate with all of the Services and also being able to communicate with a member when that is appropriate and called for.

The other thing I would say is access to good financial management. The Navy has done a wonderful job in training our service members, our active duty members, and giving them the tools for financial management. What we have also started to do is to be sure that that same level of training is available for spouses and family members because, quite frankly, when the active duty member deploys, most often the spouse who is left behind has to take care of finances. Quite frankly, in many instances, spouses are doing it even before the service member deployed. So having the ability and the skill sets to provide good financial management for a family is essential.

I would also agree with my colleague in terms of support groups and putting support groups in place that can take care of services.

I will give you just one example. On many of our bases where, even though we think, we do a fairly good job of making sure service members have taken care of the basic essentials, it still happens when a member deploys, there are things that go wrong. What we have done is put formal volunteer groups in place that will help spouses that have been left behind, doing things such as fixing tires on cars, fixing washing machines. Anything that goes wrong in the house, there is a formal volunteer mechanism that is available to help them with that. Those are the things that I would point to.

Ms. LUKENS. Yes, Senator, I also would agree with my colleagues as far as readiness goes. With Moody being the only active duty search and rescue base, our people need to be ready from the time they hit the front gate. It is not unusual, I would like to say it wasn't, but it is not unusual for folks to be assigned and within a few days to be tapped for deployment, and they can be gone as long as 179 days. We have had a number of those. What that means is that it is important that we empower the spouses and the family members left behind.

Where we partner a great deal is with our schools. We are very active with the Lowndes County and Valdosta city school system, as well as a number of the private schools in Lowndes County, and we find that they are able to identify children and families for us who need some additional assistance. We are very active anyway with the schools, going out and talking with the guidance counselors.

So as Ms. Murray alluded to, we look at a community capacity. We cannot possibly do it all ourselves, so our emphasis is on building what we like to call the front-porch mentality. When people sat on their front porches, folks would come over, sit down and talk and thrash out problems. Sometimes we lose that as we become more urban.

But our intent is to help and educate our other agencies within and off the base that can help identify people in need, and then we get those people to where they need to be. Empowerment is a very important key for this, particularly for this generation.

In addition, access to information is always a problem. We do not have that many television stations in town. In fact, we do not have any really in town, but we do have the Internet, and very recently Moody was able to launch moodyservices.com where spouses could access information about what is going on on base, both our integrated delivery system as well as morale and welfare services and activities.

So from my perspective, empowerment and access are very important, along with the beginning of education from the time they hit the front gate.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Each of you mentioned education. In civilian life, there is no greater asset to America than our military kids. They are the ones that we find usually grow up living in a military community, and a large percentage of them enlist in the military. We have, basically, three categories of schools in military communities. At Robins, we have an elementary school that is a DOD-operated school. I was at Kings Bay the other day, and there we have a school located on base that is operated by the Camden County

School system but that is primarily for kids from the base, but the teachers there are hired by the Camden County school system and are primarily teachers from out in the community. Then at Moody, we have no base school; everything is operated by the Lowndes County.

Ms. LUKENS. Yes, sir.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Do you find that there are problems that are unique to these kids, particularly in the elementary school ages, when their mothers or dads are deployed, particularly in harm's way like we have recently seen happen? Is there a difference in the ability of those three categories of schools to deal with those children's anxieties? For example, if you have spouses of active duty military, as we have here at Robins, who are teaching in the schools, are they better able to handle the anxieties of those kids versus folks who may come from the outside? Can you shed any light on this one way or the other? Ms. Heifferon.

Ms. HEIFFERON. Yes, sir. In looking at the difference in schools, I think one of the things that the Army has developed that has really assisted in this area has been the Army school liaison program to address those issues.

You asked if there are particular behavioral issues with children in the military when parents are deployed. Absolutely. There are emotional behaviors that do come through. One of the things that we have done with the Army school liaison program in conjunction with Army family team building is we have gone out into the schools, both on-post schools and off-post schools, and conducted deployment training. The Army has developed through its Child and Youth Services a CD-ROM called "Your Pal CJ" and it is interactive. It can be utilized with the children, and it addresses their emotions and their feelings when moms and dads are deployed.

Part of the school liaison and Army community service training is to assist those teachers in dealing with the particular questions that do come up about deployment; some of the particular behaviors that are expressed, separation anxiety perhaps, and some of the questions, "Is my daddy or my mommy going to be hurt in the war?" Helping teachers cope with that is essential, and quite frankly, that is one of the reasons that that Army liaison program was developed, not only to assist with these military children in situations like this, but also to assist those military children in transitioning from one school district to another, whether they are coming from another on-school post to an on-school post or coming from an off-post—on-post to an off-post school. It has been a very beneficial program for us.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Dr. Kelly.

Dr. KELLY. If you had asked me that same question 10 years ago, I would say there was a drastic difference in the services that military schools were able to provide versus schools outside the gate. I do not think there is that much of a discrepancy today for several reasons. I know the Navy, and I think that like many of the other Services we have done a much better job of partnering with the educational institutions to be sure that the services are provided.

I will give you just one example. In all of our Fleet and Family Support Centers, we have our counselors actually go out to the schools and do staff developments for principals, school counselors,

and teachers in terms of dealing with military children effectively. We have also found that superintendents are very much open to hiring military spouses to have that knowledge on staff in terms of the special needs of military children.

In the fleet concentration areas of Jacksonville, Mayport, and Kings Bay, 3 weeks ago we sponsored a workshop that brought in all school counselors, all school administrators to actually talk about the special issues facing military children. So I really think that we have gotten much better at making sure there is a level playing field.

I have to tell you, though, military children still are very special and have very special needs. Consider these children who go from school district to school district every 2 or 3 years, where testing requirements are very different, where absentee rates are very different, where special education programs, the requirements for getting into gifted programs all vary from one school district to the next school district. Quite frankly, when a military family goes from one school district to another, they expect the same level of services from one State to the next State. Lets face it, however, all States are not equal when it comes to education. They are very different, and it does present challenges for our families.

Ms. LUKENS. Sir, your question was, are needs different for military children. During the Gulf War, I was called by the principal of Nashville Middle School, Nashville Elementary School, which, of course, is just north of Moody. At that time, during recess one of our F-16s had flown over and all the children hid because they were afraid the Arabs were going to bomb them. What that pointed out at that time was that all children have fears and all children have needs and that began a very close relationship with our school systems. In the wake of September 11, I was on the phone, as was Sergeant Thornton, with every school in our area talking, not about what military children needed, but what every child needed to be reassured that they were safe. That was our first concern. Then to help them with the process of avoiding the kind of stress reaction that can, hopefully not, but could, develop into posttraumatic stress, which, of course, we do not see in our children but we unfortunately do see in our adult personnel.

Sergeant THORNTON. Sir, one of the keys to dealing with these children in the schools is having an active working relationship with the school system itself and being down there with the counselors and letting them know where the resources are on the base in case they have a problem dealing with these children. We do see specific problems that are attributed to deployments, dealing with separation anxiety as Dr. Kelly and Ms. Heifferon mentioned.

Sometimes these kids do just totally shut down, and the counselors do not know where to turn, so they will turn to the Family Support Center, and we will get involved with the kids and the family to help them out and assist them with this anxiety.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Ms. Heifferon and Ms. Lukens, very quickly, this decision by DOD to embed reporters is going to be discussed for some time, I am sure, to determine whether it was good, bad, or indifferent. With kids, particularly with the 3rd ID being as visible as it was being involved in the heavy firefights day in and day out for weeks at a time, and with our search and rescue group that

had the unfortunate loss of life in significant numbers, please give me your quick opinion about whether it had an effect on our children and their ability to cope, with their parents being deployed.

Ms. HEIFFERON. Sir, one of the first things we noticed, and we had a discussion, was the fact that the children were watching TV. When they were watching TV, the anxiety levels definitely went up, and, again, the CNN effect and the embedded reporting was a factor. I think it was a personal decision on the part of the spouses to decide whether their children could indeed watch television or limit it. Additionally, we talked to the spouses about allowing their children to express those fears.

In our child development centers, one of the things that was done was to allow the children to draw pictures, to be able to talk about the fears they have, and to express that anxiety. Also in our youth programs, in our middle school and teen programs, support groups were formed. At one of our high schools in Savannah, our school liaison officer went out and formed a support team with the teens to talk about the fears they had. So, yes, it definitely had an impact on how they reacted to the war. It was like having instant war in the living room, and they truly needed some outlets to be able to express their concerns and their fears for their parents.

Ms. LUKENS. I would concur with that. One of the very first things we did in the wake of September 11 was to send out some information about how to sit down with your child when you are watching CNN or watching television or televised reports, and of course that was continued throughout OEF and OIF. I personally advised the spouses to turn the television off and go out and take a walk. It probably would be better for everybody involved.

As you mentioned, we did lose a HH-60 and for the families who were waiting, it seemed like an eternity for them to find out whether or not their loved ones were in that crash. There really are not any words to describe it. As far as the children go, everything that we do, every component that we have in our readiness program, also has an application to children. I did give you a copy of our readiness guide which does include all that, sir.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Dr. Kelly, no aspect of your work is more important than assisting in the reintegration of military members into their families as well as into their communities. I know we have already heard a little bit about what the Navy does with respect to that. Would you like to expand on that and tell us a little bit, particularly in light of what happened at Fort Bragg last year, which is still fresh in everybody's minds? Now, as we are seeing the return of sailors, in your case, to their home ports, what are we doing with regard to counseling these individuals before they go back into the homes, back into their communities to try to make sure that we have done everything we can, from a Service standpoint, to see that another Fort Bragg situation does not occur?

Dr. KELLY. Thank you for the question. The Navy has had in place, sir, for about 12 years now, a program that we call our Return and Reunion Program. I alluded to it in my opening statement. With the Return and Reunion Program, we actually send out a team of psychologists and social workers, if it is a ship situation, they will actually go out and meet the ship. They have designated

time, one-on-one with the service members. There are a whole range of topics that are discussed.

If a service member just needs one-on-one counseling, that is available. If the service member is having a first-born child, born while he is at sea, we talk about first-time dads and what that really means.

If a service member needs help with financial counseling, briefings on financial counseling are available on the ship. If a service member has interest in what is going on back at his particular location or her particular location, we bring videos of happenings in the community and the military while they are away at sea. They are exposed to all of that.

While they are getting that, we have another team of social workers and psychologists working with the family members at the installations, giving them the same information so that when they come back, then they have both been exposed to the same information.

Another issue that I did not talk about was the whole issue of intimacy. When you have a service member who has been deployed for 6 months, and in some instances 9 months with our Seabees, the whole issue of intimacy takes on a whole separate meaning. There is a lot of anxiety associated with it, and our counselors and psychologists talk openly about what to expect with their first encounters with their spouses when they are back home. As I said, the spouses back home are getting the same kind of information.

Quite frankly, with our commands that take advantage of our Return and Reunion Program, we notice that the incidents of counseling once the commands are back go down tremendously as opposed to those that do not take advantage of the Return and Reunion training. So we think it is a real valuable tool.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Comments from either one of you ladies?

Ms. HEIFFERON. Yes, sir, I would like to add something. Our reintegration is very similar to what the Navy is doing, but the one thing I would like to stress that I think is very important, once our soldiers are back, they have already received, concurrently, the same training that we are offering, the reunion briefing, in-theater and the families have received it stateside. Once they are back, for approximately 2 weeks, we have couples training where they come together as a couple basically after that 2-week reacquainting period is over, and we address some of the stresses or some of the issues that have come up. As my colleague stated, intimacy can be one of the primary issues. Or how to communicate, or the issues with children, or the fact that you have had two people in charge, one has been in charge in-theater and then you are coming home, and here is another person in charge. It is re-communicating, coming back together as a team, because you have been separated.

After that, and to 6 weeks into their return, we also send our family advocacy program manager out into the units to assess some of the issues that may have arisen, and the stressors in the family environment that possibly could lead to some kind of domestic violence incidents. We want to, we really want to be proactive with that. As you said, to avoid anything that could occur again or reoccur as it did at Fort Bragg.

I also want to emphasize that we are all aware of that tragedy and have stepped up in our family advocacy programs in terms of commander and troop training. One of the things that we have initiated with the support of our installation commander, has been, as our commanders and first sergeants come in, we have expanded our course from anywhere to 4 to 8 hours training these first sergeants and company commanders to be looking for those risk indicators that could indicate that there might be some possible problems. We also give them the tools and resources to be able to deal with some of those indicators and who they have to contact.

Ms. LUKENS. Sir, from an Air Force point of view, at least at Moody, reunion and pre-deployment are really just two sides of the same coin. So we begin talking about reunion as soon as we finish the sentence on pre-deployment. We also have been very focused on the issue of domestic violence, and we have been very successful, as I cited in my testimony, as far as a decrease in the number or percentage of maltreatment statistics. I believe that is because we started 3 years ago investing in our families. Through our IDS, our Integrated Delivery System, we began offering couple communication monthly, and we have continued with that, and I think that that is certainly part of the empowerment that I spoke about earlier, so that our folks can at least communicate about their fears. If they need a little help, we are there for them.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thank each of you very much for your service to our country, for what you do, and for being here today to share some insights into problems and the solutions that you are bringing to those problems on behalf of all of our service members. Thank you very much.

Now we will move on to our third panel and we would welcome at this time Ms. Kate Payne, spouse of Captain Matt Payne, United States Army; Ms. Chrystie Palomo, spouse of Sergeant Philip Palomo, United States Army from Fort Stewart; Ms. Kris Edmondson, spouse of Petty Officer First Class Richard Edmondson, United States Navy from Kings Bay. Kris, it is nice to see you again in such a short time.

Ms. Edmondson: Thank you.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Ms. Marian Bush, spouse of Captain Jason Bush, United States Air Force; and Mrs. Samantha Matthews, spouse of Technical Sergeant Lawrence Matthews, United States Air Force from Moody Air Force Base.

Ladies, I want to thank each of you for taking time to be here with us today. You have heard the comments that have been made here, and we particularly want to talk about the practical side of what we are doing with respect to services to all of our military personnel. If any of you have an opening statement you would like to make, we will be happy to hear from you or we will proceed just to questions.

Ms. Payne.

**STATEMENT OF KATE PAYNE, SPOUSE OF CPT MATT PAYNE,
USA**

Ms. PAYNE. Thank you, sir. Good afternoon, Senator Chambliss. It is an honor and a privilege to have been asked to participate in today's Senate hearing to address deployment and reunification

among military families. I would like to introduce myself. My name is Kate Payne, and I am currently stationed, with my husband Matthew, at Fort Stewart. Since our move to Georgia, we have had two children, Carmen, age 2, and Rosa Jean, age 10 months. We have lived in Hinesville for 3 years, and Matthew currently serves as commander of Charlie Battery, First Battalion, Ninth Field Artillery. He has been deployed to Kuwait and, subsequently, Iraq since 23 September 2002.

As I share my thoughts this afternoon, it may help to know that my professional background is in Roman Catholic theology, an area in which I hold a master's degree. From this perspective, I consider my role as a military spouse, and specifically my work in the area of family readiness, as a type of secular ministry.

Families of soldiers are in need of knowledge, support, information, and for lack of a better word, fellowship, before, during, and after a deployment experience. Family readiness is the means by which our military community provides these intangible, though certainly necessary, benefits.

From the onset, I must admit this is my first deployment as a military spouse. My extended family has had minimal military involvement since the Vietnam era, so my comments today reflect both my own thoughts and experiences as well as conversations I have had with other Fort Stewart spouses in preparation for this hearing. Many of these women are currently experiencing their second or third deployment in 5 years. Surely these are the experts, and I am pleased to share their thoughts with you today.

My primary role of service in the military is as a battery commander's spouse. For your reference, our battery is comprised of approximately 100 soldiers, and of these, 40 percent are married. As the commander's spouse, I comprise one-half of what the Army terms the command team, and provide the primary leadership for our battery-level Family Readiness Group. Essentially, Matthew runs the soldier portion of the battery, and I lead the spouse side of the group.

Battery command is the first opportunity for a military couple to experience working together for the benefits of ours soldiers. Our common goal is to provide both soldiers and their families ample opportunity to become well-prepared for any contingency that may occur. While my part is one that may seem simple and straightforward enough, an effective command team spouse is truly invaluable. When soldiers are home with their families, the command team spouse works to put into place and develop effective communication tools, constructing a strong support network in preparation for planned training exercises and the possibility of real world deployment.

Just as soldiers train for combat situations, spouses, as individuals and in the context of family readiness, have the opportunity to train to be ready to support their soldier as expert household managers. After all, a soldier with concerns about his family and their well-being is unable to focus fully and completely on his mission. He becomes ineffective in his job and endangers himself and others. By taking the opportunity to train alongside their husbands, military spouses become the means by which their soldiers

are able to concentrate fully on the task at hand, get the job done, and return home safely and in a timely manner.

With the help of educational and support programs offered by the Army as well as the moral support of other spouses in the Family Readiness Group, these women learn to survive both the day-to-day, and the unforeseen, situations that inevitably arise during a soldier's absence.

As a command team partner, elements of my upbringing and professional background have served me well, but it has been the Army's educational and support programs that have made the most significant difference. Classes offered by Army Family Teambuilding, friendship, and fellowship provided by the Military Council of Catholic Women, as well as the practical, more technical training offered by Army Community Service have been the most crucial in forming me as an effective member of the command team.

Not long after we were married, I became aware of the Army Family Teambuilding program. With various classes offered on three levels of study, Army Family Teambuilding addressed many of the questions I had as a new military spouse. Especially as someone with so little military experience, I greatly appreciated the opportunity to learn about rank structure, the organization of the Army, and how to read my husband's leave and earnings statement, not to mention how to understand him when he came home from work. Unfortunately, acronyms run rampant among Army folk, so this was truly an enlightening educational experience. I was so pleased with the Army Family Teambuilding program that I eventually became trained as an instructor. This was an especially rewarding way to utilize my previous experience teaching at the high school level to benefit my fellow Army spouses.

Another group which played a key role in my development as an Army spouse is the Military Council of Catholic Women. As is often true of spiritually-based programs, these ladies were a warm, welcoming group offering a variety of worship, study, and service opportunities. The women I met through the Military Council of Catholic Women were varied in age and background, providing invaluable mentoring for me. Through their shared experience and abundant support, I was better prepared to accept my growing understanding of military life as one of significant sacrifice and selflessness. In addition, the monthly First Friday programs, service activities, prayer and Bible study offered by the group gave me an opportunity to see how I could be replenished in the midst of such a sacrificial lifestyle which often called for my husband's absence.

Since my arrival at Fort Stewart, I have become increasingly familiar with the formal training offered by Army Community Service. In preparation for Matthew's command tenure, we participated as a couple in a week-long training course. Through this experience, we became the beneficiaries of years of command experience and were familiarized with the programs developed in response to real needs expressed by Army families. Covering everything from self-organization and military protocol to crisis management, the courses involved in our training have truly been a benefit to our command. In this way, the Army has moved from the traditional role of taking care of its own to the more empowering role of teach-

ing its own to take care of themselves. These classes have allowed us to know how best to help the battery soldiers help themselves and their families. Especially in light of the current deployment, it has been an honor to share in this developing tradition of empowerment. Practically speaking, I have seen spouses who had never written a check in their lives now adeptly managing the family's finances. Quiet, reserved women who had previously been afraid to speak their minds have begun to share thoughts with confidence at our monthly Family Readiness Group meetings.

Admittedly, deployment and separation are significant hardships. From this difficult situation, however, new growth has taken hold and watching our spouses blossom has been one of my greatest pleasures.

As I bring my comments to a close this afternoon, I would be remiss if I did not draw pointed attention to the essential role of personal responsibility in my development as a command team spouse. The Army offers the immensely beneficial programs I have outlined here, as well as many others, but it cannot be overemphasized that every military spouse must take personal responsibility for her own growth and development. Family Readiness Group meetings are offered on a monthly basis in nearly every unit at Fort Stewart, and yet many are very poorly attended. The average for our battery is about 30 percent attendance, and this during our most intense preparation for deployment and subsequent departure of our soldiers. To be frank, I expect our numbers to dwindle significantly with our soldiers' return.

It is the choice of every spouse to be an active participant in the Army family or to remain outside this vast network of support. For many, though, the risk of taking that first step to attend a Family Readiness Group meeting, return a welcome call from another spouse in a new unit, or to register for an Army Family Teambuilding class is just too great. While these programs are wonderful, the essential person-to-person contact, the reaching out of one spouse to another, seems to be the crucial element that makes the difference between a successful Army spouse and one who refuses to step beyond her area of comfort.

I have been blessed with many wonderful mentors during my short experience with the Army who reached out to me as a new military spouse, offering the benefit of their experience and an open door to participation in activities and groups where these women had found strength and support themselves.

I strive to be for others as these women were for me, a shining example of the hospitality, strength, warmth, and selfless sacrificial living that is the military spouse. Thank you.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thank you.

Ms. Palomo.

STATEMENT OF CHRYSTIE PALOMO, SPOUSE OF SGT PHILIP PALOMO, USA

Ms. PALOMO. Hello, Senator Chambliss. It is a distinct honor and privilege to speak to you today on behalf of the noncommissioned officer wives about deployment and family concerns. My name is Chrystie Palomo and I am married to Sergeant Philip Palomo II, who has been serving in the now-famous Third Infantry Division

in the Persian Gulf since January of this year. We have lived on Fort Stewart, Georgia for the past 14 months as our first active-duty station. My husband was an Army reservist from 1988 to 1996. In November 1991 he was called to active duty in support of Operation Desert Storm. During that time, I was 20 years old, had an 8-month-old baby, and had just found out I was expecting our second child. I knew nothing about the Army except that he wore a green camouflage uniform that was very hard to iron. At that time, there was no reaching out to the Reserve families from the Army.

I remember the threat of him being called to active duty with his Reserve unit, and I had no idea what I would do if that were going to happen. Of course, the inevitable happened, and his unit was activated to serve in Operation Desert Storm. It was like a tornado came through my life.

My husband had to report every day to Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, and one evening he came home and said we had a mandatory meeting. When we walked into the room, I knew no one. I was very intimidated by those men in green. All of a sudden they were talking power of attorneys, wills, things I knew nothing about. There was no family support or family readiness groups. I felt very scared.

When it was all done and Philip was on that bus to Lord knows where, I moved to where my parents lived. I relied totally on my husband calling or writing a letter. Calls were very few, and letters were also. I never received a phone call from anyone other than him. Compared to today, there has been a vast improvement in communication since Operation Desert Storm, and my husband has gotten better at writing me.

As a new family entering into the Army, I have found Army Community Service to be the greatest asset provided by Fort Stewart. The information provided to us today by Army Community Service is just awesome. They offer so many avenues for us as spouses to get involved, to learn more about other programs, and to take different classes.

I will never forget the first day I walked into Army Community Service. Our household goods were not going to be delivered to our house until 2 weeks after we had gotten there. I was told to go to ACS as they have what is called a lending closet. When I arrived at that building I was greeted with smiles and such willing hearts to help me. I received a box full of necessary household goods on loan for a family of six. It was incredible, and it was all done with a smile.

The preparation they provided for us as pre-deployment issues arose was another grand slam. ACS provided an awesome display of information from every avenue to ease the spouse's mind. When I found out that Philip was getting deployed to the Persian Gulf, I felt very prepared for the questions that could arise upon his absence. They provided all the names and numbers that I would ever need for any question that needed answered.

During the conflict of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Susan Wilder invited each Family Readiness Group leader, rear detachment personnel, and battalion commander wives to a meeting once a month to brief us on any new information. I found these to be most bene-

ficial. As a matter of fact, most of the information that was provided to us in these meetings were the meat of my monthly newsletters.

Child care issues came up more than once at these meetings, with a concern about the yearly fee of \$30 per household with children being too much. I had to comment on this as most of the people present were officers or officers' wives, and they do have a bigger pay scale than we do. I stood up and said that although I was the wife of probably the lowest-ranking soldier in there and I had four children, I am more than sure that if I could afford the \$30 a year, everyone else could, too.

Currently, I am the Family Readiness Group leader for my husband's unit. We have 128 spouses left here. We have meetings once a month, and a detailed monthly newsletter is sent out. I call at least five spouses a week just to check on them. I also pass information via E-mail.

There have been some challenges I have faced as a Family Readiness Group leader. Senator, one area of opportunity has been the flow of information and support coming from the rear detachment. A more active role was needed to remedy those areas. Another challenge I have dealt with is customer service issues on post. While the ACS provides service with a smile, there are some departments which do not hold this view as strongly as ACS does. Moving forward with family support and readiness issues, the Army should focus on improving customer service and continue to improve upon the variety of existing services.

A final area to work on is to get units to work harder on encouraging soldiers to get their spouses and families involved in what is going on so that in times of deployment it will not prove to be hard on the spouses, the rear detachment, or other people that are trying to help them. A lot of what I am saying lies solely on personal responsibility.

Senator, this has been a great moment, not only in human history but in the history of the United States. Our men and women in uniform have done an outstanding job, yet an even greater job still was the sacrifice made by American families who lovingly and dutifully continued on with daily living, ensuring bills were paid, houses were cared for, children were tended to, and that all things pertaining to domestic matters were handled. The thought of my husband going off to war, while difficult, was not overwhelming. I support my husband 100 percent and know how important it is for me to understand my role in making this a successful deployment. The truth is that this situation allowed for and proved to be a testing ground for me and my family. Yes, it was emotionally challenging, especially when one of my four children, for that matter, all of them, decided to be out-of-sorts at one time or another. Nevertheless, I worked through the issues and actually became a stronger parent and person because of it. I know some families experienced greater difficulties and challenges than I did, and my heart and prayers went out to them. For me, now all that remains is being reunited with my husband and working together to help him adjust to family life again.

Senator Chambliss, I would like to thank you for allowing me this opportunity to speak before you and this committee. It has been an honor. May God bless America and thank you.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thank you.

Ms. Edmondson.

**STATEMENT OF KRISCHELE EDMONDSON, SPOUSE OF MM1
(SS) RICHARD EDMONDSON, USN**

Ms. EDMONDSON. Good afternoon, Senator. I do not have a prepared statement, but you do have my biography. I am from Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay, which is pretty much the mystery of the Armed Forces as far as services goes. We are called the silent service because usually there is not a lot of information that goes out about us or what is going on around our base.

I would like to thank you and the previous two panels because without you and their caring, our military spouses would not be able to face the challenges that are constantly put before us. I do applaud that and I do thank you all on behalf of all of the military spouses. Thank you very much.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thank you.

Ms. Bush.

**STATEMENT OF MARIAN BUSH, SPOUSE OF CAPT. JASON
BUSH, USAF**

Ms. BUSH. Good afternoon, sir. I, too, do not have a statement prepared but just a little bit on my background. I have been involved with and around the military for just over 10 years now. My husband is a personnel captain. My background is in education. I have taught school in several States, including in a DOD school. I taught in an on-base school in the Washington, DC, area to kindergarten children. I have an early childhood background.

I now have one son that I stay at home with and try to stay involved in different aspects of what is going on in our base involving many different child care issues and children and families, bringing my background, as well as support from myself.

My husband just took his first deployment. He was gone for 6 months and has just returned home in the last week, and without the support of these services and these people it would have been a very difficult time. However, with the different agencies and programs that were available, we made it through. I definitely have grown. I have become a stronger person because of it and I hope that I can lend my support and my experience to others that will go through it someday after me.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thank you, Ms. Bush.

Mrs. Matthews.

**STATEMENT OF SEMANTHA MATTHEWS, SPOUSE OF TSGT.
LAWRENCE MATTHEWS, USAF**

Mrs. MATTHEWS. First, I would like to thank you, Senator, and the other members of the Armed Services Committee and to those who have dedicated their professional careers to taking care of us.

I am so sorry, I am not poised at all like these other ladies, but I thank you for how you serve me and my family. My name is Samantha Matthews; I am a wife. My husband is Tech Sergeant

Matthews right there, returning from Operation Iraqi Freedom just Tuesday. So this is very fresh for me.

I was born into a military family 37 years ago, and then I joined the military at 20 for an 8-year enlistment, and then I married military. I have been happily married for 15 years serving as a military spouse. I guess I am the ideal Air Force brat, I guess you could say; I am proud to be so, though.

I did know much of what my sisters on this panel have said, and I am not surprised that much of what we share is not different. I just commend those who care for us and particularly these ladies who, unless you have been there, it is not impossible but it is quite difficult to really understand what a homecoming is like or what a goodbye is like or what a nightmare in the middle of the night is like. But it is worth it. It is worth it.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Mrs. Matthews, you knew what you were getting into from day one, and it looks like you asked for a husband even who is sharing this with you. That is a great story. He is a pretty good camera man, too, I notice there.

Thank all of you all for your great service to our country; we appreciate that very much. Let me just start out, there are five of you all here, and I am sure what Ms. Murray said about the return rate on our surveys is about average, or the Air Force may be above average. That means that only two of you ladies returned a survey. Tell us, if you will, whether or not the surveys mean anything to you? Are we asking the right questions, getting the right information, and do you feel like that anything is being done based on the information, you are providing in those surveys?

Ms. Payne.

Ms. PAYNE. I am sorry, sir, I have not had the opportunity to fill out a survey.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Okay.

Ms. PALOMO. Nor have I.

Senator CHAMBLISS. All right.

Ms. EDMONDSON. I have. Yes, sir, I really appreciate receiving the surveys, whether it be from TRICARE, the Family Service Center, or even a command survey. They are invaluable. I have seen action on them in the command, as well as the Fleet and Family Support Center. I have also acted as a Navy command ombudsman, which is basically a liaison between the families and the commands. When we get these surveys, the spouses will often ask me about it. Is it really worth it? Do we really need to fill it out? Absolutely, you need to be heard. I help you to be heard, but they need your words on that piece of paper. So, yes, they are very valuable and yes, we are being heard.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Okay.

Ms. Bush.

Ms. BUSH. I definitely agree with that. Some of the things that I have heard of why not to fill it out is they are very long and time-consuming and when you are at home with one, two, three, four children, that is just not something that takes a priority. But I also have seen results on them and agree that it is definitely invaluable, and we just try and encourage each other to get through it even if it is at midnight.

Mrs. MATTHEWS. I, too, have filled out the survey and I do believe that where we are today is because those before us have filled them out, so I just think that part of my responsibility is to continue on to also fill them out, to take care of the needs of those who come after us. The needs are constantly changing. The Air Force is constantly changing. Their job is to take care of us and meet our needs, and our job is to let them know what the needs are, so it is very important.

Senator CHAMBLISS. I know that you all appreciate that deployments and separation from your spouses are unavoidable. That is part of military life. The purpose of this hearing today is to discuss how we can better manage those deployments for you and your families when duty calls.

As we have all heard today, the service family support centers and service leadership work very hard to make these deployments as manageable as possible for you and your families. I would like to know more about what is important to you while your spouse is deployed. For example, is it the ability to communicate easily and regularly? Is it the ability to know where the unit is and when they are scheduled to come home? Is it having a supportive base community and having your children taken care of? What are the things that go the furthest to ease you and your families during the times that your spouse is gone? Ms. Payne.

Ms. PAYNE. My first response to your question would be that I understand that communication, especially in a conflict-type situation as we have just experienced, is not always possible and knowledge of where your husband's unit is and what they are doing is not always safe. So I would say the more we can do to empower our spouses, the better.

My concerns are not so much for myself. I know that I can manage my family, but what I am concerned more about is Matthew's soldiers' wives. Some of them are just not experienced in the least, and the more opportunity we can give them to grow, the better.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Okay. Ms. Palomo.

Ms. PALOMO. My first reaction to respond to your question is the mail system. I understand that while in theater, and while there is conflict going on, you cannot mail to the front line, and I understand that. My husband is not on the front line. He is about midways back, which is about right outside of Baghdad. So, he has not received mail, and the conflict is over.

Now, I do get to have pretty regular communication with my spouse. He is in a support command unit, so we do get to speak with him regularly and correspond on E-mail, but he has not received any mail in about 3 weeks now, and that is about 10 packages ago and about 35 letters ago. So as far as concerns are, I think that Fort Stewart is doing an awesome job keeping all of us informed of what is going on and the programs that we can put ourselves into to better inform ourselves for anybody that has any questions. I know lots of women in my neighborhood do not attend their meetings, and so I am their source of information for them. So as long as they are providing the services that they do, we really need to push for the wives to get involved, but you cannot make it mandatory. So, there again, it is personal responsibility.

Ms. EDMONDSON. What is important? Well, definitely empowering our spouses. In the submarine service, communication is not an option, or it is one-way pretty much. We have gotten a slight ability of a little bit of E-mail every now and then, but that is hit or miss. Therefore, it is very important to inform the spouses as far as the resources available to them, may it be the Fleet and Family Support Center, Navy-Marine Corps Relief Service, Red Cross, informing them and putting some solid ground underneath them.

Our average age on our base of our sailors is 21 years old. Our spouses are often younger. They have no military life experience. They barely have life experience, and they come up and they are standing on the pier saying bye, and now what? Where do they go, what do they do? They often do not know anybody at all because they have just reported. I am a very strong advocate for the Navy Family Ombudsman Program, and I believe the Marine Corps has something similar as far as the key volunteers. I am not sure really about the Army or the Air Force. But these volunteers, these are actual volunteers that are there as one point of contact to assist the families. So I definitely think keeping the ombudsmen program funded is important, so that the ombudsmen can be trained.

I can take approximately 150 calls if necessary. Hopefully, I have prepared them so they do not need to make that call, but this way we have another crew that helps us out, but hopefully they will call me so these sailors can do their jobs and get ready to go. Basically, I believe as one of the ladies over here mentioned, preparation, preparation, preparation is vital. Let us get these spouses, either male or female, get them ready to prepare for what is coming up against them.

I think that the Fleet and Family Support Centers and the other organizations like them are very invaluable, and we need them there.

Ms. BUSH. I agree with the others that communication is one of the key elements of what is needed during a deployment. My husband is part of a very small squadron on the base and his unit that deployed was even smaller. He took a team of four where he went, and so we did not have the big goodbye or a big network of spouses, although there are several spouses on base whose husbands are deployed. As far as his unit, where he is, there were just two of us. The other two that went with them were not married.

So, in that sense, I had to step out of my comfort zone and out of my familiar surroundings and find other spouses to network with, and that was the greatest thing I could have ever done. One of the key things that got me through this deployment was having other spouses with children that met my child care needs because we could switch off with each other. I had other spouses that I could talk to to get things off of my chest when I had a bad day.

Stress is a big part of deployments. You are not only a mom and a wife, you have the entire household to take care of. Many of them work, so they are still managing a career. They are taking care of the children, they are taking care of the finances. I stay at home with my son, and you would think that it would be very easy, that I do not have anything to do. But I was even busier with him being gone, and stress level goes way high even when you are not doing

much because there are so many things that you are left to take care of.

Some of the things that I dealt with while he was gone was my 2½-year-old son was admitted to a hospital for a week, and I dealt with that alone. My family is not here, so I dealt with that. Communication was excellent between myself and my husband during that point. His unit made sure that he was able to call me as often as he could so that for his benefit he knew that his son was okay, but for my benefit I could say, we are going to be okay; he is okay; it will just take some time.

After one of my trips that I went home to spend with family, I came back home to a hole in my roof, and it had been after the 2 weeks of rain that we had. So communication was very important with my Family Support Center and different people on base. They helped me out. I called them one afternoon and said, "My house is full of water and there is a huge gaping hole in my roof. Who do I call?" They were absolutely wonderful at connecting me with the right people for that.

Some of the positive things that came out of this, at Moody they started a deployed spouse dinner program, and once a month at our base chapel they offered a free dinner for the spouses and their families. Not only was it great just to get out and relax and not have to worry about dinner for that night, but it was great networking with other spouses and a good release for the kids because they could go and play there.

Then I also had good communication with the commander of my husband's squadron. He made sure to call me at least once a month just to check in and say, "Hey, are you okay? We are here if you need us." I really did not need to call on them for anything specific other than what I had mentioned, but it made me feel good that somebody was thinking about me, and I had some place to go if I did need it.

Mrs. MATTHEWS. I think before deployment, it is really important for us spouses to know what to do in case of a situation like your roof falls in. I think readiness is really important. I think the Family Support Center at Moody does an excellent job in that. Over 15 years, we have had several deployments, four lengthy ones, particularly in the last 6 years since we have been at Moody, and I feel like we have been fairly prepared to handle those.

During a deployment, it is wonderful, just the activities that are available. I have a 12-, 10-, and a 4-year-old. We stay very busy, but being busy makes the time go pretty fast. So it is nice that the Integrated Delivery System sends out a calendar of events for the month. I circle them; I highlight the activities and then we stay busy. That is always great.

I took a car care seminar; I have always been wanting to do that. Since the last two deployments a different car has broken down each time. Very expensive repairs at that. So I decided it is really about time to take a car care seminar, and I did. A local CMC, it is a Goodyear place down in Valdosta, offered it to spouses for free, and it was absolutely incredible. I learned how to do some things I just did not know how to do and I just took for granted that he would take care of. It was wonderful, I did still have a car that broke down this time.

But afterward, I guess after deployment I just really think we need a lot of time off. So I would just say, if the guys could just have time. They get 2 weeks off, but it takes a week at least or more for his body to adjust to United States time zones. We need more than the time that they give us, and I just think that after serving in a war and serving for 24-hour days, I am sure some days they just hardly slept and working so faithfully and so hard, I think they deserve more time off, if that helps. [Applause.]

Senator CHAMBLISS. We are running out of time here, but I have to get a comment from each of you about the educational environment and experience that you have had with your children. You all come from somewhat similar situations with respect to non-DOD schools. How do you find that children overall, particularly your children, react in their educational environment? Are we doing the right things? Are we providing the right services? Now that your spouses are coming back, what are you seeing with respect to counseling that is available or guidance that is available to our children of these deployed military parents? Ms. Payne.

Ms. PAYNE. My children, of course, are very young, so the service to which I could probably speak most accurately would be the hourly child care service on post which I use approximately once or twice a month. The most descriptive or the clearest way that I could communicate to you the type of attention that my child gets at the hourly care center would be relating a story from when she was maybe 10 or 11 months old.

I had taken her in for regular hourly care, and the staff there will always change your child's diaper before you leave the center. The woman who changed my child Carmen's diaper, told me that she had had a temperature of approximately 99.1 degrees, and the child care worker said in her opinion she thought Carmen was probably teething. I said, "Thank you very much," and we collected our things and proceeded to leave the center.

On the way down the hallway the director for hourly care for infants stopped me in the hallway and said, "Mrs. Payne, Carmen had a temperature this afternoon. I think it was about 99; I think maybe she is teething."

As we were leaving the front doors of the facility, one of the child care workers who had evidently been with Carmen throughout the day said, "Mrs. Payne, I am on my break, but I want to take time to tell you, Carmen had a fever today about 99 degrees and I think maybe she is teething."

So the attention to detail that we experience, even as a family that uses the center very sparingly, is just phenomenal, and it is very much appreciated.

Ms. PALOMO. I can give you some really good examples of the school system. I have four children. My daughter is 13 and she goes to school about 15 miles off-post to a middle school, Midway Middle School. I have three sons, one is in sixth grade, one is in fourth grade, and one is in third grade, that go to school on post at Fort Stewart. This is our first example or first time of going to an on-post school.

As far as through this deployment, I have seen at the school on post the support there. The teachers are so empathetic, sympathetic. They have open arms for these children. If you walk down

the halls of Brittan Elementary School, outside on each door pane, they made a yellow ribbon out of yellow construction paper, and each one of those children has their mother or father's name on the yellow ribbon and it hangs around the door post, so when you enter in that room they are reminded that their fathers and mothers are heroes.

Another point is, the day that my husband left, we got notified at 8:30 on a Monday evening that he was going to be leaving at 8:30 the next morning. I guess better that way than the other to be prepared. I kept my children out of school on the day that he was deployed, I think basically to keep me together.

When I wrote the note on the Wednesday when they did go back to school, of course, the ones on post were, of course, do not even fret; you do not even have to write a note; we understand, Dad is gone, Dad was leaving.

The one off post, however, did give me a little bit of a fit in saying that she was not sick, she was not in the hospital, she was not at the doctor's office. They wanted to count it unexcused, and I was not going to settle for that because this is a military community and, I mean, give us at a little break here.

As far as the schools on post, and the counselor goes around to the classrooms. They have a counselor for the upper grades and a counselor for the lower grades, and I only know the upper grades. She goes around and she makes herself very open to the children and to the parents to let us know, if you need me to talk to your child, or if your child needs to talk to me, or if you need to talk to me.

So I have found with the on post school, that I have thoroughly enjoyed the openness that they have for the children. I do not know if it is really so much sympathy that they have for the kids, but they have more understanding. They could be civilians themselves, but the children, they have a lot more attention, a lot more sympathy from the teachers as far as the moods that they might be in and the teachers understanding that.

Ms. EDMONDSON. Senator, if I might step back just a second. I did just want to relay some information as far as communication goes. Our Seabee unit, I spoke to a young spouse, married 2 weeks before the Seabee unit deployed, I spoke with her this weekend, and she said that the care and the communication was incredible, that she was being called on a weekly basis to make sure things were taken care of.

Also, I spoke with a young marine wife who I work with. She also said that the Marines were also very good about keeping in touch, making sure they had everything they needed. So I did want to add that. I am sorry to step back.

But as far as the school goes, let me tell you about the schools. My children are 12 years old. I have twin girls, and they are now going into the sixth grade and they have been to approximately five schools. We moved, on average, every 2 years. That means that we have seen a lot of different school systems, some good, some not so good. One thing that we would definitely like to see is a consistency in education throughout the United States.

Just when you go up to Maine, and then you expect for the education to be a certain level, and then you are ahead of them or Ten-

nessee, you just—we are moving throughout the country and making a transition is very difficult—it is difficult enough, but then when you find you are either behind or ahead of the school that you are with, it brings just an immense amount of challenges to our children. So I think if something can be done to somewhat regulate it.

Also the standardized testing, I understand the need for it, but I have found that one thing is very consistent, is that now the teachers are teaching to pass the test; they are not teaching to teach. They are teaching to pass the test. I think that our children are developing holes in education, and I think consistency would be good there, and I think looking over—I know this is probably a little bit out of the area but, sir, consistency would be wonderful, and if we could possibly review the standardized testing. Yes, our children might know what is on that test, but do they know anything else? I think we need to look at that.

Military children bring wonderful things to the schools that they enter. Life experiences. I know, I am personally from Kansas, and just the fact that my children have been on a nuclear-powered submarine, that would just wow me, or in a plane or in a tank, it is just incredible. Our children have been all over the world and can bring real insight. I have talked to my children's teacher and they see this and they appreciate that.

The schools in our area are wonderful. They work with Fleet and Family, as well as the parents, as well as the base, to do whatever they can do to assist the children.

When we were stationed in Norfolk, my husband was on a fast-attack submarine and was preparing to leave with a battle group for a 6-month deployment. I have never seen such outpouring of caring from a community. It was just incredible. The counselor had support sessions every week. The children would either write daddy or E-mail. Of course, that was not an option for our children at the time, but they would take pictures; they had pictures of the dads up on the door, they had a tracker with as much as they could track.

I believe that the schools in the military areas are really adapting to help the children and they work with the parents to do so. Thank you.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Ms. Bush.

Ms. BUSH. Going back to my education background, when I was a teacher and I worked in the school that was on the base—this was 6 or 7 years ago—but I was given no training in counseling or dealing with the children that had parents that were separated from them.

Being fairly new as a teacher and new to the military, it was kind of hard, but I guess with time what I realized what they needed the most was individual attention and just time to let them do what they needed to do to get through. I guess that would be what I would take to teachers and schools and districts now, that even if they get no training, understand that military children have individual needs and they go through different things that the other children do go through.

I had a similar experience with my son. This was my husband's first deployment, but being my son is only 2 years old and when

he went to his Mom's Morning Out program, about a month after my husband left, it started to kind of sink in with him, and he got real angry and was very belligerent, and when asked, "Do you want to talk to Daddy on the phone today?" He said "No, no." He would take it out on other children, and that was his way of dealing with it, and I had to let the school know that no, his hitting and that sort of thing is not acceptable, but understand that this is why he is going through what he is going through.

One thing that I would like to suggest and like to see more of made available to military parents is child care for while a parent is deployed. As I mentioned earlier, it is a very stressful time on parents and children, and we have a program at Moody called Give Parents a Break, and it is a program where once a month the child development center opens its doors to children under 5 years of age, and there is also a program for older children. It is a wonderful program. There is no cost involved with it, and the kids can go there for, I think it is 4 to 6 hours on one Saturday a month, and it gives the parents and the children a break from each other. It is a wonderful program.

I would like to see that maybe if funding could be made available for more of that. It is great on Saturdays, but when you are a parent at home, you have meetings and doctors' appointments and things like that during the week that you cannot schedule on a Saturday, so programs where things are made available during the week to parents as well as children, and even older children, like I said, there is a program for older elementary and pre-teen children. We need a break from each other after 6 months and just to keep that funding available and increased if possible.

Mrs. MATTHEWS. Senator, I think that one of the people in a previous panel had mentioned how providing education about what is going on in the military family life is so important, not just to the military kids, but also to the other kids, as well. I thought that was such an excellent point to make.

I guess it was in the last year, one of my oldest son's friends made a comment, "See, that's why I hate the military." I thought, "Oh, that's horrible." He is not a military family, but he associates military with war and death, and he had heard that we were going into Iraq, and to hear a seventh grade boy say, "That's why I hate the military," and I said, "Certainly you don't mean you hate the military. I mean, Mr. Larry is military," and I had to use that moment to explain to him. My point is that education is so important in the schools, not just to the military kids; it is not just important in the Family Support Center, but them getting out, and I know that our Family Support Center does do that.

We have career day in Valdosta. I know the middle schools have that, and our military are a hit at career day. They bring the helicopters out and their classes are completely full all the time. We have a school board liaison that meets at Moody and they coordinate with the different schools, and they do an outstanding job at working and networking with all the schools in our area. We have many; we have the county schools of like 12 or 13, and then we have the city schools, but they do a great job at talking about those needs and those troubles that come up.

I just want to share one story that Sergeant Dorn shared with me that I thought was really incredible how they meet the needs, and he shared about how a troubled mother came in and said, "I am having a terrible time with my son." He said, "Well, let us think about what we can do," because she did not want to put her son on the spot and, of course, she did not want to drag him into counseling or maybe she did. I am not sure if I got those facts right. But he went and arranged to have a speaker in that child's classroom, not pinpointing that child, but knowing that that child was in that classroom, worked out arrangements to have the military come in and say, "ask whatever questions you want," and that child asked most of the questions, and he did not realize that they were there for him.

I thought that is one really creative way that we can meet the needs of those troubled kids that just do not want to ask the mom or cannot ask the dad and do not want to talk to a professional doctor. They are already feeling odd as it is, and I commend our people at family support for thinking of creative ways to meet those needs of those kids and at the same time they were in a class with that troubled child that probably was sharing with some of those other kids, or maybe he was the troublemaker in that class, who knows, but at least it was a really resourceful way of dealing with a problem. I think he said that she reported that he did well. So thank you for what you do.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Well, ladies, certainly each of you are married to true American heroes, but you and every other military spouse out there are a hero in the eyes of all Americans. We thank you for the sacrifices you make as well as for your service to our country in addition to the service that your spouses provide.

I will tell you, Ms. Palomo, Dick tells me that we have had previous complaints about that mail service, and it is being looked into as we speak and we are going to make sure that gets speeded up.

Ms. PALOMO. Thank you.

Senator CHAMBLISS. One thing that I have not heard, which I am glad I have not heard it because when I was over at Hunter I heard it a good bit, and that was that your spouses were having a hard time getting to a telephone; they were having to stand in lines. Once they got to a telephone the service was not that great getting to you, and it maybe cut off in the middle of a conversation, which was only about a 3-minute conversation. I hope that is getting better. We made some changes and hopefully are making that a little bit better.

I thank each of you for your willingness to come over today and to spend some time with us to help shed some light on a very critical issue. I assure you, just like the surveys, we are going to take this information back and we are going to utilize exactly what you all have told us and compile our information and continue to make positive changes to make life a little better for you and your families, so we thank you very much.

Ms. EDMONDSON. Senator, may I add something really short here?

Senator CHAMBLISS. Sure.

Ms. EDMONDSON. Just that these organizations have great programs. One of the things that we come across a lot at our base is

our sailors are deployed and the spouses have the children, so they cannot come to our wonderful programs because of lack of child care. I do not know if any. I know Fleet and Family Support Center cannot pay for child care, and often MWR might be overwhelmed with the children that they have, so I do not know if there can be some extra funding to assist with that so that our spouses and our sailors can make use of the programs available to them. Just a side note there that I know that has come up. So if some kind of funding—and I do not know the way all that works, but I know that is a brick wall we hit when it comes time to going to classes.

Thank you, sir. I am sorry.

Senator CHAMBLISS. No, that is quite all right. I appreciate that additional comment. This has been a rather lengthy hearing, but I do not know of any more important subject that we could deal with from a legislative perspective than to make sure that our families are getting the care and the attention that they need. I want to thank all of our witnesses for being here today and providing great insight and great information to this very critical aspect of our military.

So, I thank you for being here, and know that your words have been heard and we will incorporate it into our thought process as we move through this authorization act over the next 2 or 3 weeks. Thank you very much, and this hearing is now adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:50 p.m., the subcommittee adjourned.]

ISSUES AFFECTING FAMILIES OF SOLDIERS, SAILORS, AIRMEN, AND MARINES

TUESDAY, JUNE 24, 2003

U.S. SENATE, JOINT HEARING OF THE
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON PERSONNEL,
AND
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION,
LABOR, AND PENSIONS,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittees met, pursuant to notice, at 3:30 p.m., in room SD-106, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Senator Saxby Chambliss (chairman of the Subcommittee on Personnel, Committee on Armed Services) and Senator Lamar Alexander (chairman of the Subcommittee on Children and Families, Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions) presiding.

Armed Services Committee members present: Senators Chambliss, Dole, Kennedy, Ben Nelson, Clinton, and Pryor.

Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee members present: Senators Alexander and Dodd.

Armed Services Committee majority staff members present: Patricia L. Lewis, professional staff member; and Richard F. Walsh, counsel.

Armed Services Committee minority staff member present: Gerald J. Leeling, minority counsel.

Armed Services Committee staff assistants present: Michael N. Berger, Andrew W. Florell, Andrew Kent, and Sara R. Mareno.

Armed Services Committee members' assistants present: James W. Irwin and Clyde A. Taylor IV, assistants to Senator Chambliss; Christine O. Hill, assistant to Senator Dole; Mieke Y. Eoyang, assistant to Senator Kennedy; Eric Pierce, assistant to Senator Ben Nelson; Andrew Shapiro, assistant to Senator Clinton; and Terri Glaze, assistant to Senator Pryor.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR SAXBY CHAMBLISS, CHAIRMAN

Senator CHAMBLISS. The hearing will come to order. First of all, let me apologize to our witnesses and to all other interested parties. Unfortunately, we had to do what you taxpayers pay us to do, and that is go over and do the people's business on the floor of the Senate, and it took a little bit longer than what we expected. I really appreciate your patience, I appreciate your being here.

This joint hearing of the Subcommittee on Personnel of the Committee on Armed Services and the Subcommittee on Children and Families of the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, will come to order. The two subcommittees meet today to receive testimony on issues affecting families of soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines.

The issues we address today are of great importance to military personnel. While striving every day to be superb soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines, the men and women of the armed services strive with equal commitment and dedication to be superb spouses, fathers, and mothers, and the programs and problems that we consider today directly impact the ability of our military personnel to successfully fulfill these all-important roles. The manner in which the Department of Defense and the Services address family issues may be instructive in assisting us as legislators in finding ways to help all American families, so I am delighted that Senator Alexander, who is chairman of the Subcommittee on Children and Families, joins me today as co-chairman of this hearing.

I will make a few more comments in a minute. If Senators Dodd and Nelson come in, we will interrupt our proceedings at whatever point they may be. We want to go ahead and get started. I will recognize my long-time good friend and the chairman of the Subcommittee on Children and Families, Senator Lamar Alexander.

**STATEMENT OF HON. LAMAR ALEXANDER, U.S. SENATOR
FROM TENNESSEE**

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Senator Chambliss, and let me also thank the witnesses for waiting while we voted. We're looking forward to this hearing, and I know Senator Dodd, Senator Ben Nelson, and others are as well.

Half the men and women in today's military are parents raising children, and they volunteer for service, they volunteer for the marriage, we know that, but with such a large percentage of the Armed Forces' reduced force structure already deployed in 120 countries, and talk in the newspapers of staying in Iraq for 5 years, there are even more stresses on those marriages and on those children.

We know that family readiness affects military readiness. That's why our subcommittees, as Senator Chambliss said, have held hearings at Fort Campbell and at Warner Robins and at Groton. We have basically combined forces between our two subcommittees, and today we want to look at what we found in those three field hearings, and talk with you about solutions.

Now, here is the picture that we've found: fewer warriors, more missions, longer deployments, frequent moves, more marriages, more spouses working away from home, and more children, and we're also finding that while our military is ahead of many segments of society in making it easier for parents raising children, there's also some work in this area that needs to be done.

In order to retain and attract a talented volunteer force, we need to make sure that families' needs are addressed in the following areas: a reasonable standard of living, a nurturing environment for children, more opportunities in the supporting community for the larger number of working spouses, as well as fostering a sense of security for families during a time of deployment.

Today, I hope we'll have a chance to discuss some specific solutions and to get your advice on those. We've read your testimony, and I look forward to exploring that testimony. For example, on the standard of living point I just made, on the bases and posts we visited, housing was being improved, and where it is that greatly affects morale, but it was disturbing to see where it was not being improved, and it was especially disturbing to find that in some cases, housing allowances are being counted as part of a military family's income, making the family ineligible for other Federal benefits, and some of you point to that in your testimony. We'd like to talk about that more.

On the point of a nurturing environment for schools, about 20 percent of the military families have a child in a post school, and there's a study going on about whether we ought to just have all military children in public schools. There is a recent Vanderbilt University study that shows that while they cost more, children are learning more in the military schools, and that the highest scores for reading among African-American eighth graders in America in schools is in the military schools, so perhaps we should be learning something from these schools. We found widespread support for expanding the practice that's been tried in some Services of giving 11th or 12th grade students, families with 11th or 12th grade students, the option of staying where they are assigned so the child can graduate in that place.

A couple of other areas I'd just mention now, and then I'll hold my comments until we have a chance to hear more of yours. In terms of spouses, in your testimony you point out that more than half, and in terms of the junior enlisted families, more than 80 percent, of the spouses are working away from or outside the home. Child care is an area in which the Services excel, with nationally accredited centers, beautiful centers which we had a chance to visit, but many families need respite care, the break a busy parent needs, and many families would like to expand the family day home network for child care services. If the Commander in Groton had more flexibility, he could spend some of the money for pre-school care, where there are vacancies, for infant care, where there's a waiting list.

Finally, the Services are taking a number of steps to support family readiness with family readiness centers, but those readiness centers could use a paid director to organize the volunteers, and the public schools which deal with families which may have a child move 10 or 11 times during a K through 12 experience need more specialists who can help deal with that.

Throughout our hearings, and especially when Senator Dodd and I went to Groton the other day, we talked a lot about reciprocity, how if you've taken some steps with this with model programs, but if we could encourage States to recognize professional licenses as spouses move from one base to another, that would help. If we could encourage States to recognize that if you learn Georgia history at Fort Stewart you might not have to learn Tennessee history at Fort Campbell in order to graduate on time, or Georgia has a good example of, if someone's transferred, the student can continue to receive tuition there at the Georgia universities.

So these are all very important. I was very impressed by the testimony we heard. There was no complaining. Every spouse we heard from was very proud of their husband or their wife who might be serving, but to use one example, today, Major Lee Medley commands a Chinook helicopter unit. He and his wife, Gricell, have a 17-month-old daughter. During those 17 months, he's been in Afghanistan or Iraq for 15 of the months, and when he was home for 21 days, he was spending most of his time training.

His wife put it this way, we want to allow our soldiers to be good soldiers, but they also want the opportunity to be good husbands and fathers. Our purpose today is to encourage military readiness, save taxpayers' money, and help children by making it easier for military parents raising children.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thank you, Senator Alexander, and the ranking member on the Subcommittee on Children and Families is Senator Chris Dodd, who has been a very strong advocate for just that, children and families. Chris, we appreciate your hard work, particularly on your hearing at Groton, and any comments you would like to make, we look forward to them.

**STATEMENT OF HON. CHRISTOPHER DODD, U.S. SENATOR
FROM CONNECTICUT**

Senator DODD. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Let me commend both you and Senator Alexander for your leadership in conducting these hearings. I think it was a wonderful idea to bring these two subcommittees together and to work on these common issues.

Obviously, we don't need to preach to our audience. Most in our audience do understand that the condition of a person in the military's family life just has an immediate and profound impact on their ability to do their job, their military mission, and if that family life, for whatever reason, is fragile or in trouble, then the ability of that military personnel to do their job is also going to be in trouble. That's as axiomatic as anything I know.

Senator Alexander and I visited the submarine base in New London, which I've had the wonderful privilege of representing now for almost 30 years. It was in my old congressional district for 6 years. I'm now in my fourth term in the Senate, so we've gone through a lot of work over the years at the sub base. I'm deeply proud of the facility, installation, and deeply proud of the people who have served there.

Senator Alexander already knew this, but I think it was helpful getting up there and having a chance to see and talk to these people. Even during the most calm, peaceful periods, those who serve in our submarine services, it's a unique and difficult service, an all-male service in submarines, gone for 3 to 6 months at a clip, usually a secret mission, which means that communication with the family is very limited. When you're away that length of time, and even when you're on shore, the hours can run 12 hours a day. There isn't a notion when you come off the submarine and on shore that you're on a vacation, quite the contrary. So the pressure on families is just tremendous there, as it is for, of course, any serviceman and woman who serve, who have families to take care of. It

really is a critical issue if you're going to attract people in the military, and then critically if you're going to retain them.

A person who goes home at night and faces a family situation that is not harmonious is not likely to make that decision to re-up. As much as they may want to, if the family is unhappy with the conditions, and particularly today, when there are recruiters outside those gates that will offer them three and four and five and six times their salaries, benefits, you're home in the afternoon, we'll help you buy a house, we'll do a lot of things for you, it's awfully tempting when things on the home front aren't as strong as they could be. So these are critically important issues.

For those who want to see our military be as strong as possible and be as ready as possible, be concentrating and focused on the mission in front of them, this is about as essential an issue as you can have in terms of achieving those goals. I think having the hearings we've had at our various installations have made that point over and over to us, and some wonderful ideas, by the way, on how we can possibly strengthen these conditions.

I was particularly interested in the housing issue. We've been told by the Defense Department there are some 134,000 housing units that are inadequate. That we ought to be able to deal with. I can't understand, in this day and age, why we can't provide the best housing conditions. We may not pay a lot of money, but that place that you put your family in, particularly if they're there without you for extended periods of time, ought to be some of the best housing we can provide anywhere in this country, and that ought to be a mission for us to try and achieve that if we can.

I'm so impressed with what the military has done on child care. I've been raving about it for years. I just wish I could get the country to adopt the child care standards the military have. They've really been the model, in my view, and that wasn't always the case, by the way.

The military did its own assessment of child care, concluded it was doing a dreadful job on child care, and under its own initiative completely changed it. As a result, today it's the best child care offered anywhere, not just in this country, in the world, and there are some specific issues that Senator Alexander and I ran into in terms of infant care and toddler care that I'd like to raise at the appropriate time, Mr. Chairman, in terms of expectations on how we deal with some of these questions. But again, particularly when we have working families, second incomes, husband and wife in many cases today in uniform, child care becomes an essential ingredient for those families to have safe, quality child care, and the military is doing a great job on that front.

Senator Alexander has already mentioned a couple of other ideas we received, and I want to endorse those, Mr. Chairman, as ones we might think about. A lot of it may be done just through encouraging. We're not even suggesting, I don't think, legislation is necessarily. Some of this might be done by just encouraging the States to adopt some uniform standards, on uniformity, so that you don't have duplication of efforts, particularly in those 10th and 11th grade high school students. I think this is a major issue, if we could say to these families, your child reaches that 10th or 11th

grade, we're going to leave you put until they finish that high school.

When you meet families that have moved 17 times in 21 years, 11 times in 12 years, and particularly with children in the high school years, you could really again force a family that we'd like to keep in uniform to make a decision to put their family first and leave an occupation they love, they truly love.

No one's doing this for the money in the military. If you're doing it for the money, there's something fundamentally wrong with you, because that's not the motivation here. It's service of country, a great job, a wonderful way to make a commitment and fulfill a duty to one's country, and we ought to be doing everything we can to eliminate barriers to sticking with that career choice.

So this hearing is very important, and I'm grateful to you, Mr. Chairman and Senator Alexander, for bringing us all together to talk about what we might do as a Senate to be helpful in this regard.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thank you, Senator Dodd, and you raised a good point in that we're not going to necessarily recommend legislation, but we may have some practical ideas of how to solve some of these problems, and make suggestions to the Department of Defense.

Now I'd like to call on my ranking member on the Personnel Subcommittee, a man with whom I have worked very closely in a very bipartisan way over the last 6 months, my good friend, Senator Ben Nelson.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR E. BENJAMIN NELSON

Senator BEN NELSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Senator Alexander. I'm sorry to be late. I'm trying to learn how to dance at two weddings at the same time, not very successfully, but I appreciate the opportunity to be here. I want to thank both of you for holding this series of hearings focusing on issues that affect the families of our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines. I plan to conduct a similar hearing in Nebraska in September focusing on the education of children of our military personnel, an important part of the quality-of-life issues that we're all interested in improving.

I commend you for holding this joint hearing because I think it will help address the issues of concern to both subcommittees. I believe that by working together, these two subcommittees can gain a far more complete picture of the challenges that face our military families, and this is particularly important today because of the extensive commitments that our military forces are pushing our military families. They're pushing military families to the limit, because of the long deployments, because of multiple deployments, and because of the importance of securing the peace across the world.

Our military makeup has undergone a significant demographic change since we ended the draft in 1973 and changed to an all-volunteer force. Before that change, our military was mainly a conscripted force, which was primarily male, unmarried, and without children. The composition of the military today, though, is far more complex. Today, more military members have family obligations.

This has a profound impact on the variety and the kinds of programs needed to support our military personnel and their families.

To demonstrate the complexity of the family makeup of our Armed Forces, let me list some of the different combinations that we encounter. More than half of the force is married, many with children. We have dual military couples. In some cases both husband and wife are in the same Service, and others are in different Services, but both serving.

In most families only one spouse is in the military. Normally the husband is the service member, but we also have a number of families where the wife is the service member and the husband is the family member.

We also have a number of single parent families, some where the mother is the single parent service member, and others where the father is the single parent service member.

Now, the reason I listed all of these different family configurations is to demonstrate the wide variety of programs that we need in order to meet the needs that these families have. Each family makeup has unique needs. We need child care programs that address the needs of single military parents as they work unpredictable shifts or are subject to short-term military exercises or longer-term, short-notice deployments.

We need programs for children when one parent is in the Service and the other is a civilian working at what we would refer to very often as a normal job, and we need education programs that meet the needs of children who relocate every few years, as my colleague, Senator Dodd, has suggested.

We need after-school programs and summer youth programs for every age group to provide a healthy environment for military children, and in addition to programs specifically for children, the Services provide many other support programs for families and spouses, and these include deployment and mobilization support programs, family advocacy programs, parenting programs, financial management programs, relocation assistance programs, spouse employment assistance programs, comprehensive health programs, and probably a whole lot of other programs I haven't mentioned.

On the Armed Services Committee, the chairman and I have worked together to improve the benefits for service members and families to make their lives even better. This year, our subcommittee mark, which was adopted by the committee and passed by the Senate, authorized an average pay increase of 4.15 percent, almost a full percentage above the increase in the employment cost index.

For families of troops fighting our wars overseas, we increased the family separation allowance from \$100 a month to \$250 a month, and we increased combat pay from \$150 a month to \$225 a month. We also authorized a high-deployment allowance of up to \$1,000 a month for service members who are repeatedly deployed, or are deployed for extensive periods of time.

We know that this is not enough, but it's a step, clearly, in the right direction, so I say thank you, Senator Chambliss, for allowing me to work so closely with you to improve the quality of life and service of the service members and their families. This hearing will give us an opportunity to know more and to learn the answers to

the questions of what more do we need to do, and what else can we do that would be helpful.

Again, thank you and Senator Alexander for holding this joint hearing.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thank you, Senator Nelson. Senator Dole, thank you for giving deference to Senator Kennedy, who has another appointment.

Senator Kennedy.

Senator KENNEDY. Thank you very much, and I'm particularly appreciative of your having this joint hearing. Senator Dodd has been the chairman of our Children's Caucus for so many years, and I think that this joint hearing could be enormously important.

I just want to bring to the attention of our members here, in preparation for this hearing, and to our panel, the excellent program that I've been briefed on called One Source, which is the Marine Corps program, which has really an incredible acceptability within both the Marine Corps and individual marines.

First of all, it went from usage of 1.6 percent December 2002 to 29 percent. It's 7 days a week, 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year, and the ratings of this program by the marines and their families are right up through the roof in terms of, the overall quality is 98 percent, would use it again 99 percent, would recommend it, 98 percent, \$1.3 million annual appropriations, going up to \$1.6 million, that's about \$5 per marine, and the range of different issues that the marines were inquiring about would be. You might well imagine, they were about parenting issues, about child care, about education, and about finances generally. That's just some legal issues.

The service, the availability for this was basically across the range in terms of the marines. It's active duty and family members; it's the reservists and family members; it has confidentiality provisions in here, and as I said, it makes as a goal, a response within 7 days unless otherwise agreed to.

It just seemed to me, in terms of the range, we have the needs our colleagues have talked about, and we've been involved in working with others in terms of particularly the Reserve and the Guard in terms of health insurance, how they have to leave coverage, and whether we shouldn't help provide the continuation, and the impact aid, which I know Senator Dole and I have been particularly interested in, and other issues.

Which I think is justified, if you look through in terms of these reports, that there's increasing problems with children whose parents are overseas in terms of discipline in the schools. In terms of some depression of the children and their academic achievement in terms of the greater kinds of needs, what you might expect, so there are recommendations of additional kinds of support, which I think we ought to try and be able to find out through all of you what those particular needs would be within the Services, and to the extent that there are additional resources, help and assistance, I'd hope that we could find that out from you. I'll submit some questions along those lines. Perhaps you might be able to give some response.

Secretary Molino, I draw this to your attention and the others as well, and to the committee's attention. I'll file my comments just

with my statement, but it just seemed to me that it's a contract with a company, Ceridian, but it seemed to me to just have a high degree of a kind of acceptability and support by the marines, and is something that I thought was extremely useful. I'm impressed by whoever got the program going, and started, and, hopefully, if it's as successful, there might be parts of it that are as applicable to the other Services.

I thank the chair.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thank you.

Senator Pryor, we're glad to have you with us, and welcome any comments you might have.

Senator PRYOR. Thank you, I don't, but I sure do appreciate your holding this hearing. It's very important. Thank you.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Yes, sir.

Military families have been placed under tremendous stress in recent years even before September 11, 2001, and the global war on terrorism, the high tempo of operations affecting military personnel was a source of great concern. Since September 11, our active duty, Reserve, and Guard personnel have performed magnificently in every mission they have been assigned.

However, the sacrifices made by the military personnel and their families, the long and continuing separations they have endured, and the problems in their personal lives resulting from these realities of military duty must be understood and carefully evaluated. We must make every effort, working closely with the Department of Defense and Department of Education, advocates for families, and the private sector and others to respond in helpful ways.

As my colleagues know, our two subcommittees have taken testimony earlier this month in field hearings conducted in Warner Robins, Georgia; Fort Campbell, Kentucky; and Groton, Connecticut. My expectation today is that we will continue to gain insight into programs and initiatives of the Services and of the formulation of the policies at headquarters level, and also into work that remains to be done on behalf of individual members and their families.

We have two panels of witnesses today that will testify. First, we will hear from John Molino, Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy; Dr. Joseph Tafoya, Director of the Department of Defense Education Activity; Colonel James Scott, U.S. Army National Guard, Director of Individual and Family Policy of the Office of Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs; and Michael Petrilli, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Innovation and Improvement in the Department of Education.

We'll introduce our second panel at the time they testify. I welcome members of our first panel. We have your written testimony, but we will start with you, Secretary Molino, for any comments you want to make in summary of your written testimony.

STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN M. MOLINO, DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR MILITARY COMMUNITY AND FAMILY POLICY

Secretary MOLINO. Thank you, Chairman Chambliss, Chairman Alexander, members of the subcommittees. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss with you matters of vital and mutual interest,

the welfare of our brave men and women in uniform and their families. Since I am not sure how long Senator Kennedy will be able to stay here, let me depart briefly from my prepared text and thank you, sir, for the endorsement of the Marine Corps OneSource program.

Just by way of background, when we decided to test that program we asked the Marine Corps to do it because, of all the Services, they were less than enthusiastic about testing it, and we knew, based on their size, that they were the ideal force that we should test it on. They not only have tested it, they have literally fallen in love with that program.

The Army has learned from their feedback and has gotten on board, and is now contracting with that organization. They've even added an additional service from another organization that will help out and complement. The other two Services, the Air Force and the Navy, are considering, based on the feedback that we're getting from the Marines, the feasibility of moving forward, but Senator, you're exactly right, we're very enthused with the potential of this program.

Senator KENNEDY. 140 languages, I saw.

Secretary MOLINO. Yes, sir.

Senator KENNEDY. Or at least that's in the print. I'm not sure, but it's incredible.

Secretary MOLINO. With only a slight delay they can link you with someone who speaks one of those 140 languages.

Senator KENNEDY. Thank you very much.

Secretary MOLINO. Yes, sir.

Senator KENNEDY. Thank you.

Secretary MOLINO. Mr. Chairman, I welcome the chance to share good news with you, news about taking care of people. I welcome the direct involvement of both subcommittees and, on behalf of the Department, I am open to your ideas and your suggestions. We can learn from your observations, from the hearings in Georgia, at Fort Campbell, at Groton, and the future hearings in Nebraska and perhaps elsewhere.

In the interest of time I'll be brief and, with your permission, refer to my written remarks for greater detail.

Those who volunteer to serve our country in uniform expect to make sacrifices. However, since 60 percent of military members now have family responsibilities, they must, as we would expect, give due consideration to the well-being of their spouses and their children. If we are to keep dedicated men and women whom we have trained so well, we must ensure that they and their families are provided with pay, health, education, and other benefits that provide them with a quality of life that is, at the very least, competitive with the society they have sworn to defend.

In the first month of his tenure in office, President Bush formally directed the Secretary of Defense to study military quality of life, and expressed clearly his commitment to this genuine readiness issue. To that end, the Department, in its new social compact, has entered into a written commitment to improve life in the military, to underwrite family support programs, and to work in partnership with families to accomplish the military mission.

In the decade since Operation Desert Storm, the Department has worked diligently to ensure that service members and their families are provided with the best support possible, especially during periods of mobilization and deployment. We have sought and employed the best knowledge and tools available to help military families cope with the demands of frequent separations and the realities of a vocation in which one or both parents may be placed in harm's way, in some cases on very short notice.

In several instances, we have leveraged the power of public-private partnerships and technology to deliver these services. The Department has come to rely heavily on its professional Reserve components. After National Guardsmen and reservists complete their tours of active duty, it is our responsibility to ensure that they receive the information, counseling, and other support they may need for successful reintegration with their families and transition back into their civilian jobs.

We are meeting that responsibility. Each of the four Services has made great strides in preparing service members and their families for dealing with deployments and facilitating ongoing contact between deployed members and their families.

All parents are challenged by the need to satisfy the competing demands of work and family. That is doubly true for parents whose work is ensuring that military missions are successful. The Department is committed to maintaining a high standard for its child and youth programs, and offering a full spectrum of services. During periods of deployment, youth programs take on added significance, especially when parents are deployed to areas where open hostility may be encountered.

Children are not only stressed by the fear of physical harm to their parents, but they also lose the benefit of the guidance, support, and nurturing that parents would provide. Our 474 youth centers provide safe and secure environments where military youth can connect with their peers and participate in recreation and sports programs. I have asked the Army's Program Manager for Children and Youth, Ms. M.A. Lucas, to give you more details about these programs. She will testify as part of the second panel, and will share some good news about the initiatives regarding services both on and off installations and in remote areas.

Let me now speak to the issue of schooling for children of military personnel. After health and safety, perhaps no concern related to their children's development is as great as parents' desire that their children attend good schools. The Department operates an excellent K-12 school system for 106,000 military dependent students at 224 schools overseas and in 7 States in the continental United States.

Dr. Joseph Tafoya, director of that school system, is with us today to provide you with details about the DOD schools and the children who attend them. However, 1.5 million school-age children of active duty, Reserve, or National Guard families attend schools not within the Department of Defense system.

About 600,000 of these children come from active duty families. It is not unheard of for these students to attend six different schools before high school graduation. Some have reported attending as many as 10 or 11. As they move from school to school, stu-

dents and their families encounter difficulties with course transfers, exit exams, athletic eligibility, and unique graduation requirements.

Recently, we have addressed issues related to the stress experienced by military dependent children because their parents are deployed to areas where danger is very real. We are addressing these issues, working closely with school superintendents, principals, and educators to increase awareness and raise sensitivities.

Just as life at our installations changes when troops are deployed, local communities are also affected significantly when large numbers are withdrawn from the community. Around the country, citizens have been generous with their time and their skills to be good neighbors to military family members left behind. We are grateful that during deployments over the past 2 years, local business and community service organizations have felt very connected to military families and have sought ways to help. Through cooperative efforts with the USA Freedom Corps, we have been able to channel the volunteerism of many local businesses and individuals to the families of deployed personnel who most need assistance.

The Department has resolved to recognize communities that are particularly friendly to military members and their families. We are developing a quality-of-life quotient that will enable us to identify communities of excellence. This initiative will also enable civilian communities to target efforts to make their communities excellent places to live, work, and raise a family.

We are committed to meeting the quality-of-life needs of our service members and their families. To maintain a modern military force in a honed state of readiness requires high morale that is bred of satisfaction with working and living conditions. We are confident that if we treat our people well, they will stay with us.

When they retire or otherwise leave active duty, they will depart with a positive memory of the military lifestyle and be our best advocates for service by future generations. With that, the Department will receive an excellent return on its training investment and ensure that tomorrow's military will be strong and capable.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify before you today. I very much appreciate your continued interest in and support of quality-of-life programs and initiatives that enhance readiness and benefit military members and their families.

[The prepared statement of Secretary Molino follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY HON. JOHN M. MOLINO

Chairman Chambliss, Chairman Alexander, and members of the subcommittees, thank you for the opportunity to discuss with you matters of vital and mutual interest: the welfare of our brave men and women in uniform and their families. I welcome this chance to share good news with you; news about taking care of people.

Those who volunteer to serve our country in uniform expect to make sacrifices. However, since 60 percent of military members now have families, they must, as we would expect, give due consideration to the well-being of their spouses and children. If we are to keep dedicated men and women whom we have trained so well, we must ensure that they and their families are provided with pay, health, education, and other benefits that provide them with a quality of life that is, at the very least, competitive with what they would experience outside the military.

To that end, the Department, in its new Social Compact, has entered into a written commitment to improve life in the military, underwrite family support programs, and work in partnership with families to accomplish the military mission.

Several new initiatives have germinated in the nourishing environment created by the recognition that the military's most valuable asset is its people.

Many of these new initiatives have leveraged the power of public-private partnerships and technology to deliver services. One that I am most excited about is an information service available to members and their families 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, every day of the year.

Earlier this year, we entered into a contractual partnership to pilot a program providing information and referral services to marines and their families. From anywhere in the world, an active duty or Reserve Marine or family member using toll-free telephone, email or Internet can communicate with a professional counselor regarding myriad topics, including parenting and child care; educational services; elder care; relocation; health and wellness; and financial and legal information. Communication is confidential and services provided include a comprehensive array of pre-paid educational materials, such as books, CDs, and videos. Simultaneous translation in 140 languages is available, as is assistive technology for low-vision users. Early reports about this program are very positive and we expect eventually to make these services available to all military families.

In the decade since Operation Desert Storm, the Department has worked diligently to ensure that service members and their families are provided with the best support possible, especially during periods of mobilization and deployment. We have sought and employed the best knowledge and tools at our disposal to provide education, training, outreach, and personal support to help military families cope with the demands of frequent separations and the realities of a vocation in which one or both parents may be placed in harm's way; in some cases, on short notice.

Last October, we issued guidance to the Services outlining the full array of services and issues to be addressed in deployment support. The guidance covered responsibilities not only for the period of deployment, but also for the phases before and after deployment. The guidance addressed such issues as total force accessibility to Services, outreach to parents, use of technology, support for high-risk families, strengthening volunteer unit-based support activities, and providing comprehensive return and reunion programs.

We established a Joint Services Contingency Planning Group to assess requirements and resources needed to support the total force during deployment. The effort was highly successful: establishing a forum for sharing ideas, eliminating redundancy, and identifying gaps in programs and services. Partnerships were formed with non-profit organizations to identify and implement strategies to ensure that resources and services are made available to those service members and families that most need them.

Through an important partnership with the Department of Veterans Affairs, we are working collaboratively with their Readjustment Counseling Service Centers to provide support for our returning National Guardsmen and reservists. These "Vet Centers" offer broad readjustment counseling services to our military veterans and their families. The centers are community-based and located in all 50 States and the territories. They have a strong track record in providing valued employment assistance and advice about educational opportunities, as well as individual and group counseling.

The Department relies heavily on its professional Reserve components. After National Guardsmen and reservists complete their tours of active duty, it is our responsibility to ensure that they receive the information, counseling and other support they may need for successful reintegration with their families and transition back into their civilian jobs. Personnel who work at Vet Centers know how to do that well. Our job is to ensure that our de-mobilizing members are aware of and linked to this important resource that the Department of Veterans Affairs offers to our veterans.

I am happy to report that all four Services have made great strides in preparing members and their families for dealing with deployments; facilitating ongoing contact between deployed members and their families; working with all components to integrate and augment support programs; using technology to provide accurate and timely information; assuring the viability of Family Care Plans; and developing web-based resources. Working with commercial airlines, we have even secured discounted fare options for military members who, on short notice, needed to transport their children to primary caregivers.

All parents are challenged by the need to satisfy the competing demands of work and family. That is doubly true for parents whose "work" is ensuring that military missions are successful. The Department is committed to maintaining a high standard for its child and youth programs and offering the full spectrum of services, including daycare through family childcare, accredited child development programs, and school-age care programs. As of December 2002, the military services were pro-

viding 176,000 childcare spaces, using a combination of delivery approaches to maximize availability within existing resources. We are working to add more spaces each year.

To ensure the continuity of services in unforeseen circumstances, the military services are expected to have contingency plans in place so that they can adjust programs and services to meet family needs as quickly as possible. Additionally, the Services, using emergency supplemental funds, have begun offering several new or expanded services, including care for mildly ill children, increased respite care at rates below normal hourly fees, and care during weekends, evenings and extended hours.

During periods of deployment, youth programs take on added significance, especially when parents are deployed to areas in which armed conflict or open hostility may be encountered. Children are not only stressed by the fear of physical harm to their parents, they also lose the benefit of the guidance, support, and nurturing that parents would be providing to their maturing offspring. Our 474 youth centers provide safe and secure environments where military youth can connect with their peers and participate in recreation and sports programs. We have been able to expand our programs considerably through partnerships with Boys and Girls Clubs of America, 4-H Clubs and other national organizations. For example, Boys and Girls Clubs of America has, over the past year, generously provided over \$5.8 million in program grants, gifts, scholarships and marketing initiatives.

Let me now speak to the issue of schooling for children of military personnel. After health and safety, perhaps no concern related to their children's development is as great as a parent's desire that their children attend good schools and receive a high quality education that will open the doors to collegiate studies and success in chosen professions, or satisfaction in the world of work.

The Department operates an excellent K-12 school system for 106,000 military dependent students at 224 schools overseas and in 7 States in the Continental United States.

However, 1.5 million school-aged children of active duty, Reserve or National Guard families attend schools not affiliated with the Department of Defense. About 600,000 of these children come from active duty families and attend public schools. It is not uncommon for these students to attend 6 different schools before high school graduation; some have reported attending 10 or 11. As they move from school to school, students and their families encounter difficulties with credit transfers, exit exams, athletic eligibility, and unique graduation requirements such as formal study of state history.

We are addressing these issues and others related to frequent relocations through identification and information sharing on a website (www.militarystudent.org) that will be operational later this summer. Also, through meetings with school leaders, parents, students and military commanders, we have found some "best practices" to be shared with other schools and communities. Last year, we published a booklet titled "Promising Practices" and have sent copies to school districts that enroll our students. The demand for additional copies has exceeded our supply. We plan now to include the booklet on our website so the good information it contains will be available universally.

Further, we are working with the Military Family Research Institute of Purdue University to study the impact that frequent moves or deployments of one or both parents have on the social, emotional and educational success of children from military families. Our study will encompass a cross-section of children from elementary-school through high school and from all four Services. The results of the study will enable us to work with schools to develop additional support programs and teacher training.

Educators, counselors, and mental health workers associated with public schools are generally not aware of the unique issues and challenges that confront military dependent students. To be effective, they must become aware of military child issues and appropriate interventions.

We have initiated several partnerships to help us address these issues with educators. We have expanded our partnership with the Department of Education's Office for Safe and Drug Free Schools to include work with the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (sponsored by UCLA, Duke University, and the Department of Health and Human Services). Together we developed the following information booklets: Educator's Guide to the Military Child During Deployment, Educator's Guide to the Military Child During Post Deployment: Challenges of Family Reunion, and Parent's Guide to the Military Child in Deployment. The first deployment guide is currently featured on the Department of Education's website. All three guidebooks will be available on the DOD website later this summer. We are considering publication of the booklets to ensure that the information is seen and used by edu-

cators and parents. The Department wants to be a good partner to local schools and is seeking ways in which we can help promote excellence in public schools, especially in those schools that educate our children.

More generally, we know we have a symbiotic relationship with the communities near our installations. Just as life at our installations changes when troops are deployed, local communities are also affected significantly when large numbers of people are withdrawn from the community. Citizens have been very generous with their time and skills to be good neighbors to family members left behind. We are grateful that during deployments over the past 2 years local business and community service organizations have felt very connected to military families and have sought ways to help. Through cooperative efforts with the USA Freedom Corps we have been able to channel the volunteerism of many local businesses and individuals to those families of deployed personnel who most needed assistance.

The Department has resolved to recognize communities that are particularly friendly to military members and their families. These are communities in which our families would be content to live even if they hadn't been assigned to that location. We are working with a contractor to develop a Quality of Life Quotient, and then to evaluate certain weighted factors. With this, we will be able to rate communities. A few of these factors are the following: Affordable Housing; Health Care; Availability of Quality Child Care; Employment Opportunities for Spouses; the Quality of Schools; Opportunities for Adult and Continuing Education; and Traffic and Safety. Using the Quality of Life Quotient as a guide, we will be able to identify Communities of Excellence. This initiative will also enable civilian communities to target efforts to make their communities excellent places to live, work and raise a family.

We are committed to meeting the quality of life needs of our service members and their families. Our service members have high aspirations and strong family values. They desire a fulfilling life for themselves and their families. To recruit the best and brightness, we must provide an inviting environment. To retain those we have trained and whose skills we vitally need to keep, we must ensure continuing challenges and opportunities to grow both intellectually and professionally. To maintain a modern military force at a honed state of readiness requires high morale bred of satisfaction with working and living conditions that make being a part of the military family more inviting than living outside of it. We are confident that if we treat our people well, they will stay with us. When they finally retire or leave active duty, they will depart with positive memories of the military lifestyle and be our best advocate to future generations. As such, the Department will receive an excellent return on its training investment, and ensure that tomorrow's military is as strong, dedicated, and vital as is today's. Now, more than ever, our national security and way of life depend on it.

Thank you Chairman Chambliss, Chairman Alexander, and members of both subcommittees, for the opportunity to testify before you today. I very much appreciate your continued interest in and support of Quality of Life programs and initiatives that benefit military members and their families.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thank you, Secretary Molino. We have also been joined by the Senator from New York, Senator Clinton, and we'd be happy at this time to take any comments you might want to make.

Senator CLINTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I want to thank you and Senators Alexander, Dodd, and Nelson for holding this hearing on these important topics. I would like unanimous consent to submit my entire statement for the record.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Certainly.

Senator CLINTON. Just very briefly, I want to thank the panel also for focusing on this range of issues: time away from children, which we know has a tremendous impact on the children's attitudes and their feelings, trying to make sure that none of these inequities that we're now hearing about. We had an awful example on Long Island where children of two deployed parents were kicked out of their school after they went to live with their grandparents, and they wanted to continue the continuity by sending them across district lines to continue to go to their same school, and unfortu-

nately, the district applied the most egregious kind of rule to disrupt these children's lives further.

We have a lot of issues, and I appreciate very much bringing these to this hearing. I look forward to working with the panelists as well as my colleagues to address them.

[The prepared statement of Senator Clinton follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY SENATOR HILLARY CLINTON

Thank you Senators Alexander, Chambliss, and Nelson for coming together to hold this hearing on this important topic. Thank you to all the witnesses for testifying.

This issue has long been a priority for me. Throughout my time as First Lady and now as a Senator, I have had the opportunity to meet with the families of our men and women in uniform. I have gone to Fort Drum and other military installations in New York where I have visited with the families of our soldiers as well as the families of Guard Members and reservists and to learn about the issues that are important to them.

It is not often recognized that the families also have to make a significant sacrifice when a husband, wife, or parent is sent off to war. These families left behind are serving their Nation like our men and women in uniform. When both parents are deployed simultaneously or the children of single parents are deployed, the children make a significant sacrifice that we cannot ignore.

When I was in the White House, I worked to champion the military childcare system because it should serve as models for the rest of the Nation. The military has done a truly exceptional job of providing high-quality care to meet the unique needs of military families. Military families often need care at nontraditional hours, including round the clock care, and, unfortunately, too often cannot afford to pay the market rate for high-quality care. By offering a means-tested payment system and a full spectrum of service offerings, from informal care to child development centers staffed by professionals, the military has done what the rest of the country has not—make high-quality care affordable and accessible to all families.

We still have a problem with reservists, who often live far away from a military base, to access affordable childcare at the hours they need them, and I hope that this is an issue these committees can work on together.

I have also been a long supporter of Troops-to-Teachers, which was started under my husband's administration. I think this program provides such an exceptional model that I worked to expand it into a national program during concentration of the No Child Left Behind Act, and today that program—"Transition to Teaching"—has already provided \$7 million to New York alone. I am pleased that Mr. Petrilli's testimony focuses on this important program, and I am committed to continuing to assist our retiring military in pursuing careers in service.

Despite the Department of Defense's model systems in education and childcare, I am troubled that finding high quality and affordable housing continues to be a problem for many military personnel and their families. Our service men and women cannot successfully complete their missions if they are preoccupied with concerns over the living conditions of their families. Sixty percent of the approximately 300,000 housing units are inadequate, and the waiting lists for on-base housing are often so long that many families wait over a year before finding permanent housing. Many military families choose to live off base in search of housing that meets high quality standards. When the private sector provides a better option, I believe we must provide our military families with a sufficient basic housing allowance that meets their needs. I am committed to ensuring that all of our military families have access to high quality and affordable housing that at the very least matches the standard provided by the private sector.

I am also concerned about the 20 percent of guardsmen and reservists who do not have health insurance, and I was pleased to work with my colleague, Senator Lindsey Graham, to address this problem introduced the National Guard and Reserves Reform Act for the 21st century, which will allow these individuals to enter TRICARE and will offset the costs for low-income people.

This bill was a tremendous step forward, and I hope that it will survive the conference, which is going on now. Either way, I will continue to work with Senator Graham to address this critical issue.

In closing, I just want to reiterate how pleased I am that these two subcommittees are working together on these important issues. As a member of both subcommittees, I intend to continue to make this issue a priority, and I look forward to working with all of you to make that happen.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thank you.

Dr. Tafoya, we'll move to you, and let me tell the remaining witnesses that we're going to adhere to a 5-minute rule on summarizing your statements so we can get to questions, so Dr. Tafoya, welcome.

**STATEMENT OF DR. JOSEPH TAFOYA, DIRECTOR,
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE EDUCATION ACTIVITY**

Dr. TAFOYA. Thank you very much, Senator Chambliss, Senator Alexander, members of the subcommittees. It is my great pleasure to serve as the Director of the Department of Defense Education Activity.

As Secretary Molino said, we serve 225 schools, and about 110,000 students around the world, and through our schools domestically. Our charter says we must provide a quality, comprehensive education, and it's in that second area where we have the quality-of-life issues. We must provide especially children that are overseas, the opportunity to do those kinds of things they would experience in a normal American school.

We have a quality staff, and we spend a lot of money orienting staff to the military issues. They become part and parcel of the communities overseas. They have an opportunity to be part of that community because of where they live. In our domestic schools, they live on base and off base and many of them are spouses, and so we spend a lot of time and effort ensuring that our teachers and administrators are sensitive to the needs of the military child and the military family.

We have a strong connection to local commands. You see examples in my written remarks to you of our efforts to communicate with parents that are deployed, to get our children involved, based on the age-appropriateness of their education, in activities that promote the parents and the child connection.

We have identified effective counseling and psychology programs for our psychiatrists to begin to work with kids as they have needs in our programs. We've been very aggressive in this area because we feel it's important to address those kinds of needs of children. Basically our communication with parents is the key issue, and our philosophy is, it doesn't matter whether the parent is there or around the world. We need to communicate with that parent; I think the examples we gave in my written statement highlight that.

Lastly, because we are a part of the Department of Defense, and our teachers are in places where the military is overseas, sometimes they are also in harm's way. Recently, our evacuation of several of our schools brought home the issue to our own staff that we need to make sure that those staff members, their children, and dependents are taken care of as we move them around the world based on the needs and recommendations of the State Department.

Lastly, we realize that we have kids only for a short period of time. I think the recent Vanderbilt study in your great State, Senator, highlighted the fact that we see mobility as an opportunity, not only as a challenge, and that we have kids only for a certain period of time. We need to maximize their education.

Likewise, at the direction of Secretary Molino and Secretary Abell, they have directed me as the director to get more involved in national activities with other State superintendents, with other districts, where we have high concentrations of military children to try to, wherever possible, ease that transition.

Sir, I welcome the opportunity to speak with you today and take any of the questions that you have to ask of me later. Thank you, sir.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Tafoya follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY DR. JOSEPH D. TAFOYA

Chairman Chambliss, Chairman Alexander, and members of the subcommittees, thank you for the opportunity to discuss with you the efforts that the Department of Defense Education Activity (DODEA) is making to meet some of the challenges facing military parents. DODEA is charged with providing a high quality, comprehensive American educational program to dependent children of our military members overseas and in our domestic schools. Part of that charge is to provide services and assistance that go beyond the basic educational needs of our students, especially during times of deployment and war.

DODEA accomplishes this on many levels through programs specially developed and implemented to address all issues that arise when a parent is deployed. Our teaching staff and administrators are provided with a comprehensive orientation to issues of deployment as well as to issues related to the military service of the sponsor. Deployment is a way of life in the military and DODEA employees understand the impact that it has on the families and particularly the students they serve. Just as part of the DODEA mission is to provide instructional excellence, it is also to maintain continuity and normalcy in otherwise very anxious times. This not only provides stability for the students, but also eliminates at least one concern from the minds of active duty military parents. Active military members should never have to add concern about their children's progress in school to their duties in the field. Our first and foremost responsibility is to keep students focused on their academic development, and DODEA's record of strong student achievement is reflective of this focus. Students need time to be children and the daily schedule of school can provide this.

DODEA teachers are highly sensitized to the needs of their students and their communities. Overseas, DODEA teachers are an active part of the military community. They have a strong allegiance to the mission of the bases they serve and have a strong sense of pride in the military activities of that base. They value the strong partnership they have with the command and parents who value their work with students. In our domestic schools, DODEA teachers are part of the larger community surrounding the base and are also active in supporting the service members.

DODEA annually identifies programs, materials, and intervention strategies to assist school counselors and school psychologists in their daily role of support for and training of staff, students and parents. In addition to these materials, DODEA ensures that counselors and psychologists are provided information about resources and strategies to support students and their families in response to world situations. Prior to Operation Iraqi Freedom, DODEA researched materials, programs and intervention strategies to enhance the resources available to counselors and psychologists. The Crisis Information Webpage, a link to the DODEA website was designed to help families, educators, and community members understand how schools would ensure that children and personnel are safe and secure.

The schools extended instruction to address questions and topics that are naturally on students' minds during a time of combat, by initiating special age appropriate activities across the curriculum. Older students were able to study geography and historical aspects of the Middle East to develop a better understanding of the culture and history of the region. Younger students participated in craft activities that sent cards, cookies, and other touches of back home to their parents and other deployed members of their community. Patriotic activities became an even more important part of the school culture.

Lastly, the strong connection to the command was extremely helpful in addressing the needs of our students. From the very top, commanders were committed to providing information and a connection for our students to their deployed parents through Internet connections, video conferencing activities, and to the Adopt-a-Service Member Program. Schools became a conduit for a variety of direct and indirect communication with deployed parents. Students regularly wrote letters, sent e-mail

messages, recorded audio tapes and sent videos produced in their classes to maintain a dynamic connection with their parents.

A classic example of this was the recent graduation of the 2003 Class of General H.H. Arnold High School in Wiesbaden, Germany. Through a partnership with parents, contractors, and command, the graduation ceremonies were broadcast live by satellite to locations in Iraq permitting deployed parents to be virtual participants in the critical milestone of their child's graduation ceremony. Events such as these occurred at a number of DODEA high school graduations. These events don't happen without the strong partnership and sense of commitment of the command, community, and staffs at DODEA schools.

DODEA staff and students also faced the need to "redeploy" during the recent military activities in Iraq. Several of our schools were evacuated due to State Department directives and our staff and students were faced with leaving their homes. DODEA staff members and their families were returned to the United States and depending on their certification were assigned to our domestic schools, reassigned to other schools in Europe or brought to DODEA Headquarters to work on curricular issues.

Our DODEA students and their families were given packets before they left for the designated safehaven. These packets included transcripts and course work information that would assist in an easy transition to their new school. Since we were unsure on how long these schools would be closed, for those students who were seniors, the packet included the transcript, the course work needed to graduate and a letter of assurance to the local school district from DODEA that upon completion of the listed coursework, DODEA would issue a diploma for that student. With few exceptions, this cooperation between DODEA and the local school districts went very well.

I thank you for the opportunity to share with you just a few of the ways that DODEA supports the social and emotional needs of our students while continuing to focus on our primary mission of providing a high quality education. Everyone at DODEA feels honored to play a role in supporting our military families and contributing to their quality of life. I am proud of the DODEA staff around the world for their commitment to our parents and students.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thank you very much.

Colonel Scott, we're pleased to have you and look forward to your comments.

STATEMENT OF COL. JAMES L. SCOTT II, ARNG, DIRECTOR, INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILY SUPPORT, OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR RESERVE AFFAIRS

Colonel SCOTT. Yes, sir. Good afternoon, chairmen and members of the subcommittees. I represent the individuals and families of our National Guard and Reserve components as the Director of Individual and Family Support in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs.

I'd like to share with you some of the critical challenges facing our National Guard and Reserve component military parents, and explain the policies, programs, and partnerships we've established in the Department to assist them in preparing for the absence of their military family member, and also for sustaining them for the duration of that absence, including the return, reunion, and reintegration resources to reunite them with their family and to reestablish them in their civilian jobs and dual military-civilian careers.

This committee has been very supportive of our National Guard and Reserve members and families, and, on their behalf, I want to publicly thank you for all your help in strengthening our Reserve components. Our military personnel and their family members are extremely grateful.

Our Guard and Reserve perform vital national security functions, and are closely interlocked with the States, cities, and towns in

every community in America. We have recently seen reservists called to active duty under the partial mobilization authority, and since September 11, 2001, nearly 300,000 Guard and Reserve members and their families have supported the global war on terrorism.

World events and our Nation's response have presented many challenges to the men and women who serve in our Reserve components. We are closely monitoring the impact of that increased use on our Guard and Reserve members, their families, and their employers, while taking a proactive approach to identify and establish new programs, modify and adapt existing programs and resources, and to expand partnerships in and out of the Department to enhance our military members and their families' ability to cope with the challenges of military service in defense of our great Nation and our communities.

Most of our Reserve component members have full-time civilian jobs in addition to their military duties, and we know that civilian employer support is a major quality-of-life factor for Reserve families. The Department recognizes the positive impact employer support has on Reserve component readiness, recruiting, retention, and the completion of the Department's missions. The National Committee for the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve coordinates the efforts of a community-based, national network of 55 committees consisting of over 4,200 volunteers in every State, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and now Europe.

Strengthening employer support is a major focus of current Department planning guidance. It requires the existence of a strong network comprising both military and civilian employer leaders, and the capability to provide for communication, education, and exchange of information.

Despite the increased utilization of our Reserve Forces since the events of September 11, and the obvious impact that the call-up of reservists has had on our Nation's employers, those employers have responded in an overwhelmingly positive fashion. Later today, this evening, I will depart Washington, DC, to join my colleagues at the 2003 Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve Leadership Conference, where many of these employers will be recognized.

Mr. Chairman, there's a great deal more detail in my written testimony concerning the programs and policies and tools that we've established to support our family members. This concludes my oral statement. I thank you and the subcommittees' members for the opportunity to testify before you today, and also for the outstanding support that you've provided to the military members of our total force, and to all of their families.

[The prepared statement of Colonel Scott follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY COL. JAMES L. SCOTT II, ARNG

INTRODUCTION

Good morning chairmen and members of the subcommittees. Thank you for the invitation to testify before you today. I represent the individuals and families of our military Reserve components, as the Director of Individual and Family Support Policy in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs. Today, I will share with you some of the critical challenges facing National Guard and Reserve component military parents and explain the policies, programs, and partnerships we have established in the Department to assist them in preparing for the

absence of their military family member and sustaining them for the duration of that absence as well as the return, reunion, and reintegration resources to reunite them with their family and to reestablish them in their civilian jobs and dual civilian military careers. This committee has been very supportive of our National Guard and Reserve members and families and on their behalf, I want to publicly thank you for all your help in strengthening our Reserve components. Our military personnel and their family members are grateful. Thank you.

OASD/RA AND INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILY SUPPORT MISSION

The mission of the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs (OASD/RA), as stated in title 10 USC, is the overall supervision of all Reserve components affairs in the Department of Defense. The mission of the Individual and Family Support Policy Directorate in that office is to ensure total force family readiness, and our goal is to support mission readiness through Reserve component family readiness.

I take this responsibility very seriously because our Guard and Reserve perform vital national security functions and are closely interlocked with the States, cities, towns, and every community in America. We have recently seen reservists called to active duty under partial mobilization authority as a result of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and western Pennsylvania as well as continuing their participation and commitment to Presidential Reserve Call-Ups (PRCs) in Bosnia, Kosovo and Southwest Asia. Since September 11, 2001, nearly 300,000 Guard and Reserve members and their families have supported the global war on terrorism. World events and our Nation's response have presented many challenges to the men and women who serve in our Reserve components. We are closely monitoring the impact of that increased use on our Guard and Reserve members, their families, and their employers while taking a proactive approach to identify and establish new programs, modify and adapt existing programs and resources, and expand partnerships in and out of the Department to enhance our military members' and their families' ability to cope with the challenges of military service in defense of our Nation and our communities.

RESERVE COMPONENT FAMILY READINESS AND SUPPORT PROGRAMS

In the post-Cold War era, members of the National Guard and Reserve are being called to active duty to an unprecedented extent. Indeed, in recent years we have called reservists to duty involuntarily for ongoing missions in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Southwest Asia. Today, there are National Guard and Reserve members serving on active duty in support of Operation Noble Eagle, Operation Enduring Freedom, and Operation Iraqi Freedom. Contingency operations challenge our service members and their families, and demonstrate that mission readiness and family readiness are inextricably intertwined. We cannot continue to rely on our reservists, who now comprise approximately half our total force, if their families are not ready for the stresses and strains of separations and long deployments.

When mobilized, reservists and their families face unique challenges and barriers. Reserve families are widely dispersed geographically and live and work in over 4,000 communities across the Nation. Often, they do not live near military installations where family support readiness services are most readily available and they may not know what services are available. Even when they are aware of available services, they often encounter difficulties in accessing them. More often they are in civilian communities with their children in public and private schools where there may be little experience or knowledge of the impacts of mobilization and deployment on parents and children.

The Department of Defense (DOD) is continuing to enhance its efforts to support Reserve families and children. The Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs (OASD (RA)) and the Office of Family Policy (OFP) have formed a strategic partnership to ensure that National Guard and Reserve family readiness requirements are recognized and included in all family readiness policy concerns within DOD. One significant result of this partnership was the publication of the first Guard and Reserve Family Readiness Strategic Plan 2000–2005. It provides a blueprint for offering greater support to National Guard and Reserve families and assisting them in coping with the stresses of separations and long deployments. The plan set out specific goals and milestones and we have already accomplished a number of these. Also, it established a link between family readiness and unit mission readiness. This plan and the products established as a result of its implementation are a direct result of partnership efforts within the OSD staff to include the Office of Military Community and Family Policy and their Quality of Life, Family Policy, Children and Youth, Community Support, and Continuing Education offices. Their

efforts and cooperation have allowed us to keep Reserve component families in the mainstream of current initiatives to support all military families.

Beginning in 2002 the OSD Office of Family Policy, Reserve Affairs, the Services and their Reserve components, and numerous Federal agencies have been meeting regularly in a Joint Service Family Readiness Contingency Assessment Working Group. The group representatives work to anticipate challenges and disseminate information during ongoing Operations Noble Eagle, Enduring Freedom, and Iraqi Freedom. The foundation for support of family members lies in the preparation and education of professionals and family members alike well before a reservist is called to active duty or actually deployed. The ability of Reserve component members to focus on their assigned military duties, rather than worrying about family matters, is directly affected by the confidence a member has that his family can readily access family support services.

We published the 5th Edition of A Guide to Reserve Family Member Benefits in May 2003, to inform family members about military benefits and entitlements, including medical and dental care, commissary and exchange privileges, military pay and allowances, and reemployment rights. From our surveys of spouses of deployed Reserve component members, we know that information and communication are essential to Reserve families. In addition to information concerning their deployed spouse, family members request information on available benefits, services, and programs, to include locations of commissaries, exchanges, healthcare and other facilities. Communication through an established unit or organizational point of contact is also key. We use a constant stream of updated information on benefits and entitlements disseminated through informal e-mailing lists, news releases, and personal speeches to ensure that Reserve component members and their families have the most current and accurate information possible. We are also expanding the accessibility of 1-800 and Internet-based employee assistance-like programs to include all Reserve component families. The United States Marine Corps has implemented Marine Corps Community Services "One Source" for all marines and their families, the National Guard has fielded their "Guard Assist" and "Guardfamily.org" for the Army and Air National Guard, and we are working closely with the Naval Reserve and the Air Force Reserve to establish their programs.

One of the lessons of this and other recent wars is that effectiveness in combat depends heavily on jointness, how well the different branches of the military communicate and coordinate their efforts on and off the battlefield. It is eminently clear that achieving jointness in wartime requires building that jointness in peacetime. That includes jointness in mission readiness, family readiness, and all quality-of-life areas of concern. We recently published a Joint Service/Total Force Guard and Reserve Family Readiness Programs Tool Kit. It is a comprehensive guide on pre-deployment, deployment, and post-deployment information for commanders, service members, family members, and family program managers. It contains checklists, pamphlets, and other information, such as benefits and services available that inform family members how to prepare for deployment. The Tool Kit is based on "best practices" from the field as identified by the active and Reserve components. As with other informational products, the family readiness tool kit can be accessed on the Reserve Affairs website at <http://www.defenselink.mil/ra>.

DOD guidance on Reserve family readiness is provided in DOD Instruction 1342.23, which encourages commanders at all levels to support total force joint-service family readiness efforts in maximizing regional cooperation, planning, and information sharing. The Department encourages participation in InterService Family Assistance Committees at the State and regional level rather than reliance on single Service or component programs to meet the needs of a divergent and geographically dispersed force.

Taking care of our mobilized Guard and Reserve members and their families is a top priority for the Department. While we can draw on our experience from past call-ups, we continue to examine our policies and programs to ensure that our mobilized reservists do not feel disenfranchised and that we have the family support systems in place. The National Guard has greatly enhanced the Department's ability to meet family needs by establishing more than 400 Family Assistance Centers in all 50 States plus Puerto Rico and Guam. Moreover, many of the Veterans Service Organizations have come forward with initiatives to support active and Reserve families left behind. One example is the Veterans of Foreign Wars who provide State coordinators in each of the States to ensure that volunteer efforts and donations are channeled to families who have the greatest need for assistance. The Department is also partnering with the Veterans Administration to ensure that demobilizing Reserve component members have access to their post-mobilization and transition counseling benefits through the Veterans Rehabilitation Counseling Centers across the Nation. The Office of Continuing Education has worked with our of-

face to provide information and materials through the Department of Education to all school districts throughout the United States so that administrators, faculty, counselors, staff, and parents may begin to understand and address the needs of children of deployed Reserve members. These include an Educator's Guide to the Military Child During Deployment and a Parent's Guide to the Military Child During Deployment and Reunion.

We also recently conducted a childcare summit to determine the significance of childcare requirements for Guard and Reserve families when the military member is training at home station and also the additional requirements when the military member is mobilized and/or deployed. The summit determined that childcare requirements for Reserve families vary dramatically between the Services and are largely determined by the families' ability to provide childcare from internal resources. Each of the Services have addressed these varying requirements by conducting pilot programs to assist and expand childcare services and resources for Reserve component families when and where needed. These programs have been largely successful and will likely be embedded in future planning and programming.

EMPLOYER SUPPORT

Since most Reserve component members have a full-time civilian job in addition to their military duties, civilian employer support is a major quality-of-life factor for Reserve families. The Department recognizes the positive impact employer support has on Reserve component readiness, recruiting, retention, and completion of the Department's missions. The National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) coordinates the efforts of a community-based national network of 55 committees consisting of over 4,200 volunteers in every State, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and Europe. ESGR's mission is to obtain employer and community support that ensures availability and readiness of National Guard and Reserve Forces.

Strengthening employer support is a major focus of current Department planning guidance. It requires the existence of a strong network, comprising both military and civilian-employer leaders, and capable of providing for communication, education, and exchange of information. To build this support, we are increasing our efforts to improve communications between the Department and employers, identify future actions that will provide some relief for employers when we call upon their reservist-employees, and strengthen the relationship between the Department and employers that will enable us to continue to use our shared employees.

Despite the increased utilization of our Reserve Forces since the events of September 11, and the obvious impact that the call-up of reservists has had on our Nation's employers, our Nation's employers have responded in overwhelmingly positive fashion. Many employers have extended benefits for their reservists mobilized to support Operations Enduring Freedom, Noble Eagle, and Iraqi Freedom, provided pay differential while they serve, continued their civilian health programs, and given both financial and moral support to their families, spouses, and children. Our Nation's employers have overwhelmingly supported our reservists in this war on terrorism, and we are extremely appreciative of their support to the Nation and to our men and women of the Reserve components who are supporting this effort.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my statement. I thank you and the subcommittees' members for the opportunity to testify before you today and also for the outstanding support you have provided to the military members of our total force and to their families.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thank you very much, Colonel Scott. Mr. Petrilli, we welcome you and look forward to your comments.

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL J. PETRILLI, ASSOCIATE DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY FOR INNOVATION AND IMPROVEMENT, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Mr. PETRILLI. Thank you, Chairman Chambliss, Chairman Alexander, and the members of the subcommittees. I'm pleased to be here this afternoon to discuss the Troops-to-Teachers program. This program provides a powerful option for military personnel as they

retire from service or enter the Reserves to serve again on behalf of our Nation's children.

My position is Associate Deputy Under Secretary in the Office of Innovation and Improvement at the Department of Education. The mission of this new office is to identify, support, and promote promising innovations in education. We are especially interested in innovations that bring in highly qualified individuals into teaching and allow them to obtain teacher certification with a minimal amount of difficulty. Troops-to-Teachers is one of those programs, and I am proud to say that the Bush administration supports this program enthusiastically.

As you may know, the No Child Left Behind Act requires States to ensure that every teacher is highly qualified by the end of the 2005–2006 school year. This is an ambitious goal, and one that we can meet, but as Secretary Paige has explained, in order to meet this goal we're going to have to do things differently.

First, we must raise academic standards for our teachers, and second, we must lower the barriers that keep thousands of talented individuals out of our classrooms. The Troops-to-Teachers program does both.

The brave men and women who fought in Afghanistan and Iraq and their colleagues around the world represent one of the most highly skilled, highly trained sectors of our society. Many of our service men and women possess a command of mathematics and science, subjects that are critical to our Nation's economic success in the 21st century, and subjects for which there is a critical shortage of teachers in our schools. The Troops-to-Teachers program promotes high standards by identifying and bringing these qualified men and women and their top notch skills and abilities into our Nation's public schools.

The program also addresses the barriers that keep many talented people out of our schools. The hoops and hurdles and bureaucratic entanglements, and sometimes mindless requirements, that find their way into State certification requirements keep countless numbers of potentially wonderful teachers from ever setting foot inside a classroom. Troops-to-Teachers cuts through this red tape by placing critical personnel inside state departments of education, people who help retiring military personnel negotiate the land mines of government bureaucracy and certification requirements, and then connect them to school districts who want to hire them. The program has also put helpful pressure on the States to open up their certification systems to alternative routes into the classroom.

Participants in this program can receive stipends of up to \$5,000 to help them with the cost of certification, or recruitment bonuses of up to \$10,000 if they teach in a high-needs school. So far, Troops-to-Teachers has placed at least 5,000 new teachers in the classrooms, many of them in the hard-to-fill areas of mathematics, science, and special education. Participants are heavily male and heavily minority, providing more such role models in the classroom. Retention rates have been very good, and principals are generally thrilled with the performance of these teachers.

Not surprisingly, the troops hold very high standards for their students. A 1998 survey found that program participants believe

that all children can achieve at high levels, and that students' socioeconomic backgrounds should not prevent them from performing at the highest levels.

Examples abound of military personnel who went on to become excellent teachers through this program. I included many in my prepared remarks. Let me just mention one here, Michael Glaze, who left the Air Force after 19 years to become a third-grade teacher in Beaufort, South Carolina, and last year was named teacher of the year of that elementary school. There are many more stories just like that.

We are convinced that this program is good for America's schools. We also think it is good for military personnel and their families as they look for new career opportunities after their retirement, or during their service in the Reserves. We at the Department of Education are proud to be a small part of this program's success.

That concludes my prepared remarks. I'd be happy to answer any questions that the subcommittees may have. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Petrilli follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY MICHAEL J. PETRILLI

Chairman Alexander, Chairman Chambliss, and subcommittees' members, I am pleased to be here this afternoon to discuss the Troops-to-Teachers program, as part of your hearing on the impact of Federal laws and policies on military families raising children.

My position is Associate Deputy Under Secretary in the Office of Innovation and Improvement in the Department of Education. The mission of this new office is to identify, support, and promote promising innovations in elementary and secondary education. We are particularly interested in approaches that bring highly qualified individuals into teaching, including approaches that target non-traditional candidates and allow them to obtain teacher certification with a minimum of difficulty. Troops-to-Teachers is definitely one of those programs, and I am proud to say that the Bush administration supports it enthusiastically.

The No Child Left Behind Act, passed by overwhelming bipartisan majorities in both houses of Congress, challenges States to put plans in place to ensure that every teacher is "highly qualified" by the end of the 2005-2006 school year. This is an ambitious goal, and one that we can meet. But, as Secretary Paige has explained, in order to meet this goal, we must do things differently. First, States must raise academic standards for their teachers to ensure that they are prepared to teach challenging content to our students. Second, we must lower the barriers that keep thousands of talented individuals out of our classrooms. The Troops-to-Teachers program reflects both objectives.

The brave men and women who fought in Afghanistan and Iraq, and their colleagues around the world, represent one of the most highly skilled, highly trained sectors of our society. Many of our service men and women possess a command of mathematics and science, subjects that are critical to our Nation's economic success in the 21st century, and subjects for which there is a critical shortage of qualified teachers. The Troops-to-Teachers program promotes high standards by identifying and bringing these talented men and women, and their top-notch skills and abilities, into our Nation's public schools.

The Troops-to-Teachers program also addresses the barriers that keep many talented people out of our schools. Unfortunately, for too long, States have relied on certification systems that seem to repel talent, rather than recruit talent. Please don't misunderstand: many teachers coming through traditional preparation programs and State certification systems are highly qualified indeed, and we owe them our gratitude for the work they do with our children. But the hoops and hurdles, the bureaucratic entanglements, the sometimes mindless requirements that find their way into State certification regimes keep countless numbers of potentially wonderful teachers from ever setting foot inside a classroom. That is a shame. Troops-to-Teachers helps cut through this red tape by placing critical personnel inside State departments of education, people who help retiring military personnel negotiate the landmines of government bureaucracy and certification requirements. The program has also put helpful pressure on the States to open up new, streamlined "alternative" routes to certification that take less time, cost less, and are de-

signed specifically for career-changing adults with lots of relevant skills and experience. (As I will explain later, however, many barriers remain that keep talented individuals, including those from Troops-to-Teachers, out of the classroom.)

With that context in mind, let me lay out some basic facts on how Troops-to-Teachers operates and what it has accomplished. Beginning in fiscal year 2002, Congress has appropriated Troops-to-Teachers funds to the Department of Education; through a memorandum of understanding with the Defense Department, we transfer that money to DANTEs, which handles day-to-day administration, as it has done since the program's inception.

Troops-to-Teachers assists eligible military personnel in making the transition to teaching in public elementary and secondary schools. To be eligible, in general, a service man or woman must: (1) have retired from active or Reserve service; (2) have separated from the Service after 6 or more years of continuous duty and be willing to enter the Reserves for at least 3 years; or (3) be currently serving in the Reserves and have at least 10 years of active and Reserve service and commit to continuing in the Reserves for at least 3 more years. Program entrants must also hold a baccalaureate or advanced degree, except that those seeking to become vocational and technical education teachers qualify if they have at least 1 year of college, at least 6 years of military service in a vocational or technical field, or meet a State's certification requirements for vocational and technical education teachers.

The program offers participants counseling, referral, and placement assistance in moving into their new teaching careers. In other words, it links military personnel with teacher preparation programs operating in the States in which they want to teach, and then with school systems seeking to hire Troops-to-Teachers participants. It provides these services through 33 State support offices that assist participants with State certification requirements and employment leads in a total of 44 States. DANTEs also provides program information through a network of military education centers and transition offices, and maintains a Web page that provides information on job vacancies and includes model resumes and other information.

Participants can also receive stipends of up to \$5,000 to help them with the cost of certification expenses, or recruitment bonuses of up to \$10,000. Recipients of stipends must agree to teach full time in a school in a "high-need" school district for at least 3 years. Recipients of recruitment bonuses must commit to teaching full time for at least 3 years in a school that has at least 50 percent of its students living in poverty or that has a large percentage of children with disabilities.

What has the Troops-to-Teachers program accomplished in its almost 10 years of existence? The Department of Education has not yet conducted a rigorous, scientific evaluation of the program—we have been involved with it only for the last 2 years—but the data on program participation and information from available studies are very impressive. Although, for 5 years, the program did not receive an appropriation sufficient to provide financial assistance to participants, Troops-to-Teachers has placed over 5,000 new teachers in classrooms, and many of them have filled needs that are of the highest priority in school districts and schools. For instance, some 44 percent of placements have been in the hard-to-fill areas of mathematics, science, and special education. Participants are also heavily male and heavily minority; their presence thus addresses the need for more male and minority role models in the classroom. Retention rates have been good; as of 1999, 82 percent of participants who had entered teaching were still in the classroom. Under the statute, Troops-to-Teachers participants who receive financial assistance must be placed in high-poverty schools and districts, which typically have the hardest time recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers.

These basic statistics are backed up by positive findings from independent studies of the program. A 2001 General Accounting Office report found that the official records on participation in the program may actually understate the total number of military personnel who have benefited; they count only people who applied formally to the program, not other personnel who may have taken advantage of the counseling and placement services available but never submitted a formal application.

A 1998 national survey of Troops-to-Teachers participants by the independent National Center for Education Information found that participants had the types of attitudes and expectations that result in effective education. Participants believed that all children should be held, and can achieve, to high educational standards and that students' socioeconomic backgrounds should not prevent them from performing at the highest levels of achievement. It also found that teachers who had entered the profession through the program believed that they had achieved satisfactory relationships with students, parents, and other teachers, and that two-thirds intended to remain in teaching as long as they were able to do so or until retirement.

A survey in Texas found that school principals who had hired teachers through the program rated almost 60 percent of those teachers "Above Average" or "Outstanding." They considered program participants superior to other teachers (with comparable levels of experience) in such areas as "contribution to improvement of performance," "contributions to the school and community," and "classroom management." In a companion survey, 89 percent of Texas teachers who had entered teaching through the program reported that their last official performance rating was either outstanding or above average.

The Department's optimism that Troops-to-Teachers can become an important vehicle for helping to solve the teacher shortage problem, bringing non-traditional candidates into the teaching profession, and opening up new methods of training and licensing teachers is bolstered not only by these reports but also by some of the experiences of individuals who have gone through the program. To take one example, Michael Glaze left the Air Force after 19 years to become a third-grade teacher in Beaufort, South Carolina. Last school year, he was the "teacher of the year" at Beaufort Elementary School.

Other examples include 17-year Army veteran Eusabio Bretado who has taught math and social studies at Desert Hills Elementary School in the El Paso area. An immigrant from Mexico and a one-time high school dropout, he has received excellent performance ratings and his students have performed extremely well on Texas academic assessments. Douglas Kononos, after 20 years in the Air Force, has embarked on a second career teaching special education in New Braunfels, Texas. Arthur Moore, who teaches special education in Baltimore, entered the profession, after a 24-year Army career, through an innovative alternative-preparation program operating in that city.

I hope these anecdotes convey to you why we are so excited about this program. But I must also stress that we do not want to rest on anecdotes. One of the key objectives of our new office is to determine, using scientifically based research and evaluation methodologies, what strategies and interventions in elementary and secondary education really work, and then try to capitalize on those success stories by encouraging their proliferation. So we have begun work with the Department's evaluation offices on the initiation of studies that hold Troops-to-Teachers to rigorous analytical standards.

Before I finish, I should point out the remaining challenges confronting the Troops-to-Teachers program, and similar efforts to place nontraditional candidates in our Nation's schools. In too many States, certification barriers remain high. Alternative certification programs—which allow teachers to earn their certification while they are teaching, and often include intensive mentoring by expert teachers—are an important step forward. Without them, troops would have to go back to education school for several years, a luxury that many men and women with families to support cannot afford. But oftentimes, these alternative programs are expensive and lengthy, and merely repackaged traditional education school programs into a different (but still burdensome) arrangement. The Troops-to-Teachers stipends help with the cost, but many participants in these programs complain about attending evening classes that they see as adding very little value to their teaching.

What we desperately need are bold new approaches to certification, approaches that recognize the knowledge and skills that nontraditional candidates bring to the table, and approaches that focus more on results and competencies rather than on process and seat time. The administration has tried to do its part in recent years by supporting some important initiatives in this area. For example, we made a 5-year, \$10 million grant to the Western Governors University to support the launch of its online Teachers College. This virtual college allows individuals to earn their credentials by demonstrating their competency to teach through completion of courses or other creditable experiences. The competency assessments can be completed on line, any time, anywhere, and, combined with a teaching experience, can qualify an individual for a teaching position. This program is just getting off the ground, but imagine the possibilities it holds for the Troops-to-Teachers program. Military personnel stationed around the world, as they approach retirement, could take courses on line when off-duty and make great progress toward full State certification even before they return to civilian life. Only a handful of States have approved this program so far, but we hope the rest follow suit soon.

Similarly, the Department has made a 2-year, \$5 million grant to the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence. The American Board is developing extremely rigorous assessments for new teachers, both in key academic areas and in professional teaching knowledge. If these assessments are adopted by States, individuals who pass them would be considered fully certified, and therefore highly qualified. Troops-to-Teachers participants could take and pass this online exam and head straight into the classroom. This kind of streamlined approach is the best and

fastest way to turn our troops into teachers, but it depends on the willingness of the States to do things differently.

This concludes my prepared remarks. I would be happy to answer any questions the subcommittees may have.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thank you very much. I will tell my colleagues we're going to adhere to the 6-minute rule on questions. I will defer until the end, and we'll begin with Senator Alexander.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for the testimony. I would like to ask questions about the subject most of you talked about, which is education. If I had to guess, I'd think, of the families we've talked to, their first concern, outside the safety of their military spouse, is that their children have a chance to have a good education, and the three areas that I'd like to try to get some reaction to, if we have time in the 6 minutes, is, one, talk for a moment about the post schools and what we might learn from them; two, to inquire about, in how many instances are any of the Services allowing families with children in the 11th and 12th grade to allow those children to continue to graduate where they are rather than reassign the parent; and then third, I wanted to see if you had any suggestions about how we might help you in the comments you make about encouraging States to recognize, to engage in reciprocity, particularly as we get into the increased testing and someone moves from Arkansas to Tennessee and has to meet a new set of standards and delay graduation.

I was thinking about this. If I had to describe a school this way, and say that its students were from families who were at the lower end of income, whose parents were often and unexpectedly absent, who moved regularly, sometimes as many as 6 or 8 or 10 times during a K-12 period of time, who had a significant minority population, who had a number of single parents, who had an unusual amount of stress at home because their parents were subjected to the possibility of great danger, and who were from families where 63 percent of spouses are working and more than 80 percent of the lower income members are working away from home, why, you might say I was painting a recipe for an education disaster. Yet the Peabody College study of the post schools that you mentioned, the schools that are on the bases and the posts, and as you said, serve 110,000 students, is it 20 percent of all of the students, or 10 percent?

Dr. TAFOYA. Excuse me?

Senator ALEXANDER. Ten percent or 20 percent of all the children of military families are in post schools?

Dr. TAFOYA. In post schools, approximately 30 percent of our enrollment, and we're approximately about one-ninth of the children. So if you do the math real quick we have about 30,000 students out of the 900,000 that are on post schools in the United States. Obviously, we have 110,000 worldwide.

Senator ALEXANDER. Okay, so I listed all those potentials for problems, yet in September 2001, Vanderbilt University's study of the post schools found that DOD schools demonstrated high minority student achievement, and high achievement overall. For example, African-American students in DOD schools ranked first in the Nation in eighth-grade reading scores compared to all the States, so I gather we spend more per student at these schools, but we

have at least as many of the same challenges in these schools as they have in others.

What can we learn from the post schools, first about the schools that serve at Fort Campbell, the majority of children go to public schools, not post schools. What can we learn about those schools, or what can we learn about all of our public schools from these very successful Department of Defense schools?

Dr. TAFOYA. Sir, we are very fortunate to have the strong recommendation and support of the commands at these bases. These DOD schools are their schools. It's a model that corporate America could take to heart to see that, for instance, during our parent-conference days, the Services say to our parents, unless it's a case of a military mission, your duty station that day is at the school. We have many schools that have 95 to 100 percent of the parents coming for parent conferences because that's the expectation of the command that is there. So we have that ability.

We think in many communities where they have large employers, if they had that same kind of a program to dismiss their workers, to say to their workers, you need to take 2 hours, you need to go visit your school, you need to be there at parent conferences, that high rate of parent activity in the schools is what sets us apart, but I think there are other ways that public schools could benefit from that.

In addition, the other issue I'd like to comment in my brief time here, sir, is that again we spend a lot of money. A lot of that money has to go for other services. There's a misconception out there about the amount of money. We're the only school system that has to actively house our people overseas, give them allowances, travel their families back and forth, and so when we actually compare the amount of our budget that we spend on classroom, we're very close to the national average.

A lot of these auxiliary costs are what make our people costs higher. When our teams compete against one another in a limited six-game football-season schedule, we have teams going from London to Frankfurt to play football, in buses, so that's the additional cost we have.

Senator ALEXANDER. While I've got you, what about the idea of allowing military parents who have a child in the 11th or 12th grade to not be reassigned, so their child can graduate? Is that practice prevalent in the armed services, and if so, should it be?

Dr. TAFOYA. I'll let Secretary Molino respond to that.

Senator ALEXANDER. Secretary Molino.

Secretary MOLINO. Senator, it's a policy within the Army that, unless there are compelling military requirements, those requests will be approved, and in fact Army statistics show that only 1 percent of the requests since they instituted that policy have been denied. That amounts to less than 20 requests.

The Air Force is actively looking at that Army policy and considering the implementation of a very similar policy. The Navy and the Marine Corps, at this point, indicate that they have policies in effect where service members may request deferment from assignment, and don't feel they need a specific policy addressing this topic. They do say there is ample opportunity to request those kinds of waivers.

The most up-front example, however, is the Army, and they've had wonderful success with it, and it gets very good feedback from the parents.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary.

We have a vote going on, and that's why a couple of Senators have left, so I'm going to go to Senator Nelson.

Why don't we go to Senator Dodd, if that's all right with Senator Nelson.

Senator DODD. I'm going to abbreviate my question. I want to address child care, if I can. I want to set you up so that you understand what I'm getting at. You know the history of this, 1988, serious problems on bases with child care, Congress stepped in, working with the military, we had 350 percent turnover rate, low wages, very poor quality. Within 1 year of the military instituting some recommendations, we went to a 40-percent turnover rate, which mirrored exactly what was going on within the Services themselves, just a vastly improved situation.

We hired 5,700 Civil Service GS positions to improve training, linked pay, in fact, to training, and just took a system that was really in trouble and just shot it up and made it, as I said in my opening comments, the best child care system in the world.

The question I have for you is, I understand here now we're about to make some decisions that the DOD and the Army are doing away with the Civil Service or GS positions, going back to the pre-1988 level for NAF, or the nonappropriated fund employees, and I'm very concerned with the cut in these positions, as they pertain to child care specifically, because child care, as I mentioned earlier, is such an important support for military families. It is inconceivable to me that someone who is out fighting, putting their lives on the line, is going to have to worry at all about whether or not their children are getting the kind of care they need.

It's been such a success. I can't think of anything that would cause a bigger problem than to have people in the Services worry about whether or not their children are getting adequate child care. I don't know why we'd want to roll back the clock to the 1988 direction, if that's the case, and I want you to address that if you can.

I understand the family daycare system. I'm not opposed at all to having family daycare, and Senator Alexander and I heard in Groton some concerns about whether or not they would step in, but family daycare can't be the system. In fact, most military personnel if given a choice between a family daycare setting or a center-based, choose the center-based overwhelmingly. Given the choice, they prefer a center-based system, and so I wonder if you might address, Secretary Molino, what's going on here, and you're going to have a lot of concern expressed here in a bipartisan way, if we're rolling back the clock on child care on our military bases.

Secretary MOLINO. Thanks, Senator. We're not going back to 1988, and we will not accept or tolerate any degradation in the quality of the child care program that we have. You are absolutely right, we have the best in the world. We're very proud of it. Some organizations that were the most critical of the military child care system are now our biggest advocates, and give us the highest praise.

What we're looking at in the Civil Service versus NAF, non-appropriated fund, scenario, is, would that provide the commander more flexibility vis-a-vis the hiring process? Is this something the Services want, to give them more ability to fill spaces that might otherwise go unfilled in the staff positions?

We don't know if the answer is yes or no to that. We're looking at it. We're willing to ask those kinds of questions, but I give you our firm commitment that if there's any indication that any of these moves would lead to a degradation of quality, that's a step we're not going to take.

Senator DODD. You keep us posted on that. I'd be very interested in how the various Services would react to that very question. I applaud you for asking the question of them as well. I'd be very interested in their answers.

[The information referred to follows:]

That is why only one Service, the Army, will evaluate the system between August 2003 and September 2005. They will specifically look at such areas as the length of time for recruitment and placement, the continuation of appropriated fund support, issues related to training, benefits and health insurance and the review and expansion of the current child care personnel pay plan. We will, of course, involve all the Services in any assessment and future decisions.

The second quick question I have for you as well goes to the issue of infant care and toddler care. I don't want to bore you with all of this, but we found a situation where in the child care centers there were no vacancies for the infant care, and they had a ton of slots open for the older children, and it seems that under these—they call it a most efficient organization, or MOE, something's not lining up here right. What's going on?

Secretary MOLINO. I agree with you, Senator. I didn't react as skillfully as you did, but I read that example in Senator Alexander's and Senator Chambliss' op-ed piece that was in the Washington Times. I don't know the specifics of it. I did ask the question, and I intend to get into it a little more deeply to find out the details, because the information I've received would lead me to conclude that the commander in fact has the latitude to move money around so that it could apply to infant programs if they don't need them in the preschool programs.

What must be considered, however, is the fact that a dollar that buys toddler care, that dollar will not buy the same level of care.

Senator DODD. You're absolutely right.

Secretary MOLINO. It's more expensive.

Senator DODD. You're exactly right.

Secretary MOLINO. I don't know if that's the nuance that's involved here, but I need to find out more about it.

Senator DODD. Will you let us know about that?

[The information referred to follows:]

However, the commander does have flexibility within budget and facility constraints.

Secretary MOLINO. We think the commander has that flexibility.

Senator DODD. That would be good. That would make more sense to me, and you're right, infant care is more expensive for all the obvious reasons, but it would seem to us there was something else going on, other than just that. We didn't ask the simple enough

question that we just asked, so I'd appreciate an answer. If you could inquire about that, I'd appreciate it.

Secretary MOLINO. When we get to the bottom of it, we'll be happy to.

[The information referred to follows:]

While commanders do have some flexibility for adding or changing space use, what must be considered, however, is the fact that a dollar that buys preschool care, will not buy the same level of infant care. Changing the configuration of child development center rooms can require construction and more equipment and staffing. Often, it is not economical or practical to reconfigure rooms as the population changes from year to year.

Senator DODD. Mr. Chairman, in order to make sure my colleague gets a question or two in here before the second bells ring, if I could just submit maybe some additional questions that have been raised in writing to our panelists they could respond to, I would appreciate that very much. I apologize, but I'm offering the next amendment on the floor in the Medicare bill, and I may not get back, and that's what I'm concerned about.

Senator ALEXANDER. That will be done.

Senator DODD. I thank you, Mr. Chairman, immensely, and I can't tell you how appreciative I am, Mr. Chairman, of your taking time to come to Connecticut and visit the sub base in Groton. It meant a great deal to have you up there, and I'm sorry Senator Nelson couldn't make that trip, but you're invited any time as well.

Senator BEN NELSON. I'll come back.

Senator DODD. We're very proud of it. These issues are so important. I'm glad you understand how important they are. I know you do, but I can't think of anything we can do that could be as important as getting these family issues right for people. I thank both you and Senator Chambliss for holding this joint hearing.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Senator.

Secretary MOLINO. Senator, sometimes we're rightly accused of keeping our lamp under a bushel, and we welcome the opportunity to brag a little bit.

Senator DODD. You should. Some of these things are just great what you're doing, just terrific.

Senator ALEXANDER. Senator Nelson and Senator Dodd, thank you for your leadership. Senator Nelson, we have three votes coming up. I think we have time for you to ask the questions that you'd like, and then Senator Chambliss will be back and I'll go vote, so if you'll bear with us we'll keep going.

Senator BEN NELSON. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. Tafoya, the Department of Defense Education Activity as an office does an outstanding job of operating two separate educational systems. One for foreign schools, overseas schools in other words, and one for domestic schools at select locations here within the United States.

Of course, these schools have an excellent reputation. You've already heard some of the results of students who are attending these schools in terms of their outstanding scholastic performance.

The question I have is, does the Department of Defense have any activity or any kind of program that might help State public schools meet those unique needs of military children who are not able to attend the DOD schools? In other words, you're not able to

provide all the educational activity that's required by military students, so is there a program that you might have in mind? It would apply certainly in the case in Nebraska. It's one of the things that we're going to be seeking at our field hearing later this year.

Dr. TAFOYA. Perhaps Secretary Molino would be better able to answer that.

Senator BEN NELSON. Would you be better able, Secretary Molino?

Secretary MOLINO. I don't know how much better able I'll be, Senator, but I'll give it a shot. The Department has worked for sometime—we've recognized this, and as you heard in my statement the vast majority of our students, military children, do attend public or private schools. We have collaborated for some time with major organizations, the Military Child Education Council, of course, and the Military Impacted Schools Association, with which I know you're very familiar.

Senator BEN NELSON. Yes.

Secretary MOLINO. In fact, we're doing what we can to share best practices and to make superintendents, principals, and school-teachers aware of what is involved in being a military student, and trying to make them more sensitive to it.

We have a Web site that's about to be stood up called militarystudent.org, which would enable anyone, because of the dot-org indicator, to tap into that and find out what's going on with military students.

We have another Web site, militaryteensonthemove.com, which is keyed to the military student, so he or she can share and realize that they're not alone in the things they're experiencing, and you may or may not be familiar with, in collaboration with the MISA organization and John Deegan, we published a book called *Promising Practices*, which is an effort to share best practices across the Nation. It cites the best practices that districts around the country have implemented to make this transition that much easier.

So having said all of that, sir, we are very interested in learning from anything that comes out of the hearings that you all plan to have.

Senator BEN NELSON. Thank you. We are anxious to get that information as part of the public record so that it might be made available so that others can certainly be aware of it and appreciate the activity as well.

Because I don't want to miss a vote, at this point in time I'm going to take a recess until Senator Chambliss or Senator Alexander return. Well, just in time. Thank you.

Senator CHAMBLISS. I apologize for the interruption again, but we have three votes in succession, but we're going to try to keep going, because you've been very patient, and we have one more panel to go.

Colonel Scott, one question that came up during our field hearing at Warner Robins was with respect to the reaching out by local communities, particularly bases in local communities where local units of the Guard and Reserve had been called up.

A lot of times we know that services are available to active duty that aren't available to the Guard and Reserve. As we're calling Guard and Reserve personnel up more and more, we need to make

sure that we're equalizing not just benefits while on active duty, but while they're off active duty, and we've been doing that, but when they're on active duty the support services that are required by active duty are the same kind of services that the Guard and Reserve need. I would appreciate your comments on what your perspective is on that particular issue.

Colonel SCOTT. Yes, sir. We've been working very closely with the bases and the posts and the military installations to ensure that they can meet the surge capability, and, basically, what we found is that many of our military members and their families, as you suggested, may live in the communities, but many of them live away from the communities where these installations and activities are. The outreach characteristic is critical in order to provide those services.

What has happened over the last 3 months is that the National Guard, as the role model and leader in providing family assistance centers across the Nation to Guard and Reserve total force personnel, they've established more than 400 family assistance centers across the Nation, the goal here being that no one would be more than a phone call or a short drive to be able to get information, referral, and follow-up activities.

These family assistance centers obviously are not equipped and resourced to provide services directly, but they are there to assist the families in identifying exactly what they need and how they can access it. Again I would refer to the discussion between Secretary Molino and Senator Kennedy about the Marine Corps OneSource program. We're working closely with the Department to ensure that the Reserve components in the National Guard are also included in those services as they are provided and contracted for, and that is working very well.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Secretary Molino, is your One Source program in operation at all Marine Corps bases?

Secretary MOLINO. It is, Senator. It's active for the entire Marine Corps, active and Reserve. The Army has picked up on it, and has let a contract of its own. In addition to that, with some of the supplemental funding that Congress provided, we were able to go to Central Command and Special Operations Command and enable them, across Services, to give it to those family members who are assigned to those two commands.

Senator CHAMBLISS. To you and Dr. Tafoya, let me address this question. Another consistent problem that we've seen service-wide is the fact that some kids are required to pass history exams in one State, move to another State for their senior year, and run into a problem with credits because they don't get credit for that history course or that history exam they may have taken in Georgia and now they're in Louisiana. In addition, there are some courses that you may take in one State and you move to another State and all of a sudden they're not getting credit for those courses they fall behind in.

Another example of an issue similar to this, although a little bit different, is what has been addressed in my State, and that is that any child who now graduates from high school and enters into a university system school pays in-State tuition irrespective of

whether or not the parents are subsequently transferred to another State. I think it's a very positive program.

In those types of situations, are there any ongoing affirmative efforts by the Department of Education as well as the Department of Defense towards equalizing this situational, and solving these problems, and do you have any thoughts about things that we might do to try to assist you with that?

Dr. TAFOYA. First of all, before we could actually go out to other people and say, here are some solutions, we had to ensure that we had our own house in order. We were one of the first groups that was involved in the Army Secondary Education Transition Study (SETS), where they were looking at transition issues, to have our superintendents around the world agree to accept all transcripts, to agree to accept all courses that students have to ensure that in the Department of Defense schools we were not presenting obstacles to kids. That's been resolved.

We have worked closely with Otto Thomas, who also works with Secretary Molino. We have one of our ex-superintendents, Dr. McMullen, who was the superintendent at Fort Campbell's schools, working with local school districts that are around military bases to assist in that issue of transition to ensure that superintendents and local boards, according to the SETS the Army has done and the SETS agreement, they make a commitment to address just those things you've asked for, that requirements and courses and State history courses and all these kinds of things are addressed through the local board and the local superintendent. I believe there are 125 school districts now across the Nation who have signed onto that.

So part of our process here is to assist in that. We've asked our superintendents of our DDESS schools, our domestic schools to work closely with the surrounding schools in their community to ensure that is happening. I know Secretary Molino, through the Office of Educational Opportunity, has addressed these issues, and he may want to expand on that.

Secretary MOLINO. I'd like to, Senator, if you'd permit me.

The Department, in addition to what Dr. Tafoya has mentioned, has sponsored four conferences in areas where there's a high military density that brought students, parents, and commanders together with school personnel and school districts to discuss issues in common. Specific issues were identified, and we've worked extensively with these leaders and others to ease the transition for the dependents.

This summer, we'll activate a Web site that links to schools which our children are most likely to attend so that the students can communicate with those schools and know what the requirements are and bring the proper documentation with them, or in many cases even forward that documentation before they arrive.

The SETS that Dr. Tafoya speaks of is the Army-sponsored Secondary Education Transition Study. It looked at the problems at the secondary education level for students transferring between schools, that has provided some very revealing guidance. I cited the booklet to Senator Nelson that we published in conjunction with the Military Impacted Schools Association, and we're very optimistic.

What we have found is that some of this is a matter of miscommunication. Very often what one course is described as on a transcript is really the same course requirement. It's just under a different nomenclature, and we're finding that by breaking down these communication barriers we're having a good deal of success.

Dr. TAFOYA. Sir, if I may add one point about making sure our house is in order, we've worked very closely with others as the Department of Education receives the State plans, to ensure that we are aware of what other States are doing, especially those States with a large proportion of military children. We want to ensure that our graduation requirements, once in our system, are consistent with the most stringent in the Nation.

What we don't want to have happen is have one of our students leave one of our DOD schools, transfer into the regular school, and not meet all the requirements. So, as States up their graduation requirements for additional math, algebra, geometry, we are doing likewise, because we believe it's our responsibility to ensure that any student leaving our school and going back into a regular public school is able to meet those State standards. We're working very closely with representatives of the Department of Education and local State superintendents to address those issues, because we want to ensure that, in fact, the kids are well-prepared when they leave our system in terms of course credits and requirements.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Do we have any DOD high schools?

Dr. TAFOYA. Yes, sir, we have 57 of them.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Are there any domestically?

Dr. TAFOYA. Yes. We have schools at Fort Campbell and Camp Lejeune. We have another school at Quantico and at Fort Knox. We have four local schools in our domestic schools. We also have three in Puerto Rico and one in Guam.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Mr. Petrilli, in your written testimony you discuss some of the innovative methods to enhance the process for certifying teachers, including online opportunities. It seems to have great potential to benefit military personnel and their spouses who are interested in teaching. Has the Department of Education explored the possibility of extending the principles of the Troops-to-Teachers program to spouses of military members who may need just this type of assistance to achieve necessary training and certification?

Mr. PETRILLI. Thank you, Senator. We do have several programs that relate to people who are not in the military. We have a program called Transition to Teaching, which supports programs across the country such as Teach for America, that bring in talented individuals from other fields, mid-career professionals. Some of those programs do a lot of work online.

We've also supported through a Star Schools grant, Western Governors University's Teachers College, which is entirely online, and is meant to be really a national system. They have now accreditation, and they have reciprocity agreements with 47 States now, so if maybe a spouse of somebody who's in the military wants to get certified to teach, they could do so anytime, anywhere, and once they go through that process, that certification should be accepted anywhere in the country, so they're working hard on that. We've

been very supportive of those efforts. We'd be happy to continue to do work on that front.

We are looking at other opportunities right now to support additional outreach efforts to try to make sure that anybody in the country who wakes up one day and decides, I'd like to find out how I could become a teacher and what the requirements are, to make sure that information is easy to find.

We support a center called Recruiting New Teachers, which has an online clearinghouse. They're about to do a new relaunch of their site, and they're going to have a lot more information about alternative certification to really help walk people through what's required in all the States to make this happen.

A lot of this comes down to State policies, though, and the States being willing to look at these alternatives to their traditional systems. A lot of these troops simply could not afford to go through the traditional route of going back to school for several years to take all these additional courses, so we've really got to make a system that works for them, and acknowledges all the skills and knowledge that they bring into this service.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Are you getting the expected participation in these online training programs?

Mr. PETRILLI. Many of them are very new, so you know, at this point it's in its early days, and we don't know yet, but all indications are that this is something that's going to be very popular. Certainly we look to the other instances in higher education of online learning which are extremely popular, so we expect that to be the same here as well.

Western Governors University just received its accreditation about 3 or 4 months ago, so they now can really ramp up, and we expect to see that in coming years.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Great. Gentlemen, let me thank you once again for your patience in being here, for your testimony. Members will have an opportunity to submit written questions to you. I'm sure that we're going to have some of those so that we can put some additional information in the record.

Thank you very much for the great job you do for our men and women, and for our families. We appreciate you. Thanks for being here today.

Secretary MOLINO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. TAFOYA. Thank you.

Colonel SCOTT. Thank you.

Mr. PETRILLI. Thank you.

Senator CHAMBLISS. At this time, we'll ask our next panel to come forward: Dr. Shelley MacDermid from the Military Family Research Institute of Purdue University; Joyce Raezer of the National Military Family Association; and M.A. Lucas, Director of the Army Child and Youth Services.

Ladies, welcome to each of you today. We have already received your written statements. I compliment each of you on the quality of your written statement, and they will be entered into the record. I'd like to give each of you the opportunity to make an opening statement to summarize your written statement, and if you will, so we can continue to move forward, limit that to 5 minutes, please. Dr. MacDermid, we will start with you.

STATEMENT OF SHELLEY M. MACDERMID, Ph.D., CO-DIRECTOR, MILITARY FAMILY RESEARCH INSTITUTE, PURDUE UNIVERSITY

Dr. MACDERMID. Thank you very much, Chairman Chambliss, and thank you for your invitation to testify.

My sense of the question that concerns you is, has military life become so demanding that it's destroying families, and I'd like to answer with an analogy. Imagine a large-frame home built beside the sea. It was sturdily built, on a strong foundation. Over the years, it has withstood major storms, surviving high winds, dangerous hail, and isolation from the mainland.

Recently, the storms have been coming closer together and lasting longer, causing some damage. Less obvious than the periodic storms is the relentless wash of the waves, which has gradually eroded the shore and may be getting close to the foundation of the home. Dedicated and skilled workers have been doing repairs and preventive maintenance, but it's getting harder to keep up.

This is the image that developed in my mind as I reviewed data about military families over time. Deployments and separations are the storms of military life, the acute challenges that families willingly face. As I'm sure you know, the frequency and duration of deployments have been rising for more than decade.

The waves of military life are the chronic conditions families repeatedly confront. Frequent moves and long work hours are two examples. You've heard a lot about moving already, so let me say a word about work hours. These have been creeping up the beach. More than half of active duty members now report more than 50 hours of work per week. High or unpredictable work hours are associated with negative evaluations of military life, particularly amongst spouses.

Despite the storms and the waves, military families seem to be holding strong. There is good news from several studies in that 75 to 90 percent of families perceive themselves as functioning with no major problems, even after moves and deployments. I have seen no clear evidence that military marriages on the whole have become less stable.

I'd like to use my remaining time to try to do some long-term forecasting about the weather systems approaching in the future, based on the data now in hand. First, I think there might be some issues on the horizon about marriage, specifically about spouses. Military members are now less likely to be married when they enter, and increasingly less likely to marry while they serve, although 2002 looks to have been an unusually good year for weddings in the military.

To the extent that members want to be married, I wonder if they will feel that they must leave the military, particularly if the pool of prospective spouses is uninterested in military life. For current spouses, I think underemployment, as opposed to unemployment, may become a larger concern in the future. I also note that spouses' dissatisfaction with the amounts of personal time allowed military members took a sharp upward turn during the 1990s at the same time that members reported more satisfaction with military life. I wonder what the discussions are in those homes?

Second, there is much we do not know about reunion and readjustment. Following the first Gulf War, at least two large studies found that members' psychological distress was substantially higher a year or more after reunion than it had been immediately upon return. The degree to which reunion programs are based on such findings is unclear. In general, we know little about the processes of readjustment within families over time, and especially how different approaches to intervention stack up. I endorse the goal of broadening access to family counseling as a basic resource for well-functioning families, as well as families with more serious issues.

Finally, as I have reviewed the data, I have become increasingly concerned about depletion. Some researchers have observed that negative reactions to recent increases in tempo seem disproportionate. I wonder whether the combination of rising tempo and long and rising work hours may be eroding family resilience. Reservists in particular are being called upon to do more, more often, and for longer periods of time, but with limited access to the supports originally created with active duty families in mind. I think that the creation of the 1-800 information and referral service is an excellent step in the right direction for them.

We still don't know much about how challenges accumulate for military families over time and with what result. Independent of my vested interests, I think the creation of the Military Family Research Institute was a positive step, and we've been pleased to be part of efforts to address these gaps, for example with an upcoming study on military families as they move.

This concludes my statement. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Dr. MacDermid follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY SHELLEY M. MACDERMID, PH.D.

Good morning chairmen and members of the subcommittees. I appreciate very much your invitation to testify. I've been asked to review and discuss data regarding the well-being of military families, especially in relation to changes in the demands posed by military duties. In general, my remarks focus on the Armed Forces as a whole and not differences among the Services. Also, my comments focus on married military members, but I am very aware that all members are parts of families who care and worry about them.

My sense of the question that concerns you is, "Has military life become so demanding that it's destroying families?" I'll answer with an analogy. Imagine a large frame home built beside the sea. It was sturdily built on a strong foundation. Over the years, it has withstood major storms, surviving high winds, dangerous hail, and isolation from the mainland. Recently, the storms have been coming closer together and lasting longer, causing some damage. Less obvious than the periodic storms is the relentless wash of the waves, which has gradually eroded the shore and may be getting close to the foundation of the home. Dedicated and skilled workers have been doing repairs and preventive maintenance, but it's getting harder to keep up.

The home in my analogy represents military families. Deployments and separations are the storms of military life; the acute challenges that families willingly face. As I'm sure you know, the frequency and duration of deployments have been rising for more than a decade (Polich & Sortor, 2001; Rand Research Brief).

The war on terrorism has placed prolonged demands on military families in both the active and Reserve components. For example, in fiscal year 2000 less than 1 in 100 members of the Guard and Reserves was deployed (2002 Population Representation Report). As of last week, that number was more than one of every five (Wolfowitz, 2003). While this may be normal in time of war (Dunning, 1996), it is no less demanding of families.

I have two additional observations about deployment; first, to the extent that they are unexpected, prolonged, and violent, hostile deployments are "catastrophic" stressors that are much more challenging for families than routine events (Peebles-Kleiger & Kleiger, 1994). Second, deployment is not the only military event that

separates families. Unaccompanied tours of duty and other assignments should not be ignored as part of the military “weather system”.

The waves of military life are the chronic conditions families repeatedly confront: Frequent moves and long work hours are two examples. With each move, employed spouses who comprise about two-thirds of the total lose several weeks of work, and children make educational transitions (Active Duty Survey, 1999; Hosek, Asch, Fair, Martin & Mattock, 2002), sometimes changing schools multiple times with a single change of station because of moves to and from temporary housing. Substantial percentages fall behind or lose academic credit. The schedule mismatch between children’s school days and parents’ work days makes affordability and accessibility of nonparental child care major challenges, even for school-aged children too young—or teenagers too old—to be left home alone.

Work hours are another wave in the weather picture, and they have been creeping up the beach: the percentage of active duty members reporting more than 50 hours of work per week rose from 46 to 56 percent between 1992 and 1999 (Active Duty Surveys). High or unpredictable work hours are associated with the perception that work responsibilities interfere with family life, which in turn is related to family problems and disagreements, and especially among spouses, negative evaluations of military life. Soldiers with more predictable work hours, who feel better informed, or who feel that their tasks are necessary, well-planned or relevant report significantly lower conflict and inclination to leave (Castro & Adler, 2000; Durand, Burrell, Stetz, & Castro, 2003; Huffman et al., 2001). In the future, work-family conflict may grow as a concern because workers in general have increased their participation in family life and may be becoming less tolerant of the invasion of home life by work.

Despite the storms and waves, military families seem to be holding strong. There is good news from several studies, in that 75 to 90 percent of families perceive themselves as functioning with no major problems, even after moves or deployment (Orthner, 2002a; Kleiger & Kleiger, 1994; Marlowe, 2000). In addition, military members’ overall satisfaction with military life has been rising slightly (Active Duty Surveys, 1985, 1992, 1999). To the extent that deployments are not too numerous or demanding, and offer personal challenges and professional opportunities, there is some evidence that they increase members’ willingness to stay—especially members with dependents (Hosek & Totten, 2002; Huffman et al., 2001). Spouses’ satisfaction with their employment and career opportunities, while still relatively low, rose during the 1990s, evidence of success of the strong efforts by the Office of Military Community and Family Policy and others to assist them.

I know that there has been concern that the percent of married military members has fallen, but I have seen no clear evidence that military marriages on the whole have become less stable (MFRC, 2001). There is some suggestion that deployment may exacerbate the instability of already-troubled relationships, however (Schumm, Bell & Gade, 2000).

The news is also generally encouraging regarding the possible connection between deployment and spouse abuse. Overall, substantiated reports of spousal abuse fell from 1998 to 2002 (Keel, 2003). Recent longitudinal analyses show that the strongest predictor of post-deployment violence is not deployment but earlier violence (McCarroll, 2000, 2002).

I’d like to use my remaining time to try to do some long-term forecasting about the weather systems approaching in the future, based on the data now in hand.

First, I think there might be some issues on the horizon about marriage, specifically about spouses. Military members are now less likely to be married when they enter, and increasingly less likely to marry while they serve, although 2002 looks to have been an unusually good year for weddings (DMDC, 2003)! To the extent that members want to be married, I wonder if they will feel they must leave the military, especially if the pool of prospective spouses is uninterested in military life.

For current spouses, I think underemployment, as opposed to unemployment, may become a larger concern in the future. I know of no studies specifically on this issue, but in the July 2002 Status of Forces Survey, 29 percent of active duty members reported that their spouses were overqualified for their work. I know that spousal employment is already a high-priority issue for military policymakers, and continued efforts to expand access to good jobs and to child care are likely to help.

I also note that spouses’ dissatisfaction with the amount of personal time allowed military members took a sharp upward turn during the 1990s, at the same time that members reported more satisfaction with military life. Spouses continue to raise concerns about family communication during military action (Bell & Schumm, 1999). Anxiety, pain and anger on this issue come through loud and clear in family members’ contributions to the our web-based deployment diary.

Second, there is much we do not know about reunion and readjustment. Following the Gulf War, at least two large studies found that members’ psychological distress

was substantially higher a year or more after reunion than it had been immediately upon return (Marlowe, 2000; Wolfe, Keane, & Young, 1996)—the degree to which reunion programs are based on such findings is unclear. In general, we know little about the processes of readjustment within families over time, and how different approaches to intervention stack up. I endorse the goal, however, of broadening access to family counseling as a basic resource both for well-functioning families who need help over a hump, and families with more serious issues.

High percentages of active duty military members continue to report being unaware of some or all of the family support mechanisms available to them (Mancini & Archambault, 2000; Orthner, 2002a). I applaud the efforts of the Office of Military Community and Family Policy to improve awareness and coordination via the Joint Family Support Contingency Working Group.

Finally, as I have reviewed the data, I have become increasingly concerned about depletion. Some researchers have observed that negative reactions to recent increases in tempo seem disproportionate (Polich & Sortor, 2001); I wonder whether the combination of rising tempo and long and rising work hours may be eroding family resilience. Reservists in particular are being called upon to do more, more often, and for longer periods of time, but with limited access to the supports originally created with active duty families in mind—I think that the creation of 1–800 information and referral is an excellent step in the right direction for them.

Unfortunately, since DOD has so far conducted relatively little longitudinal research, especially about Reserve families, we don't know enough about how challenges accumulate over time and with what result. Independent of my vested interest, I think the creation of MFRI was a very positive step and we have been very pleased to be part of efforts to address these gaps with, for example, the upcoming Military Families on the Move study.

In conclusion, the military house continues to stand strong, but it is being tested. The options for policy makers are to reduce the storms, abate the waves, and devote even more resources to preventive maintenance and repair.

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Senator CHAMBLISS. Thank you very much, Dr. MacDermid.

Ms. Raezer, welcome back to the Subcommittee on Personnel. We're pleased to have you once again. I enjoyed your written statement and look forward to your summary comments.

STATEMENT OF JOYCE WESSEL RAEZER, DIRECTOR, GOVERNMENT RELATIONS, NATIONAL MILITARY FAMILY ASSOCIATION

Ms. RAEZER. Thank you, Chairman Chambliss. I want to thank you and Chairman Alexander for seeking the military family input at your recent field hearings, and for your continued interest in de-

termining how best to support these families as they support the mission. NMFA thanks Congress for its work over several years to provide pay, housing allowance, and other benefit improvements necessary to retain the quality force now protecting our homeland and waging war against terror.

We also thank you for including that \$150 increase in the family separation allowance in the fiscal year 2003 supplemental appropriations, and in the Senate version of the defense authorization for 2004, and would hope that that permanent authority is approved for all service members on orders away from their families. Whether a service member is deployed to Iraq, on a ship in the Pacific, or on an unaccompanied tour to Korea, to the family it's the same thing. Gone is gone.

Our written statement details many of the pressing issues affecting families, not just related to deployment, but also to their daily life, and as we've seen today, all of those things intersect. We urge you to examine how these issues intersect, and to ensure that changes made to remedy one problem do not result in an unintended consequence that creates a problem somewhere else. As seen in our discussion of military allowances, our families too often deal with the confusion caused by unintended consequences of program or policy changes.

Although some service members are coming home, many will be deployed for a very long time in too many locations around the world. Others are working those long hours at their home station to support their deployed colleagues. These service members need to know their families are as prepared as possible to handle the stress of deployment, that they can access vital support services wherever they live, and that's important, because so many of our families don't live on the installation, and that the volunteers and family support personnel on the front line of family support have the backup and resources they need to assist families over the long term and in crisis situations.

NMFA congratulates the Department of Defense for initiatives now in place, and for the heightened level of support provided during Operation Iraqi Freedom, especially the joint actions across the Services and the active and Reserve components.

We believe the level of family support now is higher than it was in the first Gulf War. What concerns us is how that level of support will be sustained over the long term.

Like Dr. MacDermid, I also had a weather analogy. My weather analogy was that dealing with deployment is a little bit like having a cloud over one's head the entire time. You have to go about your daily business, but the deployment is always there, just as the clouds have been over all of us on the east coast this spring, and so you have to look at both the daily life and the extra pressure that deployment brings, because that daily life has to go on. The children need the quality education, spouses need a satisfying job, health care has to be available, their homes must be safe and well-maintained, and the family must be secure financially.

What we are seeing is also that depletion, the fatigue, military families as they're dealing with the simultaneous burden of all of this, the deployments, pre-, post-, during deployment, education issues, spouse career issues, all of that is made worse, and more

unpredictable when families don't have a consistent source of information or support services.

There are many wonderful support services. Unfortunately, the level of information and support still varies across the Services, and across the active and Reserve components, across units within a single Service. They also depend on where families live, and whether the service member is deployed as part of the unit, or individually. Family support responsibilities are the command's rear detachment of volunteers, and professional family support staff must be clearly delineated and standards set so that families know where to go for assistance, and so that everything does not end up on the shoulders of volunteers.

Wonderful programs such as the ones referenced here today don't help if service members and families don't know about them. Family communication with the service member and the unit is essential during deployments, but family expectations about the level of that communication must be realistic so that those expectations don't actually contribute to the stress.

Some service members deployed to Iraq have been able to send and receive e-mail and regular mail messages and have had the opportunity to make weekly morale calls home. For those who haven't, and there are many, the families are more stressed. The unknown is always harder to deal with, especially when, as one service member's mother told us, we keep hearing on the radio that a soldier has died.

Families don't understand why their service members can't communicate regularly. Commands must contribute. Commanders must help service members communicate, and must encourage not discourage, and demand that their rear detachments communicate with families, especially if that unit is in a situation that's on the nightly news, and that includes Guard and Reserve families as well.

Other witnesses have talked a lot about the school issues. The schools are on the front line of family support for a lot of our families, and we hope that the support for schools will continue, both the DOD schools, and the civilian schools that educate most of our children.

Service members can't afford to be distracted by worries that their spouse is having problems with finding a job, that their children aren't doing well in school, that their disabled child has lost vital services because of the deployment and the counting of an allowance. The stability of a military family and community and the ability of the service member to focus on the mission rests on the Nation's continued focus on the entire package of quality-of-life components.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Raezer follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY JOYCE WESSEL RAEZER

Chairman Chambliss, Chairman Alexander, and distinguished members of these subcommittees, the National Military Family Association (NMFA) is appreciative of your interest in the well-being of military families as evidenced by the scheduling of this hearing and recent field hearings. Your focus on military families at this critical time sends a message to those families that Congress is interested in how they are faring and wants to ensure they have the tools they need to maintain a stable home life while supporting their service members engaged in the military mission.

This statement highlights the most pressing deployment-related concerns, as reported to NMFA by military families and our network of more than 140 Installation Representatives. It also includes a discussion of other important issues affecting military families' quality of life: the education of military children, spouse employment, relocation, health care, and how military allowances are treated by other government programs. While attention over the past year has appropriately focused on deployment-related issues, it is important to remember that military families' quality of life, and thus their ability to support the service member's mission, depends on the interaction of many factors. Service members look to the Nation to understand the family's quality of life is a readiness requirement: service members must have confidence their family is taken care of in order to focus on their military task. Quality of life is not just about the support provided during deployment, nor just about pay. It is about having a safe, well-maintained place to live. It is about access to quality health care without bureaucratic complexities. It is about a quality education for their children. It is about meeting the aspirations of a spouse for a career and a couple for a secure retirement. It is about respect for a job well done.

FAMILY READINESS

Since September 11 active duty members and their National Guard and Reserve peers have engaged in numerous duty assignments from homeland security to armed conflict. At the same time, members have continued to perform ongoing missions in various far-flung areas of the globe. Deployments produce economic and psychological strain and raise stress levels in the family. The lifeline of the military family, the military community, also feels the strain. Family services are important to an installation not pressured by high perstempo or conflict-related deployments. They are essential when families are left behind. Family center personnel, military chaplains, installation mental health professions and Morale, Welfare and Recreation programs all provide needed assistance to families. When spouses find themselves as the sole head of the family, the services available to assist them and their children are truly lifelines. E-mail, video teleconferencing centers, and special family activities ease the strains and pains of separation. But none of these services are without cost. Just as the deployed service member's readiness is dependent on proper training, food, shelter, clothing and weapons systems, the readiness of the family is dependent on accessing needed services. Both must have adequate funding and staff to ensure a force ready to successfully carry out its assigned mission.

NMFA is appreciative of actions taken earlier in this session of Congress to ease the financial burden facing military families as they deal with deployment by providing an increase for Family Separation Pay in the fiscal year 2003 supplemental. We strongly request permanent authority to provide the increase for all service members deployed from their families, as included in S.1050, the Senate version of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). Whether the service member is deployed to Iraq, on a ship in the Pacific, or on an unaccompanied tour in Korea, to the family, "gone is gone!"

Families and Deployment

Lessons learned during the first Gulf War and subsequent operations on how to support families have resulted in a wider range of options to assist families, units, and installations in communication and family support during the most recent deployments. Recent initiatives to support families include:

- Toll-free information lines;
- Partnerships with organizations such as the Armed Forces YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs, and 4-H Clubs to provide additional youth activities and after-school care;
- Increased after-hours child care available at some installations;
- Family readiness materials posted on various Department and Service Web sites;
- Additional Family Assistance Centers set up in communities dealing with high levels of deployment;
- Improved information and assistance for Reserve component families transitioning to TRICARE;
- Family support personnel tasked to obtain family contact information from service members at mobilization sites;
- Increased training and guidance for rear detachment personnel;
- Increased interaction with nearby civilian community organizations, including schools; and
- Improved return and reunion programs to support service members and families in the post-deployment period.

A program offered by Army Chaplains, "Building Strong and Ready Families" is a good example of innovative family programs and coordination between commanders and helping agencies. It is targeted at improving relationship skills and assisting initial-entry soldiers and their families with making the transition into the military culture. A clarification on the use of appropriated funds to pay the expenses of soldiers and their families to participate in these command-sponsored, chaplain-lead training opportunities was included in the Fiscal Year 2003 Defense Appropriations Act; permanent authority applying to the active and Reserve components in all Services is included in H.R.1588. NMFA requests that the Conference Committee include this language in the final version of the Fiscal Year 2004 NDAA.

Based on what NMFA hears from families, initiatives put in place since the first Gulf War have enabled them to better cope with deployment-related demands this time around. There are gaps, however, as pointed out by the family members at the recent field hearings. Problem areas include the need for more child care, better communication with the service member, timely information from the command, specialized support for geographically-separated Guard and Reserve families, training and back-up for family readiness volunteers, and enhanced support mechanisms to deal with crisis situations arising from long or frequent deployments. NMFA is concerned that installations have had to divert resources from the basic level of family programs to address the surges of mobilization and return. Just as the Family Separation Allowance helps families deal with the increased financial burdens they face during deployment, resources must be available for commanders and others charged with ensuring family readiness to help alleviate the strains on families facing more frequent and longer deployments.

Family Readiness volunteers and installation family support personnel have been stretched thin over the past 2 years as they have had to juggle pre-deployment, ongoing deployment, and return and reunion support, often simultaneously. Unfortunately, this juggling act will likely continue for some time as many service members are only now leaving for deployments of indeterminate lengths. Volunteers, whose fatigue is evident, are frustrated with being called on too often during longer than anticipated and repeated deployments. As these family members—on whom the military depends to help others even while dealing with their own family needs—expressed to you in the field hearings, they support the service members' choice to serve; however, they are worn out and concerned they do not have the training or the backup from the family support professionals to handle the problems facing some families in their units. Military community volunteers are the front line troops in the mission to ensure family readiness. They deserve training, information and assistance from their commands, supportive unit rear detachment personnel, professional backup to deal with family issues beyond their expertise and comfort level, and opportunities for respite before becoming overwhelmed.

NMFA knows that the length of a deployment in times of war is subject to change, but also understands the frustrations of family members who eagerly anticipated the return of their service members on a certain date only to be informed at the last minute that the deployment will be extended. The unpredictability of recent deployments is perhaps the single most important factor, other than the danger inherent in combat situations, frustrating families today. This unpredictability extends also to the length of time a family can count on a service member being home before he or she is ordered for another deployment. Families who can count on a set return date cope better than those dealing with an unknown return. Because of the unpredictable nature of the military mission today, family members need more help in acquiring the tools to cope with the unpredictability.

To better assist family members deal with the unpredictable, a clearer delineation of responsibility must be developed on who among the command, the professional family program staff, or other helping agencies provides what information, what training, and what support for families. Although the Services have improved rear detachment accountability and responsibilities since the first Gulf War, NMFA still hears of too many cases where rear detachment personnel supposedly the commander's information connection to families and the first line of assistance in dealing with the military chain of command and in facilitating communication with the service member were not responsive to the needs of unit families, did not provide timely information to volunteers, or did not even know what resources were available in the community. Families often express confusion about where to turn for assistance to the rear detachment, to the installation family center, or to the new Family Assistance Center set up in response to the deployment. Unit Family Readiness Group leaders ask where they are to receive training in communicating with and supporting other family members and what level of support is appropriately their responsibility. Because responsibilities are often not well-delineated, family

volunteers frequently feel that everyone's problems are being dumped on them, even when they do not have the requisite skills to handle them.

Commanders may recognize these gaps, but often do not have the expertise or time to train their rear detachment or volunteers in dealing with family issues, nor do they always know what resources are available either. Commanders must set the expectation that their rear detachment personnel assist families when needed and that families are to be kept informed about what is happening in the deployed unit. Communication is key in allaying some of the stress associated with a deployment, especially when the unit is involved in an operation featured on the nightly news. Frequent communication also dispels rumors. A capable rear detachment cadre and family readiness volunteers help to facilitate communication to and from the command and to serve as the commander's agents in supporting families. NMFA believes that the responsibility for training the rear detachment personnel and volunteers and in providing the backup for complicated cases beyond the knowledge or comfort level of the volunteers should flow to the installation family center or Guard and Reserve family readiness staff. Family program staff must also facilitate communication and collaboration between the rear detachment, volunteers, and agencies such as chaplains, schools, and medical personnel.

Organizational stovepipes continue to hinder collaboration in the development and maintenance of strong emotional and mental health in both individuals and families of the military community. As was seen in the Fort Bragg, NC domestic violence cases during the summer of 2002, not all military family members or service members make use of the counseling and support services available to them. While the TRICARE mental health benefits are rich by the standards of many other plans, the program does not have a preventive care component. For TRICARE to pay for services, there must be a medical diagnosis, thus discouraging many family members from seeking care. Many members and their families also believe that seeking counseling services through military programs may harm their careers or that these services are only intended for families identified as having problems. The authors of the Fort Bragg Epidemiological Consultation Report who examined the domestic violence incidents noted that the various support agencies do not often coordinate their activities. NMFA strongly believes that better coordination and communication among all installation helping agencies as well as with those in the civilian community is imperative to help families deal with stress and promote better mental health. NMFA also believes that TRICARE must cover preventive mental health services just as it covers medical preventive services such as well-baby checks, immunizations, PAP smears, and mammograms. An emphasis on emotional health rather than treatment may also make beneficiaries more likely to seek appropriate services in a timely manner.

National Guard and Reserve Families

As of June 18, 210,256 National Guard and Reserve members were on active duty. While many of the challenges faced by their families are similar to those of active component families, they must face them with a less-concentrated and mature support network and, in many cases, without prior experience with military life. Unlike active duty units located on one installation with families in close proximity, Reserve component families are frequently miles from the service member's unit. Therefore, unless they pay for their own travel expenses, families are often unable to attend unit pre-deployment briefings. NMFA constantly hears the frustrations family members experience when trying to access information and understand their benefits. The lack of accurate benefit information and unrelenting communication difficulties are common themes among Guard and Reserve families.

DOD has developed several key initiatives that address the needs of Guard and Reserve families. NMFA applauds this effort, but there is still much to be done. Although the Guard and Reserve have increased the number of paid family readiness coordinators to assist volunteers and provide basic information, Guard and Reserve unit volunteers, even more than many of their active duty counterparts, are still stressed because of the numbers of families they must assist and the demands placed upon them. At a minimum, NMFA requests funding for child care to enable these dedicated volunteers to perform their expected tasks more efficiently. Funding to enable families to attend pre-deployment briefings would help strengthen the ties between the units and the families and the families with each other and assist in ensuring that accurate information is provided directly to the family members. Guard and Reserve families ask for standardized materials that are appropriate to all Services, so that if an Army Reserve family happens to live close to a Navy installation they would understand how to access services there. The establishment of a joint Family Readiness program could facilitate the understanding and sharing of information between all military family members.

Through our contact with Guard and Reserve families and family support personnel over the past year, NMFA has heard wonderful stories of individual States, units, and families caring for and supporting each other. NMFA is aware of leadership involvement at all levels to help ease the challenges faced by service members and families. NMFA is especially proud of the efforts of The National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) as an advocate for the Reserve component member facing employment issues. ESGR is encouraging employers to set up their own family support programs and provides information to employers and to their employees about the legal rights of Reserve component members. By providing this information in the workplace, ESGR is helping civilian communities gain a better understanding of the valuable role the Guard and Reserve play in the defense of our Nation.

Compensation issues continue to be of paramount concern among Guard and Reserve families. Some surveys indicate that as many as one-third of Reserve component members have taken a significant pay cut upon activation. Families who initially financially prepared for a 6-month activation now are faced with the devastating monetary consequences of a 1- or 2-year loss in income. Some small business owners and single practice professionals are facing the loss of their businesses. NMFA is aware of the disaster the previous income replacement program created, but believes that attention must be directed to these problems or retention of these individuals may become extremely problematic. In addition, some Guard and Reserve members experienced problems with pay processing upon activation. This delay in receiving the paycheck led to overdue payments on bills, and occasional threats to foreclose on mortgages or to turn the family over to a collection agency. Pay and personnel systems for activated Guard and Reserve members must work in coordination so families do not have to deal with bill collectors.

Opportunities Exist for Joint-Service Collaboration

NMFA applauds the Office of Military Community and Family Policy in the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) for its creation of a Joint Family Support Contingency Working Group to promote better information-sharing and planning among OSD and the military Service headquarters family support staff, including the Reserve components. NMFA appreciates the invitation to participate in this working group, an innovative concept that grew out of the successful collaboration in the operation of the Pentagon family assistance center after the attack on the Pentagon. The working group understands that most military families live off-base and is encouraging new ways of helping families that are not all centered on the installation. NMFA has long promoted additional outreach into the civilian community by installation personnel so that family members unable to get to an installation can still receive needed assistance. The possibility of further incidents that might prompt restricted access to installations makes this outreach even more imperative.

Working group discussions have also highlighted just how "joint" our military has become and how joint coordination to improve family readiness makes sense in providing consistent information and in using scarce personnel and other resources to the best advantage. Because service members increasingly serve on joint missions or are assigned to installations not belonging to their parent Service, they need easily accessible information and support not necessarily tied to one particular Service. A start in improved joint family readiness support would be the establishment of a common web and phone portal to provide basic information and referral services. One possible vehicle for providing this joint information portal and for communicating with family members and helping them access assistance when needed, wherever they are located, is being tested by the Marine Corps Community Services (MCCS). The new program, "MCCS One Source," provides 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, telephone and online family information and referral, situational assistance, and links to military and community resources. Since February 1, this service has been available to active duty and Reserve Marines and their family members. The Army is also making this service available to soldiers and families at an expanding list of installations. Employee Assistance Programs such as "One Source," provide an accessible source of information for service members and families and, if properly coordinated with other support services, should allow service family support professionals to devote more time and attention to supporting unit volunteers and to assisting families with more complex problems.

Joint-service, community-based support, supplementing the information and assistance provided through the unit during a deployment makes sense, especially for Guard and Reserve families geographically separated from the service member's unit and from each other. NMFA suggests that DOD strengthen and perhaps formalize partnerships with national organizations such as the American Red Cross and U.S. Chamber of Commerce to enlist their assistance through their local chap-

ters in setting up community-based support groups for military family members. The groups could include not only spouses and significant others of all deployed members, no matter what unit or Service the member is attached to, but also the parents of service members. Involving local community leaders in setting up these support groups would address two of the most common concerns expressed by some of these isolated families: the feeling that they are the only families in town going through the strain of deployment and the sentiment that people not associated with the military do not appreciate their sacrifices.

Child Care

Military child care is another important element in family readiness. In testimony this spring, Sergeant Major of the Army Jack Tilley noted that during 2002, 27 percent of enlisted soldier parents reported lost duty time due to a lack of child care. Deployments increase the need for child care. Families, where the parents were previously able to manage their work schedules to cover the care of their children, must now seek outside child care as one parent deploys. Guard and Reserve families most often do not live close enough to a military installation to take advantage of the subsidized, high-quality care available at the Child Development Center or Family Daycare homes. Since 2000, DOD has had the authority to increase the availability of child care and youth programs through partnerships with civilian agencies and other organizations. The Services set up pilot programs to take advantage of this authority and obtain more care for children off the installations; however, NMFA has been informed that less than 10 percent of DOD child care is provided off-base.

To meet the needs of far-flung families, some with limited funds to pay for child care, DOD must look for innovative ways to provide access to child care services, tied not to specific locations selected by DOD, but to what best serves parents and children. Employee Assistance Programs such as the Marine Corps's "One Source" could help families locate the child care and a DOD subsidy, possibly based on the income categories used to determine rates at DOD centers, would help create a more equitable benefit. Another option to help military families pay for child care would be to make them eligible to contribute pre-tax dollars to a Flexible Spending Account. These accounts are popular in many civilian work places and are currently being implemented for Federal civilians in some agencies.

Military spouses testifying at the field hearings spoke emphatically about the need for increased child care slots to serve families of deployed service members. While there may be some increased need for full-time slots, the greatest need is for hourly care to support spouses in their roles of family readiness volunteers, to enable a spouse to keep a doctor's appointment or attend a parent-teacher conference, or just to provide a well-deserved respite for both parent and children. Hourly care has almost always been in short supply at many installations and NMFA is concerned that current funding levels, as well as those proposed for fiscal year 2004, for the Military Child Development System may not be adequate to meet both the routine demands for child care and the increased need due to deployments. We request additional funds to ensure the provision of the high quality child care service members and their families need.

Return and Reunion

The Services recognize the importance of educating service members and family members about how to effect a successful homecoming and reunion and have taken steps to do so. The Navy pioneered this process and has been holding reunion briefings on ships prior to homecoming for several years. The Army, Marine Corps, and Air Force, learning lessons from recent deployments and the tragedy of Fort Bragg, have developed online programs and brochures for the service members and their families. They have also stepped up briefings for returning service members and, when possible, their families to assist in the return and reunion process. Information gathered in the now-mandatory post-deployment health assessments may also help identify service members who may need more specialized assistance in making the transition home. Successful return and reunion plans depend on the interaction between all helping agencies, support from the command, and multiple methods of getting information and assistance to service members and families.

Return and reunion programs are aimed at both traditional and non-traditional family units, including single and married service members, spouses, parents, children, and significant others. The information spans subjects from finances and division of chores to recultivating family intimacy and practicing safe driving procedures. The Services have gone from the old policy of "if we wanted you to have a family we would have issued you one" to sharing guidance on how to reestablish intimacy with your spouse or significant other after separation. The one underlying theme with almost all the literature available is to "go slow" and develop realistic

homecoming expectations. Other organizations outside the Services, such as the American Red Cross, offer reunion resources as well.

The question remains, however: how can one access the information? Returning military units will be briefed as units before they are returned home, but what about the service members deployed and returning individually? Information for families is readily available on a variety of “unofficial,” family-friendly Web sites. However, there are times one needs to know the special code word or the secret hand shake to navigate or even find the official Service Web sites to know that Lifelines is the family friendly program for the Navy, Crossroads is the source for Air Force family information, the Well-Being tab on the official Army site contains information on family programs, or that “One Source” is available for both active and Reserve marines. Web information is an easy fix, however. The biggest challenge is reaching the geographically isolated families, the families of service members who deployed individually or not as a part of a unit, or the families with no access to the web. News about briefings for families should be disseminated as widely as possible. As NMFA has emphasized before, family briefings would be better attended if child care and travel expenses were provided. NMFA encourages DOD to use the same organizations that were so effective during the height of the crisis—the Red Cross, local chapters of veterans’ service organizations, the Chamber of Commerce—to get the information out to families in avenues other than the Internet.

NMFA applauds the quality of much of the new reunion information. It is a great example of “purple” information, much of the new material is not Service specific. In addition, the special attention paid to the Guard and Reserve returnees and their reacclimation into the work place enhances the scope of the entire reunion process. The inclusive way all the Services, active and Reserve components, are addressed in this literature serves as a model for how information should be presented in a joint family readiness plan in the future.

Successful return and reunion programs will require attention over the long term. Many mental health experts state that some post-deployment problems may not surface for several months after the service members’ return. NMFA is especially concerned about the services that will be available to the families of returning Guard and Reserve members and service members who leave the military following the end of their enlistment. Although they may be eligible for transitional health care benefits and the service member may seek care through the Veterans’ Administration, what happens when the military health benefits run out and deployment-related stresses still affect the family? As part of its return and reunion plan, the Army has announced it will contract with an Employee Assistance Plan to provide toll-free phone and Internet access to help returning service members and families access local community resources and to receive up to six free face-to-face mental health visits with a professional outside the chain of command. Unfortunately, we do not have information yet on how long returning service members and families will be eligible to use this service.

Ongoing evaluation through surveys of service members, families, commanders, and family support personnel is essential to capture lessons learned and determine what initiatives were most effective in ensuring family readiness during deployments and a smooth transition in post-deployment. NMFA was pleased that the Senate approved an amendment to Sec. 1023 of its version of the NDAA that would require DOD to include an investigation on the availability of support services to Guard and Reserve families as part of its report on the conduct of Operation Iraqi Freedom. In formulating any study of family support, NMFA suggests that questions be included on support and information provided in all phases of the deployment process: pre-deployment, during deployment, and return and reunion.

NMFA applauds the various initiatives designed to meet the needs of families wherever they live and whenever they need them and requests adequate funding to ensure continuation both of the “bedrock” family support programs and implementation of new initiatives. Higher stress levels caused by open-ended deployments require a higher level of community support. The cost of meeting unique family readiness needs for National Guard and Reserve families must be calculated in Guard and Reserve operational budgets and additional resources provided. Family readiness responsibilities must be clearly delineated so that the burden does not fall disproportionately on volunteers. DOD should partner with other organizations and explore new means of communication and support to geographically dispersed families. Innovative ways of meeting the child care needs of geographically-dispersed families and the deployment-related surge demand for child care may need to include a combination of subsidies, the use of information and referral services, and the option of Flexible Spending Accounts, in addition to increased slots available in the DOD child development system. As with other family readiness information and support, return and reunion programs should be both unit and community-based

and should be facilitated by a collaborative effort of all helping agencies across the active and Reserve components of all Services. Return and reunion support must be considered a commitment to service members and families over a period of several months. Special attention must be provided to ensure that geographically separated families have access to needed services, especially following a service member's deactivation.

EDUCATION FOR MILITARY CHILDREN

A significant element of family readiness is an educational system that provides a quality education to military children, recognizing the needs of these ever moving students and responding to situations where the military parent is deployed and/or in an armed conflict. No less than the stay at home spouse, children are affected by the absence of a parent and experience even higher levels of stress when their military parent is in a war zone shown constantly on television. The military member deployed to that dangerous place cannot afford to be distracted by the worry that his or her child is not receiving a quality education. Addressing the needs of these children, their classmates, and their parents is imperative to lowering the overall family stress level, and to achieving an appropriate level of family readiness. But it does not come without cost to the local school system.

Service members want to know that their children's school buildings are secure, that school district leaders are working with installation leadership to ensure the safety of children at school and on the school buses. They want their children's schools to serve as extra eyes and ears, watching for changes in their children's behavior and academic performance and ensuring that adequate counseling resources are in place to assist children in dealing with not only the stress of the deployments, but also with the fears of unknown dangers at home. Teachers and counselors now must help the remaining parent answer the children's questions of "Why did the military send Dad or Mom away when we could be in danger here?" Schools educating military children must be prepared to help teachers and other staff who are also military family members deal with the emotions brought on by the combination of domestic threats and large-scale military deployments. They must often run programs with fewer volunteers, sometimes losing both the deployed service members and their spouses who now have more demands on their time. They must also help "new" military children, the children of members of the National Guard and Reserves, who may be dealing with deployment for the first time.

NMFA is pleased to report that most schools charged with educating military children have stepped up to the challenge. They have become the constant in a changing world and the place of security for military children and their families. The goal, according to one school official, "is to keep things normal for the kids." The schools' role is to "train teachers in what to look for and deal with what they find." NMFA received many positive stories from parents and schools about how the schools have helped children deal with their fears, keep in touch with deployed parents, and keep focused on learning. We have also heard stories of schools helping each other, of schools experienced in educating military children and dealing with deployment-related issues providing support for school systems with the children of activated Guard and Reserve members. In the process, many schools have increased the understanding of their teachers and other staff, as well as their entire communities, about issues facing military families.

NMFA is appreciative of the support shown by Congress for the schools educating military children. Congress has consistently supported the needs of the schools operated by the DOD Education Activity (DODEA), both in terms of basic funding and military construction. Congress has also resisted efforts by a series of administrations to cut the Impact Aid funding so vital to the civilian school districts that educate a majority of military children. NMFA is also appreciative of the approximately \$30 million Congress adds in most years to the Defense budget to supplement Impact Aid for school districts whose enrollments are more than 20 percent military children.

DODEA

Department of Defense schools are located in overseas locations (DODDS) and on a small number of military installations in the United States (DDESS). The commitment to the education of military children in DOD schools between Congress, DOD, military commanders, DODEA leadership and staff, and especially military parents has resulted in high test scores, nationally-recognized minority student achievement, parent involvement programs and partnership activities with the military community. It is significant to note that the Commander of USAREUR stated in May that over half of the military members assigned to USAREUR are deployed away from their permanent duty sites. Imagine the challenges facing a school sys-

tem in a foreign country where half of the student body has an absent parent! DOD schools have responded to the increased operations tempo with greater support for families and children in their communities. Most recently, several schools arranged special satellite hook-ups to allow deployed parents in Iraq and Kuwait to participate in their high school students' graduations from a distance. NMFA also appreciates the actions taken by DODEA staff in easing the transition for students enrolled in DOD schools in Turkey when they were forced to evacuate prior to the start of the war. DODEA not only provided families with contact information and educational records, but also guaranteed that students who could not meet the standards for graduation or promotion to the next grade because of their late transition into a civilian school could receive DODDS diplomas and certification that their work in the DODDS schools warranted promotion.

While DOD schools have been immune from some of the constraints besetting civilian schools affected by State and local budget pressures, military families served by DOD schools have expressed concerns about DOD rescissions this year that caused cuts in maintenance, staff development, technology purchases and personnel support and also forced the elimination of some instructional days in some districts. While DODEA has experienced Department-wide rescissions in previous years, this year's was larger than normal, thus making it more difficult for the system to make the necessary adjustments midway through the school year. Because the timing of the Federal fiscal year is out of sync with the school year, NMFA believes this calendar mismatch may tend to worsen the impact of mid-year Department-wide budget allocations on the school system and the children it serves.

Transition Issues

Despite the success of the DOD schools in raising achievement levels, it is important to remember less than 20 percent of military children attend these schools. The rest depend on civilian school districts, which often vary in quality and responsiveness to families' concerns and the demands of the military lifestyle. Military families move on average every 2.9 years and their children may be at an educational disadvantage, even by many well-intentioned programs and rules designed to improve school quality. Military parents applaud higher accountability standards—they want the best possible instruction for their children as well as rigorous course offerings. They do not want their children punished, however, when the various Federal and State initiatives clash, causing difficulties for mobile children. Because of varying course standards, school schedules, and State graduation requirements, military children sometimes lose credits needed for graduation. Currently, at least 18 States have graduation requirements linked to performance on State exit exams and several others are developing exit exams. With the rise of exit exams and increased graduation requirements, transfers are becoming more problematic, especially in the high school years.

NMFA believes that the improved accountability measures promoted by the States and contained in the Federal No Child Left Behind Act will ultimately benefit all children. In the short term, however, NMFA is concerned that the reliance on States to determine what tests they will use to meet the Federal testing requirements, what standards must be met for promotion and graduation, and how to determine which schools are making adequate progress will make things more difficult for military and other mobile children. If one-third of the population of a civilian school in a military community turns over every year, how can that school be held responsible for the academic performance of the children who just arrived? How fair is it to apply sanctions to a school for gaps in children's learning that occurred somewhere else? How can children be held responsible for concepts their former school, which used a different set of curriculum standards, never taught? NMFA urges Congress as it monitors the implementation of No Child Left Behind to take into account the issues facing mobile children and the schools that serve them to ensure they are not unfairly penalized for circumstances beyond their control.

Impact Aid

NMFA also asks Members of Congress to continue their support of Impact Aid. A well-funded Impact Aid program enables districts serving large numbers of military children to approach the level of educational opportunity available in neighboring, non-impacted school districts even though they do not have access to the same kind of tax base. Impact Aid dollars are provided in lieu of lost tax revenue to districts where the Federal responsibility is the greatest under the law. The dollars go directly to school districts with no strings attached. The local community, the people with the greatest stake in the quality of education in their schools, decides how Impact Aid funds will best serve the basic education needs of all students.

Military families understand that the Impact Aid program supports basic education services provided by their local school districts. They understand the impact the Federal presence has on the tax base of these local districts and their States. They understand the impact their children and the transient military lifestyle can have on their local schools. What they and their civilian neighbors do not understand is why Impact Aid funds fall short of the levels intended by the creators of the program or of the amount needed by their children's schools. Military children, whether living on- or off-base, impose costs on the district as they move in and out: records must be prepared, evaluations and testing must be done for special programs, transition labs or remedial programs may be needed. Military families hold the government, and the citizens they have sworn to serve and protect, accountable for living up to their promise to provide a quality education for their children. The districts have accepted the responsibility to educate military children; the Federal Government must provide the resources it has promised to support that education.

NMFA thanks Congress for its continued funding of Impact Aid for the military children who live off the installation, the so-called "military Bs." Two-thirds of military families live off-base. Although military families living in the civilian community pay property taxes to help support local schools, they often do not contribute to other sources of education funding. States provide an increasingly larger share of local districts' funding. Many military members pay no State tax on their military income. They also shop in military exchanges and commissaries, thus paying no sales tax. Under the provisions of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Relief Act, they are often exempt from paying personal property taxes or license fees for automobiles if they are on military orders away from their home State. Funding for these children will become even more crucial for school districts as the military Services increasingly look to the civilian community to provide more housing for military families. Funding for military Bs will also be important to districts serving installations building privatized housing in civilian communities off-base rather than on the installations. Although developers may pay some taxes, these revenues may be inadequate, especially during the early years of the privatization contracts.

DOD Support

NMFA has been pleased with recent comments by DOD officials and with Department initiatives focusing on military parents' concern about the quality of their children's schools. In congressional testimony and in press interviews early this year, Dr. David Chu, Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, outlined some of the factors other than mission capabilities that must be considered in the Department's considerations of installations to be slated for closure or realignment:

Once we begin the base realignment process, a careful look at the quality of life of civilian communities where our military families live is warranted. We owe children a good education no matter where their parents may serve, as well as good child care, homes, and spousal career opportunities.

Schools serving military children have been aided by improved interaction and partnerships with their local installations. The military Services are, to varying degrees, increasing their collaborative efforts with schools and their support to military parents who need information and assistance in becoming more effective advocates for quality education for their children. The Army has taken the lead in creating and funding School Liaison Officer positions to provide an important link between schools, the installation command, and parents. Well-trained, involved school liaisons have also provided important information and support for school staff on how to support children during deployments. Other Services are beginning to hire school liaisons at some of their installations and, even when they do not have school liaisons, they frequently provide briefings on deployment-related issues to school staff.

Cooperation between educators and the military in support of military children and their schools is also occurring at the national level; the Department of Education has posted a resource guide for educators created by the DOD Educational Opportunities Directorate on assisting children in dealing with deployments. NMFA does wish, however, the brochure could be a little more visible and accessible on the Web site! (<http://www.ed.gov/inits/homefront/homefront.pdf>) Private organizations such as the Military Impacted Schools Association and the Military Child Education Coalition have made materials available to help school districts better support children of deployed service members. NMFA has also fielded its share of calls from school staff looking for deployment-related resources and has provided information in its newsletter and on its Web site.

NMFA is pleased that the military services are responding to military families' belief that quality education is both a quality of life factor and a retention issue. We hope that the partnership programs begun by the Services and local schools, the

hiring of school liaison officers, and initiatives to provide military families with better information about local schools and to study the problems faced by military children as they move will continue despite the greater demands placed on both the military and supporting school districts. Out of the challenge of working together to develop plans for security and to move children, school staff, parents, and school buses on and off installations under security alerts have emerged better working relationships to address other issues. Service initiatives to facilitate parent involvement in schools, such as the policy at Fort Hood, TX and other installations that states a service member's place of duty is the scheduled parent-teacher conference, help schools and the children they serve. The Army has addressed the difficulties students face when moving in their senior year by recently instituting a Senior Stabilization Policy that enables the soldier to request a delay in PCS orders so that a rising senior can finish high school at the current location. Since the policy was implemented 2 years ago, the Army has received applications from more than 2,400 service members for stabilization and has approved 99 percent. The biggest complaint NMFA has heard about this program to date is that other Services have not yet adopted it! The Army is also the lead agent for DOD on an initiative to educate States about the problems facing military members and their families in obtaining in-State tuition status. Heightened awareness among military commanders and local States about education issues has also resulted in the creation of reciprocity arrangements, most notably concerning the high school State history credit, to keep students from losing academic credit or from repeating similar courses.

Lastly, NMFA would hope that DOD will begin to request the supplement to Impact Aid, rather than wait for Congress to add it. Building this funding into its budget request would signal to school districts and military families that the Department wants to ensure better quality in all schools educating large numbers of military children, not just those in DOD schools. Requesting this funding will also signal that DOD recognizes that it may need to assist schools with security, school construction, or special learning programs if the presence of military children or DOD programs and policies cause a loss of school funding or increased expenditures that cannot be met through Impact Aid or other Federal, State, or local programs.

Schools serving military children, whether DOD or civilian schools, need the resources available to meet military parents' expectation that their children receive the highest quality education possible. Impact Aid funding for both on and off-base children and the DOD supplement to Impact Aid provide needed funds in lieu of lost tax revenue and help districts meet the additional demands caused by large numbers of military children. Initiatives to assist parents and to promote better communication between installations and schools should be expanded across all Services. Military children must not be placed at a disadvantage as State and Federal governments devise accountability measures.

SPOUSE EMPLOYMENT

The ability of a military spouse to be employed and to have career progression affects both the family's finances and the self-sufficiency of the spouse when the member deploys. Studies after the first Gulf War showed that spouses who were employed handled the stressors of the deployment better than those who were not employed. NMFA anxiously awaits the DOD report on the status of its spouse employment programs requested by Congress in the fiscal year 2002 NDAA. While we do not expect DOD to create a jobs program for every military spouse, it does need to facilitate the transition of mobile military spouses into already existing opportunities and to target efforts where spouses are having the greatest difficulty accessing educational programs or employment. Sixty-three percent of all military spouses and 87 percent of junior enlisted spouses (E-1 to E-5) are in the labor force. Very obviously, the financial health of the military family is significantly dependent upon the employment of the spouse. Family financial health is without question a family readiness issue.

The ineffectiveness of military spouse employment programs and military spouses' own efforts to pursue careers have been a source of frustration for service members, spouses, and the Department for at least two decades. This satisfaction was most recently highlighted in DOD's 2002 Active Duty Status of Forces Survey. When asked about their satisfaction with spouse employment and career opportunities, only 32 percent of the respondents stated they were satisfied; 34 percent were dissatisfied. Approximately one-fifth also noted that the loss of spouse income due to a PCS move had caused a problem for their family. Because they are more likely than their male peers to have an employed spouse, female military officers cite an even higher level of frustrations with spouse employment issues. In the 1997 DOD

Survey of Enlisted Spouses, the majority of spouses in the job market reported that they had been unable to find a job that matched their experience and training.

Part of the frustration boils down to numbers and limited resources. Of the approximately 677,000 military spouses, approximately 60 percent are in the job market. Approximately one-third move each year, meaning that an average of 135,000 military spouses will need to find a job each year. Some civilian corporations, when moving employees, pay private relocation firms up to \$1,500 per spouse to help them find a job in the new location. The sheer numbers of military spouses make this kind of funding support out of reach for DOD. Service spouse employment program managers often have several other responsibilities within the installation family center and thus have difficulty finding the time to develop contacts with local employers, provide basic job search training to young spouses entering the job market for the first time, and help spouses who have been on a career track somewhere else find appropriate upward mobility at their new location.

In order to enhance military spouse career progression, NMFA suggests that DOD should first make improvements in its own Military Spouse Preference Program to make more Federal civilian jobs available to mobile spouses. We also hope that any proposed changes in DOD civilian personnel and hiring procedures expand opportunities for mobile military spouses to become part of the DOD workforce; we look to Congress to ensure that military spouses are not placed at a disadvantage by these changes. Because DOD is increasing the number of contract positions, NMFA also suggests that Congress expand the use of Military Spouse Preference to include jobs offered by government contractors. DOD should continue to expand its nascent partnership efforts with corporations and other Federal Departments to enhance training, placement, and career progression for military spouses.

To address the spouse employment dislocations caused by Permanent Change of Station (PCS) moves, DOD should work with States and localities to enable military spouses to participate in local educational and training programs at the same fee structure as in-State residents, to encourage States to enter into reciprocity agreements covering trade and professional licenses, and to raise awareness of the needs of transitioning military spouses. A spouse professional goods allotment included in relocation weight allowances could help affirm the importance of a spouse's career or volunteer activities to the military family. Key in addressing the financial burden placed on military families when they make a PCS move is ending the reluctance of many States to pay unemployment compensation to military spouses who quit their jobs to accompany the service member on military orders. At a time when family expenses are already high, the family should not be forced to give up the spouse's income. The inability to collect unemployment compensation often means that military spouses must take the first available job at their new location because they cannot afford to spend time looking for more suitable, career-enhancing positions. Employers in military communities are aware of this need and thus tend to offer lower wages to the military spouse.

NMFA looks forward to the release of the DOD spouse employment report and to increased efforts to enhance military spouse career progression. NMFA believes that DOD's primary focus related to spouse employment should be on mitigating the disruptions caused by government-ordered moves. It should also make the Military Spouse Preference program more responsive to changes in government hiring practices. Partnerships with other agencies and employers as well as coordination with States to promote training and educational opportunities, address licensure issues, and secure unemployment compensation for spouses forced to move would also enhance the financial well-being of military families.

RELOCATION

While progress has been made in easing the difficulties faced by military children when they enter new schools as a result of their military parent's PCS orders and initiatives are being developed to aid military spouses in transporting their careers, military families note less help in facilitating the actual move process. NMFA is appreciative of the significant increases in certain PCS allowances authorized in the fiscal year 2002 NDAA. These are very significant steps to upgrade allowances that had been unchanged for over 15 years. Even with these much-needed changes, however, service members continue to incur significant out-of-pocket costs in complying with government-directed relocation orders.

PCS household goods weight allowances were increased for grades E-1 through E-4, effective January 2003, but weight allowance increases are also needed for E-5s and above and officers as well to more accurately reflect the normal accumulation of household goods over the course of a career. The frequency of PCS moves coupled with the spotty quality record of many carriers requires continued improvements to

the household goods movement process, to include a greater emphasis on measurable accountability standards in the evaluation of carriers. After a series of pilot programs designed to test improvements to the move process, DOD is now developing a "re-engineered" program incorporating some of those improvements. NMFA has been informed that the anticipated roll-out of this new initiative is expected in fall 2004. The new program, called "Families First," is being developed by a working group made up of representatives of the military Services and the moving industry. Ironically, the "Families First" working group has sought no input from military families!

This year's DOD request for the NDAA contained a provision to authorize the payment of full replacement value for goods damaged in PCS moves. In recent NMFA briefings to family members, this legislative proposal was the one receiving the highest praise, with the sentiment, "It's about time!" Family members have been shocked to learn that, although requested by DOD, the full replacement value provision was included only in the Senate version of the NDAA. Federal civilian employees receive full replacement value reimbursement for goods damaged in their government-ordered moves. NMFA urges Congress to provide the same benefit for military families as soon as possible, and not make it contingent on the implementation of another round of "re-engineering."

NMFA urges Congress to continue upgrades of permanent change of station reimbursement allowances to recognize that the government, not the service members, should be responsible for paying the cost of government-directed relocations. NMFA urges Congress to include authorization for the payment of reimbursement for full replacement value of goods damaged in PCS moves and to increase weight allowances to better reflect the accumulation of household goods over a service member's career.

HEALTH CARE

After a rocky start over several years, the TRICARE system is providing most of the promised benefit for most families, particularly those enrolled in Prime. Changes made in the Prime Remote program for active duty families and ensuring access to Prime and Prime Remote for the families of activated Guard and Reserve members have gone a long way to providing a truly uniform benefit for all families of those on active duty.

NMFA is appreciative of congressional initiatives this year to provide additional assistance to TRICARE Standard beneficiaries, to provide a point of responsibility within DOD to ensure that Standard beneficiaries receive appropriate benefit information, and to identify locations with inadequate provider participation in order to encourage more providers to participate in TRICARE. The Senate proposal to mandate market area surveys of TRICARE Standard provider participation will provide DOD and Congress with the information they need to determine the causes of provider shortages reported by beneficiaries and to devise a solution to the problem. NMFA notes that these surveys, as with all surveys of civilian provider participation in TRICARE, must not only identify participating or network providers, but also whether or not these providers are accepting new TRICARE patients.

Despite the improvements in TRICARE, NMFA remains apprehensive about several issues: beneficiary access to health care, the implementation of a new generation of TRICARE contracts, and the ability of National Guard and Reserve families to have reasonable access to care and continuity of care.

Access

Although recent TRICARE surveys highlight improvements in beneficiary access to care, NMFA continues to field calls from beneficiaries with access issues. Service members and families enrolled in Prime are promised certain standards for access to care in providing appointments, wait times at a provider's office and geographic availability. Yet the calls we receive tell another story. Even service members are told by the direct care system, "Call back next month, there are no more appointments available now." Family members are routinely not informed that they can request an appointment with a provider in the civilian sector if access standards cannot be met in the direct care system. However, IF the member or family member mentions the words, "access standards," appointments that fall within the guidelines magically appear. Although deployment-related access issues at MTFs now seem to have been resolved, NMFA is concerned that some family members may have been denied access to timely care despite the promises made when they enrolled in TRICARE Prime. TRICARE was designed so that care could be provided in a timely manner within the civilian network when it was not available in the direct care system. There is no reason, including the deployment of medical personnel, that access standards should not always be met.

TNEX and other contracts

The next round of TRICARE Contracts (TNEX) would appear to place significant new levels of authority and responsibility on local Military Treatment Facility (MTF) commanders. NMFA is concerned this may actually increase the differences in how beneficiaries access care rather than make it more uniform. NMFA looks for assurances that the transition to the new contracts and from the current twelve United States regions to only three will be managed to cause as few disruptions as possible for beneficiaries. Because existing regions will be brought gradually into the newer, large regions, the potential exists for an education and information nightmare as beneficiaries moving to a new location try to determine what regional contractor handles their enrollment, processes their claims, and sets the “rules of the road.”

Currently, Managed Care Support Contractors in some regions have total responsibility for making appointments, and in all regions have the responsibility for making appointments within the civilian network. The new contracts would appear to leave this responsibility to the local MTF commander, either to arrange all of the appointments or to opt into an as yet unknown national appointment contract. Also, all current Managed Care Support Contractors are required to have a health information line. Surveys have revealed that military beneficiaries use these advice lines at a higher rate than civilians, yet the new contracts do not require TRICARE contractors to offer them. Instead, the decision to have one and/or which one to have is left up to the local MTF commander.

TNEX also appears to blur lines of authority and accountability rather than strengthening them. Beneficiaries need a clear line of command and accountability for their problems with accessing care to be fixed and for their concerns about quality of care to be appropriately addressed. This oversight also must apply to information about changes to the benefit or in how beneficiaries access care from the current method. If changes are to be made, beneficiaries need to be educated and informed BEFORE the fact.

NMFA is especially worried about what will happen to the resource sharing arrangements that have provided the staff necessary to optimize care in the military facilities, thus providing continuity of care for patients while enabling the system to avoid the higher costs of paying for care the civilian sector. Resource sharing arrangements made by the Managed Care Support Contractors at the request of the military hospital commanders have been a TRICARE success story for beneficiaries and the facilities. Currently, there are approximately 600 resource sharing arrangements provided by the Managed Care Contractors in 95 military treatment facilities. They have enabled commanders to keep emergency rooms open longer hours, staff more operating rooms, operate additional primary care and pediatric clinics, and maintain access standards during deployment and summer rotation staffing gaps. Unfortunately, the TNEX contracts call for current resource sharing agreements to end immediately on the termination of the old TRICARE contracts. Although the Services and their MTF commanders will have the authority under the new contracts to enter into various types of contractual agreements with providers, NMFA is concerned that the abrupt termination of existing resource sharing agreements may result in the loss of valued medical providers familiar with the medical needs of the beneficiaries they serve and at least a temporary halt to certain vital services.

Madigan Army Medical Center at Fort Lewis, WA, for example, uses resource sharing arranged by the TRICARE contractor to staff its pediatric clinic. Resource sharing provides 3.4 physician and 4.4 licensed practical nurse positions, as well as clinic support staff, enabling the hospital to keep approximately 24,000 patient visits each year in the facility. When the current Region 11 contract expires next year, the agreement providing that staff goes away. Imagine the disappointment of the families who have come to depend on those doctors and nurses to care for their children when told their hospital no longer has the means to retain them. Imagine the reaction of a deployed service member when he or she receives an e-mail from the spouse that their child's doctor is no longer available because of the provisions of a “new and improved” TRICARE contract.

To protect beneficiaries' continuity of care during the implementation of the new contracts, NMFA believes that current resource sharing arrangements should not automatically end with the expiration of the existing TRICARE contracts. Rather, a plan must be in place to allow for a bridge period under which the resource sharing arrangements can be transitioned smoothly from the control of the Managed Care Support Contractors to the MTFs. The plan's emphasis must be on ensuring that current providers are retained in order to protect the relationships they have developed with patients and with the facilities.

NMFA is also concerned that the transition to the new contracts has delayed implementation of the important changes in the Program for Persons with Disabilities

(PPWD) enacted by Congress in the Fiscal Year 2002 NDAA. The program to replace the PPWD has been developed and, according to briefings provided to military association representatives and at this year's TRICARE Conference, promises a rich benefit and vital assistance for some of the most vulnerable active duty families. Members of these subcommittees were instrumental in securing the legislative changes to enhance this program; NMFA urges Congress to press for implementation as soon as possible following the start-up of TNEX. Legislative "tweaking" may also be needed to provide a benefit bridge as service members move from active to retired status until they can secure needed benefits for the disabled family member in their local community.

Guard and Reserve Health Care

While the "rules of the road" for using TRICARE, particularly Prime, seem now to be well understood by most active duty and retired family members, it is another story for National Guard and Reserve families. Since many of these families do not live near an installation, most of their information comes in printed form, on the web or via telephone. In addition, many live in areas where providers are unaware of TRICARE, as there are few if any other uniformed service beneficiaries in the area. Lead agents and TRICARE contractors routinely conduct TRICARE briefings for members of units about to mobilize; unfortunately, in most cases, families (those who will actually have to navigate the system) live too far away to attend. If the service member and family live in a different TRICARE region from the one where the unit is located, the information provided in the unit setting may not be the same for the region in which the family actually lives. Decisions to enroll in Prime, use standard or remain with an employer provided plan need to be family decisions based on full and accurate information provided to service members and their families. NMFA is pleased that the Senate has recognized the distinct health care information and education needs of Guard and Reserve members and their families and included a provision in S.1050 to require DOD to create new Beneficiary Counseling and Assistance Coordinator positions (BCACs) to assist them in making the transition to TRICARE and guiding them through the transition following demobilization. These new BCAC positions will be located at both the Lead Agent offices and at the MTFs and will be in addition to the BCACs who currently provide assistance to other beneficiaries.

NMFA has long believed that the approach to meeting the health care needs of Guard and Reserve members and their families must be flexible enough to ensure access to care and continuity of care. We believe the provisions in S.1050, as amended, address most of these issues. The amendment approved by the Senate would authorize Guard and Reserve members, for a reasonable premium, to enroll themselves and their families in TRICARE when not on active duty. Thus, members who currently have no insurance in civilian life could have access to an affordable program and would enjoy continuity in both program and care for the family when the member is activated. Alternatively, the legislation would authorize DOD to pay the premiums of an employer-provided private sector plan for the family of an activated Guard or Reserve member up to the level of what TRICARE would cost DOD if it were provided to the member and his/her family. This would allow those with civilian provided coverage to continue with their current plan and providers.

Defense Health Care funding must be adequate to meet readiness needs and provide for both the purchased care segment of TRICARE and the direct care system. Access standards were part of the promise DOD made to families when they enrolled in TRICARE Prime and must be met. Civilian networks must be robust enough to support MTFs in meeting the access standards. Recruitment of TRICARE Standard providers and education of Standard beneficiaries should be as much a part of the TRICARE program as are these endeavors for Prime providers and enrollees. The new round of contracts must provide standardized ways to access health care across all regions and beneficiaries should have a clear picture of who can solve their access problems and quality of care concerns. Families of Guard and Reserve members should have flexible options for their health care coverage that address both access to care and continuity of care. In addition, accurate and timely information on their options and such things as transitional health care must be provided to the families as well as the service member.

MILITARY ALLOWANCES AND FEDERAL PROGRAMS

As service members were preparing to head to the Middle East for Operation Iraqi Freedom, NMFA heard from some of the most vulnerable military families of a large cost being imposed on them because of the service member's deployment. Disabled family members of military service members may qualify for Supplemental Security Income (SSI), based on the disability and on income. Often the SSI pay-

ment itself is relatively small; however, SSI is the gateway to coverage under Medicaid, which covers some services not covered by TRICARE. When service members deployed and began receiving deployment-related payments, they discovered that their disabled child or spouse would probably lose eligibility for SSI because of the increase in the family income. Some families actually tried to refuse the extra allowances because the services provided as a result of their SSI eligibility were more valuable than the additional pay. One Marine family cited in press reports, for example, received approximately \$400 in additional deployment allowances, but stood to lose services, supplies, and medical care for their disabled 3-year-old worth \$8,000 a month. The problem: Social Security counted special pays and allowances as unearned income when calculating a person's eligibility for SSI, thus weighting the allowances heavier than basic pay.

After Members of Congress brought this issue to the attention of the Social Security Administration this spring, Social Security Commissioner Jo Anne B. Barnhardt issued an emergency regulation, retroactive to October 1, 2002, to exempt deployment pay received while the service member is in an officially designated combat zone from the eligibility calculation for SSI benefits. Commissioner Barnhardt issued a second ruling on March 27 to exempt Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) received by service members residing in privatized military family housing from SSI eligibility calculations, thus protecting residents of military family housing once it is turned over to private developers. Families living in government quarters are more likely to qualify for SSI than families receiving BAH because the value of the government housing is not counted toward SSI eligibility while BAH is. When government housing is privatized, service members, even if still living on the installation, begin receiving BAH, which is then paid to the developer as rent in an allotment.

This spring's SSI dilemma highlights a long-standing frustration for military families: the confusion involved in how and when military allowances are counted for tax purposes or to determine eligibility for military and civilian programs. The treatment of BAH alone, as seen in the following matrix, results in confusion for families and disparities as they move from one assignment to another and from on-base to off-base housing. The matrix shows only Federal and DOD programs; many State programs also have varying rules for treating BAH and other military allowances.

BASIC ALLOWANCE FOR HOUSING (BAH) AND PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

Program	Value of Government Quarters	Privatized Military Family Housing (BAH included on Leave and Earnings Statement)	BAH
Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)	Excluded	Excluded	Excluded
Food Stamps	Excluded	Included	Included
WIC (USDA)	Most States exclude	Most States exclude	Most States exclude
WIC Overseas (DOD)	Excluded	N/A	Excluded
DOD Family Supplemental Subsistence Allowance.	Included (adds in amount of BAH service member would have received).	Included	Included
National School Lunch Program (USDA)	Excluded	Excluded	Included
DOD Overseas Student Meal Program	Excluded	N/A	Excluded
Head Start Program	Excluded	Included	Included
Supplemental Security Income (SSI)	Excluded	Excluded	Included
DOD Child Care Fees	Includes BAH II (not geographically-based BAH).	Includes BAH II (not geographically-based BAH).	Includes BAH II (not geographically-based BAH)

As can be seen in the matrix, BAH is not even consistently treated under DOD programs. The eligibility puzzle has grown more complicated in recent years as the military Services have begun to privatize military family housing. The promise of privatization is that the Services will be able to upgrade their housing stock at a faster pace using private capital than by relying on the military construction process. By law, when housing is privatized, service members must be paid BAH. The effect of this provision on family members' eligibility for certain safety net programs was not known when the privatization authorities were created. It soon became evident, however. When Army housing at Fort Carson, CO, was privatized, two-thirds of the families living on Fort Carson who were eligible for food stamps became ineligible, simply because they started receiving BAH. The inclusion of the BAH on their

Leave and Earnings Statement (LES) made it appear that these families' income had increased, even though they were living in the same house and the BAH was immediately paid out as an allotment to the developer as rent.

Next, many families found out they no longer qualified for free and reduced school lunches because of the inclusion of BAH on their LES. Because the percentage of children on free and reduced lunches is used as the poverty rate when qualifying schools for Federal title I funds and certain State school funding, the local school district serving Fort Carson stood to lose approximately \$400,000 in the year following the privatization. School districts launched a legislative initiative to restore the status quo so that children would remain eligible for free and reduced lunches and schools would remain eligible for funding they needed to better serve their students. The legislative change exempting BAH received by service members in privatized housing from eligibility calculations for free and reduced lunch passed as an amendment to the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (P.L.107-171).

Last year's protection of the status quo in determining eligibility for free and reduced lunches and this year's SSI regulatory change related to BAH are a boon to families living in privatized housing. These changes, however, do exacerbate disparities experienced by military families based on where they live. Often, whether or not families live on the installation in government quarters or privatized housing is determined by chance—by the availability of housing or the size of the waiting list—and not by choice. Young families most in need of government housing are often forced to seek housing on the economy because there is not enough junior enlisted housing available on the installation. Although funding for BAH has improved in recent years thanks to funding support from Congress, on average, BAH still does not cover service members' total housing costs. This year, it is funded to provide on average all but 7.5 percent of out-of-pocket costs for a housing standard tied to a service member's rank. The standard on which BAH is based for an E-5 with dependents, for example, is a two-bedroom townhouse. Service members needing a larger home off-base cover the additional rental costs out of their own pockets, yet because they receive BAH, they often have too much income to qualify for Federal safety net programs. Service members lucky enough to receive either government quarters or privatized housing on an installation obtain the appropriate size housing for their family size and, because the value of their government housing does not count toward eligibility for most programs, they find it easier to qualify. Families in privatized housing by law may be charged no more in rent than their BAH, thus limiting their out-of-pocket costs. So, we have the situation where families living on base with fewer expenses qualify for additional support programs while families living off-base with higher housing and transportation expenses do not.

NMFA urges members of these subcommittees to assist in bringing a sense of order in how military allowances are counted for Federal programs to ensure equitable access to these safety net services and to protect families against disruptions in benefit eligibility caused by the receipt of deployment pays. No family should have to face the prospect of losing valuable benefits for a disabled child because a service member has received deployment orders. Families living off the installation are often there only because of insufficient on-base housing, yet endure higher expenses than families living on an installation. Ideally, therefore, NMFA believes tax free allowances such as BAH should not be counted under any safety net program, which is how they are now treated in determining eligibility for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). NMFA understands that this could increase the number of military families eligible for some of these programs, but believes this is justified given the need for equitable treatment of all service members, as well as the loss of spouse income due to military relocations and high operations tempo.

Inconsistent treatment of military allowances for tax purposes and in determining eligibility for safety net programs creates confusion and disparities between service members based on where they are able to find housing, and can exact a financial penalty on military families. A start in correcting this inequity would be to adopt a common standard in how BAH should be counted in eligibility formulas and to ensure that the receipt of deployment-related allowances do not cause military family members to become ineligible for support services for which they would otherwise be eligible.

NMFA thanks these subcommittees and Congress for your advocacy for a better quality of life for service members and their families. Just as the family worries about the deployed service member, the service member's constant concern is about the well-being of his or her family. In the dangerous environment in which they must frequently operate, service members cannot afford to be distracted by concerns at home. They need to know their spouse has access to information about benefits and services available, their children are receiving a quality education, their family can access health care when needed, their family's prized possessions will arrive at

a new home in one piece, their spouse isn't frustrated by an inability to have a meaningful career, and that their disabled child has not lost vital services simply because of deployment or the location of the family's residence. Assuring the service member that the decision to serve will not penalize the family is critical to the service member's readiness and thus to mission readiness. The stability of the military family and community and their support for the forces rests on the Nation's continued focus on the entire package of quality of life components. Military members and their families look to you for continued support for that quality of life. Please don't let them down.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thank you.

Ms. Lucas, we're pleased to have you here.

STATEMENT OF M.A. LUCAS, DIRECTOR, ARMY CHILD AND YOUTH SERVICES, U.S. ARMY COMMUNITY AND FAMILY SUPPORT CENTER

Ms. LUCAS. Thank you, sir. Good afternoon. I appreciate the opportunity to discuss the child care and school transition challenges facing military parents. The requirement for military child care and youth programs is quite simply to support force readiness by reducing the conflict between parental responsibilities of the military service members and their unit mission requirements. There's no doubt that the conflict is there.

Surveys in the Army indicate that soldiers lose duty time to deal with issues related to youth misconduct and the lack of available child care. Child care is a workforce issue that truly impacts readiness.

Other militarily unique factors contribute to the need for child and youth programs. For example, military families are younger than their private sector counterparts, and live away from their own extended families. Young service members have infants and toddlers, as Senator Dodd noted, who need the very kind of care that is least available and most expensive off-post.

Service members generally don't have a standard Monday-through-Friday, 9-to-5 work week. Likewise, the military mobile lifestyle, with its frequent relocations, makes school transitions difficult, especially for our teens. Quality child and youth programs allow service members to focus on their mission, knowing their children are learning and are well cared for in our child care programs and their teens are adjusting well to new schools. Military child care and youth programs are an incalculable force multiplier.

In addition to providing our routine child care services and youth supervision options, to date, this year, in fiscal year 2003, the Department of Defense Military Child and Youth Programs have supported military parents with more than 400,000 hours of additional contingency-related child care. We are also piloting outreach efforts aimed at serving geographically dispersed active component service members as well as Guard and Reserve members who are eligible to utilize these services while on active duty or in a training status.

Our challenge is to sustain our baseline child and youth programs, construct additional child care facilities where necessary, develop the infrastructure to stabilize our child care workforce, and consistently provide services such as respite care, extended hours care, back-up care, school transition assistance, care options for geographically dispersed service members, support youth communications with our deployed parents, and career potential, espe-

cially for our military spouse employees. These objectives will increase the availability of military child care in a systemic manner.

The Army has begun the process of implementing the results of the secondary education study, SETS, that addressed the challenges that military-sponsored students face when transitioning from one school district to another. In the Army, we are implementing two outcomes of this study. First, the Army has funded school liaison officer positions at Army installations to provide these transition support services, for instance, information about graduation requirements and records transfer and extracurricular activities.

Second, we have established a framework for school systems called the SETS agreement to encourage and facilitate the adoption of reciprocal school policies and practices among the SETS schools. To date, 125 superintendents, representing 129 school districts, which encompass over 2½ million military-connected and civilian children, have signed on to make school transitions easier by giving all mobile children, not just military-connected children, a level playing field.

A ground-breaking Army personnel process, begun in April 2001, has allowed more than 2,400 soldiers with children entering their senior year in high school to remain an extra year at their current duty station. Students are not disrupted, and can graduate with friends. Clearly, this is the right way to support our families when possible.

In August 1990, the House Armed Services Committee challenged the Department of Defense, and I quote, "to be on the leading edge of the child care movement in America." The Services responded by making military child care, once derided by many as the "ghetto of child care," the model for national child care reform.

Military child care and youth programs are absolutely essential to the well-being of our military families. Your committees have been champions of military child and youth programs for more than 20 years. We believe the Department of Defense and the military Services have delivered unprecedented, measurable cost, quality, and availability outcomes documented by various reports and studies, including GAO and the Rand Corporation. A May 17, 2000, USA Today quote sums it up: "the military is a model of child care efficiency."

I would hope you would agree that the Nation has received an excellent return on its investment in military child care. On behalf of military parents all over the world, I ask your continued support for our military child and youth program. Military parents face a variety of challenges every day. Knowing their children are well cared for should make those challenges a bit easier to handle.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Lucas follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY MS. M.A. LUCAS

Good afternoon, Chairman Chambliss, Chairman Alexander, and members of the subcommittees. I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today to discuss the child care and school transition challenges facing military parents. It is my privilege to represent the Child and Youth Programs of our armed services and to tell you about our initiatives that respond to the needs of our military parents.

As the Director of Army Child and Youth Services, I can report that never have the stresses of military parenting been greater than in this “post-September 11 world”—nor has the need been greater to assure our military parents that their children will be well cared for as they deal with the daily impact of the global war on terrorism. Throughout these significant challenges, our Military Child and Youth Programs are also accommodating the needs of our military communities and striving to meet the ever-increasing demand for unique child care options and school transition services not found in the private sector.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The requirement for Military Child Care and Youth Programs is—quite simply—to support force readiness by reducing the conflict between the parental responsibilities of military service members and unit mission requirements. There is no doubt the conflict is there. The Army Sample Survey of Military Personnel Spring 2002 data shows 27 percent of enlisted soldier parents who use child care lost duty time in a 3-month period due to the lack of child care. This reflects a rising trend, up from 20 percent in 1995 and 23 percent in 1999. Likewise, a fall 2001 survey showed 27 percent of enlisted soldier parents with children 13–18 years living with them lost duty time in a 12-month period as a result of dealing with youth misconduct. Clearly these trends demonstrate the fact that availability of child care and youth supervision options has an impact on military mission readiness.

There are many military-unique factors that make child care and youth supervision options a necessity to support our troops, e.g., military families are younger families with children away from their own extended families and neighborhoods; large numbers of infants and toddlers—the very age group that care is least available for off post; military duties requiring child care and youth supervision options 10–14 hours per day including early morning, evenings, and weekends as well as round-the-clock care—sometimes for an extended period of time; lack of care options at remote sites and overseas; and large numbers of parents whose spouses are deployed making them temporarily geographically single, as well as true single and dual military parents. Likewise, the mobile military lifestyle with its frequent relocations makes school transitions difficult—especially for teens. Quality Child and Youth Programs allow service members to focus on their missions knowing that their children are thriving in our child care programs and their teens are adjusting well to new schools. Military Child Care and Youth Programs are an incalculable force multiplier.

With the advent of the global war on terrorism, military parents literally “go to war” each day they leave their homes. It may be they will be gone for a day and return home that night. It may be they will board a ship and be gone for 6 months. To a child or young person who sees the reality of this war on the evening news, the fact that his or her parent—or, in some cases, both parents—must leave every day to face this threat can be understandably frightening. Military Child Care and Youth Programs have responded, meeting as many needs as current resources allow, most recently during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

CHILD CARE AND YOUTH SUPERVISION OPTIONS TO SUPPORT MILITARY PARENTS

In a very real sense, Military Child Care Programs also “go to war” whenever our military forces are called upon to do so. Many installations and bases have Child Care Mobilization and Contingency Plans that can be activated whenever there is an extraordinary contingency condition, be it a natural disaster or a war. When these child care plans are activated, here are some of the things that happen to benefit military parents, especially parents who may have been sharing child care arrangements and now will need additional support while one of the parents is deployed:

- Child care options provided are tailored to meet the current mission requirements, e.g., hours of operation may be adjusted to support an extended duty day, more hourly care is available to support unit briefings.
- Child and Youth staff identify locations for alternative child care sites to expand services.
- Staff recruitment and background check actions are expedited to replace those family member employees who return home during the sponsor's deployment and to accommodate increase in children served.
- Safety and security measures are augmented and may include the designation of staff as “mission essential personnel” in order to provide child care services for other mission essential personnel.
- Fees are often reduced and extended child care hours in support of the mission may be provided at little or no cost to service members.

Today, thousands of Child and Youth employees and Military Home Care providers are supporting families of deployed troops, often beginning as early as 4:30 a.m. and going until late into the evening to support shift workers. Military Home Care providers frequently provide additional evening hours of care taking the children to ball practice, choir, helping with homework, and volunteering to coach youth sports teams whose coaches are deployed. Staff also often work at night and weekends to provide care during family readiness group meetings and special events held by the installation to support families of deployed service members. In short, Child and Youth employees and Military Home Care providers are making every effort to provide a "normal" life to children who desperately need this support.

It may not sound extraordinary to us, but to the families that are supported, the efforts of these Child and Youth staff and Military Home Care providers make all the difference in their ability to cope with the stress of family separation. Telling, too, is the fact that many of them are also dealing with the deployment of their own spouses.

Here are some examples of initiatives implemented by the Services specifically to support the needs of parents during the current deployments:

- The Army offers extended hours care to soldiers using Child Development Centers and Family Child Care Homes at 85 installations. Many of these locations are providing care for children of deployed soldiers for up to 60 days in Family Child Care Homes. This allows these children to stay in a familiar setting as an alternative to foster care when grandparents or other family members are unable to care for them while their parent(s) is deployed. Providers caring for these children receive special training and oversight. An average of 38,000 hours of contingency related care is provided monthly in these child and youth programs. Twenty-one thousand of these care hours are in Family Child Care homes.
- The Navy is offering around-the-clock care in Pearl Harbor and Norfolk regions (where there are large fleet concentrations) to meet the extended hours need of shift workers and families of deployed sailors. The Navy is also creating a group home in each of these regions accommodating 12–18 children, with three shifts available.
- The Marine Corps is offering respite care, extended hours care, and child care during deployment briefings to support Marine Corps families. Deployment training materials for children were developed to assist Child and Youth staff and Home Care providers help children deal with the current deployment.
- The Air Force has expanded their Family Child Care Program at 70 Air Force bases to help parents when they need care beyond their regular child care arrangements to include before, during, and after deployments. Child care services include extended duty care for parents who work extended hours or have a shift change or need temporary help. Sixteen hours of care are offered for each child in families of active duty military, Air National Guard, and Air Force Reserve members returning from deployments of 30 days or more so they can spend time with spouses and catch up on family duties. An average of 11,000 hours of care is provided monthly through the use of the Expanded Family Child Care programs.

To this point in fiscal year 2003, through its different initiatives, Army child care programs have impacted nearly 10,000 families with more than 20,000 children by delivering 231,400 child care hours beyond "normal" operations. The Air Force, Navy, and Marines are providing comparable support to their families as well. In total, more than 400,000 hours of contingency related child care have been provided to military parents Department of Defense (DOD) wide.

Military parents are also concerned about the impact of the global war on terrorism on their school-age children and teens. All the Services have held meetings with teens to help develop the kinds of programs on the installations that appeal to this age group and help them cope with the changes in their lives brought on by a parent's absence.

Communication with parents who are deployed is an essential factor in maintaining well-being in the lives of our children and youth. At youth centers, where computers with internet connectivity are available, our young people use e-mail and digital photography to stay connected.

NEW WAYS OF PROVIDING SERVICES

The global war on terrorism is transforming the way we deliver child care services to military families, particularly to those not living on or near military installations. For example, one of our National Guard bases provided on-site child care to a Ma-

rine Corps Reserve unit located approximately 2 hours away. Although the child care staff had only 3 days to prepare for the request to provide child care for a Sunday deployment briefing—it happened . . . much to the great satisfaction of the Marine Corps unit making the request. By offering child care to military parents located 100 miles away from the Child Development Center, the staff demonstrated they were not bound to delivering service in the “traditional” way.

The military Services are piloting numerous outreach efforts aimed at serving geographically-dispersed active component service members as well as Guard and Reserve members who are eligible to utilize these services while on active duty or in training status.

- A Memorandum of Agreement between the Army and the General Services Administration (GSA) permits active duty patrons to include Guard and Reserve in 23 communities throughout the country (e.g., Albany, New York and St. Louis, Missouri) at the same cost as at an Army Child Development Center.
- The Army is implementing several pilot programs to support monthly weekend drills for Guard and Reserve units and child care for 12 activated Guard and Reserve Family Support Groups.
- Cooperative agreements between the Army and the Boys & Girls Clubs of Miami, Florida; Killeen, Texas; Tacoma, Washington; Silver Spring, Maryland; and Dale City, Virginia, are allowing the Clubs in these local communities to offer services to military-connected youth that are comparable to Army Youth Programs in terms of training, staff supervision, and predictable programming.
- Our Military Youth Programs are receiving strong support through our ongoing partnerships with the United States Department of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service (i.e., 4-H Clubs) and the Boys & Girls Clubs of America.
- In support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Boys & Girls Clubs all over America have “opened their hearts and doors” to our school-age children and teens of military families living off-post, as well as to children of reservists and National Guard. Children can participate in local Club activities for little or no cost to their families.
- Cooperative Extension Service “military liaisons” in 38 States are supporting military-connected children and youth through a variety of outreach initiatives. These State and local 4-H Club partnerships with Military Youth Programs reinforce a sense of community for our school-age children and teens whether they live on or near a military installation or are a part of the greater community. Wherever they move, our youth are involved and connected in 4-H clubs.

We are encouraged by these successes and by that fact that each of these deployment support initiatives has the potential to be expanded to additional sites.

A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH

The Department of Defense is working to institutionalize our “lessons learned” by establishing an infrastructure to support the child care and youth supervision needs of our military parents. This systematic response may range from ensuring we have a cadre of well-trained Home Care providers who can handle long-term care or respite care to support that single service member or that “geographically-single” spouse, to guaranteeing extended hours that mirror the installation duty day at Child Development Centers so that dual-employed military families can meet their military obligations.

Working parents and service members require a range of baseline programs to support their child care needs. These programs and services are vital in ensuring that military parents have reliable child care options that minimize lost duty time. Normal duty requirements usually involve Full Daycare in Child Development Centers, Military Child Care Homes, or Before and After School Programs. Full day operations cover a range of duty hours usually from 6 a.m.–6 p.m., Monday through Friday. Hourly Care is provided in these same programs to support the intermittent child care requirements of both working and non-working parents. Non-working parents who volunteer their time supporting family programs use hourly care options. Youth Programs provide predictable options and services during out-of-school time particularly for middle school youth who are too old for child care and too young to drive or have a job. Youth programming can include leisure activities, life skills classes, opportunities to volunteer for community service, workforce preparation, individual/group sports and fitness activities, homework centers, and youth technology labs.

Many military parents often need care beyond the normal duty day. Extended Hours Child Care, usually offered in Military Child Care Homes on and off post, must be available for children of parents who require routine evening child care,

work unusual or long hours, or have mission related child care needs that require services over 12 hours a day. Parents involved in training exercises or temporary duty away from their home station may require round-the-clock care with specially trained Home Providers for periods of up to 60 days.

Single parents and parents with deployed spouses find themselves dealing alone with the stresses of parenthood. Respite Care offers short-term hourly care to provide them a "break" to tend to family business or take time for themselves. Respite care services, often offered as part of a child abuse prevention plan, are generally at no cost to parents for limited periods of time or offered at a reduced rate.

We believe much lost duty time is due to routine child illnesses and unreliable child care arrangements. Back-up child care homes are an option to provide care when routine child care arrangements break down or cannot be used. Many times it is the service member who takes time off to be with a child recovering from a cold because the spouse holds a job with limited benefits and would lose needed income from a day's pay.

On-Site Group Care, provided in non-traditional settings, is often used to support command functions, e.g., pre-deployment briefings. Child care staff come to the event location with mobile child care kits and "set up shop."

We need to institutionalize services such as these to support military parents who are under constant stress of a high operating tempo and frequent deployments.

SCHOOL TRANSITION SUPPORT

Just as we are sharing our lessons learned in Military Child Care, the work the Army is doing in partnership with local school systems is applicable to ease school transitions for any mobile student.

In 2000, the Army, in partnership with the Military Child Education Coalition, conducted a study to gain a greater understanding of the challenges that military-sponsored students face when transitioning from one school district to another. The findings included student difficulties with transferability of student records, course grades, credit hours, and high stakes testing requirements of different States as they moved from school district to school district. Of course, these are issues that impact all mobile children and not on just those children with military parents.

To institutionalize the results of the Secondary Education Transition Study (SETS), the Army has funded School Liaison Officer positions at Army installations to facilitate school transitions for our children. These trained professionals are providing Army families with consistent and predictable transition support services, e.g., improved communication about school calendars, graduation requirements, records transfer, and opportunities for students to more rapidly develop social and emotional connections to the new school and community.

The number of school systems serving children from families of all branches of the military who are willing to both emulate promising practices and share ideas that will make the transitions easier encourages us. To date, 125 superintendents, representing 129 school districts, which encompass over 2.5 million school-age children, have signed the SETS Agreement to facilitate the development of reciprocal school policies and practices to institutionalize processes for school transitions. The vast majority of the signatory school systems are stateside public schools, and I am pleased to note that all of our Department of Defense Dependent Schools and Department of Defense Domestic Elementary and Secondary Schools are signatories. The Army is forming a steering committee of superintendents to promote communications among these school systems and expand the SETS Agreement process to major school systems supporting military installations. A web-based "forum" will allow all SETS superintendents to network and share information on promising practices. We are asking local schools to consider policy changes in order to level the playing field so all mobile children have the same opportunity for academic success and smooth school transitions. We are hopeful all major school districts serving military-connected children will become signatories of the SETS Agreement so that no child is "left behind."

During Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom, it has been clear that SETS school systems are committed to responding to the needs of our military children. Superintendents, principals, and counselors welcome information about how to support our children, including military support services available for their use. Teachers and counselors are extremely positive and demonstrate a genuine interest in the well-being of our military-connected children. Because these partnerships with the local schools were well established prior to the need for them, the outcomes resulted in a better understanding among students, parents, and school personnel as mobilization of soldiers occurred.

School systems who are members of the Military Child Education Coalition, a private, non-profit organization whose mission is to address the education needs of children in military families of all Services, receive an "interactive counseling center." This point-to-point video teleconferencing computer system enables counselors from the losing school to communicate with the receiving school when a student is in transition. Copies of transcripts, course descriptions, and other records can be reviewed on screen and transmitted real time to either school. This is an excellent tool for both and parents counselors.

The Military Child Education Coalition also sponsors a Transition Counselor Institute series to help school guidance personnel work with military-connected children. Subjects include the military lifestyle, deployment, and relocation issues. The Military Child Education Coalition has trained almost 1,000 educators from 29 States and overseas through this institute.

Since April 2001, the Army has allowed more than 2,400 soldiers with children entering their senior year in high school to remain an extra year at their current duty station. Soldiers may apply to the Army Personnel Command for stabilization approval 12 months prior to the start of their child's senior year. Only 21 requests, fewer than 1 percent, have been denied because of the needs of the Army. As of June 2003, 60 requests were pending approval. The Army evaluates the applications on a case-by-case basis and looks to be able to say "yes" to the request.

Families tell us this process works. Students are able to prepare for post secondary opportunities, go to the prom, and graduate with friends they made during their high school days. Army service now means one less sacrifice for families. We are being told we are doing the right thing.

CONCLUSION

In August 1990, the House Armed Services Committee challenged DOD "to be on the leading edge of the child care movement in America." The Services responded by making military child care, once derided by many as the "ghetto of child care," as the model for national child care reform. Indeed, a May 2000 report issued by the National Women's Law Center entitled: "Be All That We Can Be Lessons from the Military For Improving our Nation's Child Care System," notes: "The best chance a family has to be guaranteed affordable and high quality (child) care is to join the military." Several States are now piloting the key components of the Military Child Care System, in response to the language in the Fiscal Year 2000 Defense Authorization Act, Public Law 106-65, "Support for Expanded Child Care and Youth Programs Services for Dependents." We believe that this effort, in addition to improving child care in the private sector, will lead to additional quality child care options for military parents.

Although military child care programs are acknowledged as a benchmark model today, we are evaluating our present operations with a clear view of where we must go in the future while maintaining the key elements of quality, affordability, and availability that define our DOD Child Care and Youth Program policies.

Our new challenge is to sustain our baseline Child and Youth Programs and develop the infrastructure that will allow us to routinely provide predictable services such as school transition assistance, offer respite and extended hours care as needed, identify care options for geographically-dispersed service members, support youth communications with deployed parents, and facilitate partnerships with schools and community organizations that will increase the availability of care for military-connected children. Only by looking at these options, in addition to our existing baseline programs, will military parents have sufficient affordable, quality child care and youth supervision options.

To do so, we must focus our planning on ensuring fee equity for all patrons regardless of whether they choose care in Child Development Centers or in Military Child Care Homes; increasing the availability of off-post care options that are comparable in quality and cost to on-post programs; stabilizing our child care workforce by paying competitive wages; and offering career potential—especially for our military spouse employees—within the Military Child and Youth Program system DOD-wide, and constructing additional on-post child care facilities where necessary.

We must also, however, recognize that we are accountable for our operations and deliver back to military families and to the American taxpayer the very best and most efficient system that we can. We have done that and will continue to do so.

Military Child Care and Youth Programs are absolutely essential to the well-being of our military families. Your committees have been champions of Military Child and Youth Programs for more than 20 years. We believe DOD and the military services have delivered measurable cost, quality, and availability outcomes. These outcomes are documented by various private sector reports and studies done by the

General Accounting Office, RAND Corporation, our national professional accreditation status, and media stories. A May 17, 2000, USA Today quote sums it up: "The military is the model of child care efficiency."

I hope that you would agree that the Nation has received an excellent return on its investment in military child care. On behalf of military parents all over the world, I ask your continued strong support for our Military Child Care and Youth Programs. Military parents face a variety of challenges every day. Knowing their children are well cared for should make those challenges a bit easier to handle.

Thank You.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you very much, Ms. Lucas, and thanks to all of the witnesses for your complete testimony. I've read all of your testimony. I'm sorry I wasn't here to hear it all. The United States Senate does not run with the same precision as the United States military.

I have several questions, and just so you know what the schedule is, the Senators have two or three more votes. I'll be here for another 20 minutes or so, others will be back, I think, but probably we'll wind this up, if that suits your schedules, about 5:30. Is that all right with you?

I would like to first thank you for the completeness of your testimony. It's a big help to us, and it helps us begin to get specific with areas of things that we might do. I thought that I would ask you about some very specific things, and let me start with Ms. Raezer. Let me start with the housing allowance. At Groton, or at New London, I guess I should say, we ran into this, and you mention it here, that in the new housing that's being provided there is a housing allowance, and so the sailors are finding on their paychecks a new entry that says, here is your housing allowance.

Now, that looks good, but one problem, and maybe it was an unintended consequence, or maybe it wasn't, one problem is that that makes those families ineligible for some other Federal benefits, like child care vouchers, WIC payments, perhaps even food stamps, because previously those housing allowances were treated as in-kind benefits, and not a part of income. Is that true? How widespread is that, and if that's true, what should be done about that?

Ms. RAEZER. As we addressed in our testimony, this is a really big issue. It has been an issue historically because of the way basic allowance for housing has been treated versus government housing, the in-kind housing. Value of in-kind housing for most programs has not been counted toward eligibility. However, housing allowances which show up on a pay stub are, so our folks who have lived off the installation, and remember 60 percent of our folks live off the installation, have had to deal with this issue for a long time.

It was especially bad when the housing allowance wasn't covering even close to what it was supposed to cover by law. These folks were dealing with higher housing costs, higher transportation costs, they were further away from base services, and yet they couldn't qualify for free and reduced lunches for their kids and other safety net programs.

Senator ALEXANDER. They were off base.

Ms. RAEZER. They were off base.

Senator ALEXANDER. The basic allowance for housing was counted in their income.

Ms. RAEZER. What's complicating the issue now is that under the authorities for the privatization of military family housing, which

in one sense is a very good thing, since we're getting private capital in to fix military housing at a much faster rate than we can get through military construction.

Senator ALEXANDER. They were pretty good-looking buildings.

Ms. RAEZER. Yes.

Under that legislation, it was mandated that service members in the privatized housing will receive this basic allowance for housing, which is then turned over as an allotment to the developer as rent. So you have these folks sometimes living in the same house, but when the contract goes into effect with the developer, all of a sudden it looks like they're making more money, but they lose eligibility for the programs on which they've depended for extra help.

At Fort Carson, Colorado, when the Army turned over all that housing to the developer, two-thirds of the families who were on food stamps went off food stamps, simply because the housing allowance started showing up on their LES. This issue has been fixed for some programs for free and reduced lunches, that eligibility was fixed.

Senator ALEXANDER. When you say fixed, what do you mean?

Ms. RAEZER. Well, what I mean is that now with respect to children living in privatized housing, their parents' housing allowance is not counted towards those children's eligibility.

Senator ALEXANDER. So that was the solution.

Ms. RAEZER. It was legislation attached to the agricultural bill last year, but it only fixed the problem for those children and parents—it only really maintained the status quo. It fixed the problem for the folks in privatized housing. We still have those folks out in the community who are having larger expenses who still can't qualify.

Our organization, after looking at this, said it would really be nice if everybody was treated the same way in terms of basing allowance for housing. The military child care system kind of compromises. Everybody has the standard, what's called BAH-2 counted as part of their income, so it's the same across the board for everyone.

Right now, as you can see in the chart in our written statement, it's a mish-mash for some things it's counted for privatized housing, not for other housing. Some places it hasn't been readjusted yet for the privatized housing. It's very, very confusing for our families.

Senator ALEXANDER. I can imagine that there would be a large cost to the Government and in equity of dealing with people off-base as well as on-base, and the question would come up, well, would it be then fair to everyone, including people who don't have families, that—excuse me just a minute.

Ms. RAEZER. Sure.

Senator ALEXANDER. I'm just checking to see if I'd voted.

Ms. RAEZER. We're looking for you folks to help us simplify this.

Senator ALEXANDER. I'm glad to know the problem, and if you're then considering all families, the question might be, should that total amount of money just go as a pay raise to the Services, but I think that's as far as I can take it now, but I think it's a significant issue, and a larger one than I thought.

A second question I have to pose to any of you is, can you be of any help to us in suggesting what we might do to encourage more

reciprocity among States on the issues that make life more difficult for frequently moving military families, particularly families with children? There are various models, and there are various agreements, but I'm wondering if there might not be an interstate compact of some kind that the Federal Government might encourage, not a Federal law.

A lot of these are State prerogatives, driver's licenses, professional licenses for spouses who are accountants, or who want to work for child care, but maybe there would be some sort of interstate compact that the Federal Government could help encourage, and that military associations could then go out and encourage their State legislators to pass, or is that already being done?

Ms. RAEZER. It's being done in some places. The Governor of Texas just signed a bill into law that would actually encourage the State of Texas to look at reciprocity agreements on some of these issues with other States that have a high number of military children.

Senator ALEXANDER. It's a law to encourage other States?

Ms. RAEZER. Encourage Texas to enter into, to explore reciprocity agreements with other States.

Senator ALEXANDER. I see. Texas would make its own agreements.

Ms. RAEZER. Yes, and that's the first step, because as you said, this isn't completely a Federal issue, but I would hope that Members of Congress could use their bully pulpit to say, this really is something that is worthy of the States' attention when you go back home.

One piece that we would ask for Federal help on is just, in your oversight of No Child Left Behind, to ensure that the varying State accountability measures that are being developed to bring the States in compliance with No Child Left Behind don't unfairly penalize mobile children and the schools that are charged with educating them.

Senator ALEXANDER. Another role that the Federal Government might play is, the Department of Defense has lots of resources, many of the people who were here today have lots of resources that would assist Governors and legislators in figuring out what it is they ought to do, so it might be just as simple as getting a few of the Governors together with some of us and the Department of Defense and some of you all and in an orderly way trying to get that going.

Ms. RAEZER. It would.

Senator ALEXANDER. Ms. Lucas or Dr. MacDermid, do either of you have comments?

Ms. LUCAS. Yes, sir. I can tell you that the Army has contacted a number of State legislators asking them to review their in-State tuition eligibility, especially under the following conditions, asking them to look at their in-State tuition for soldiers and family members within the State of legal residence, the immediate in-State tuition for soldiers and family members in the State of assignment, and then the continuity of in-State tuition once established.

The proponent for that within the Army is the Office of the Adjutant General, and we would refer your question to them for a more comprehensive reply.

Senator ALEXANDER. I wonder if I might ask you to do this for the committees, would each of you, if you feel you can, think about the reciprocity issue and write us a letter when you are finished, in the next few days, and outline for us the areas where you think reciprocity would be most useful, and any other comments you might want to make. Like, some things are easier to do than others, and you've pointed out that some things are already being done. I was a Governor one time, and the Uniform Commercial Code was not adopted by the Federal Government. It was adopted State by State, and my guess would be that many States with military posts and bases would rush to try to adopt some sort of reasonable compact, and once several States did, that would encourage others to do more, but it would help us to know, from the families' point of view and from the military's point of view, what would help the most.

In New London they might say, we have a lot of spouses who want to be a part of the family daycare network, and it takes 6 months to get certified in Connecticut, and by the time they're certified, they're off doing something else. They can't wait 6 months.

Dr. MacDermid, did you have anything you'd like to add?

Dr. MACDERMID. No, thank you, Senator.

Senator ALEXANDER. Let's talk about child care just a little bit more. I was very impressed with what's happened in the child care, child development centers we saw, and Senator Dodd and I may have a little different emphasis on the family network. I think that's a pretty good thing. At Fort Campbell they were saying, we have 65 licensed spouses. My guess is that many of those are military spouses, which provides an opportunity for income and care for children, and fulfillment, and they need perhaps 230 homes.

I heard discussion that we need respite care. The discussion about flexibility we talked about, but other than respite care, family network, what other child care issues should we be thinking about?

Ms. LUCAS. Sir, I'd like to talk just a little bit about the family child care first, because military family child care providers are, in fact, all military spouses.

Senator ALEXANDER. So they're all spouses.

Ms. LUCAS. They are all spouses, but military family child care is a viable option only if the parent fees are equitable to the same fees that parents are paying in military child development centers; and that the home providers receive some kind of compensatory funding offset, as authorized in the Military Child Care Act to make up the difference in their expenses.

Senator ALEXANDER. Now, today, are the home providers not paid?

Ms. LUCAS. They are paid directly by the soldiers and sailors and airmen and marines. However, the fee policy that the Department of Defense uses for patrons to pay for care in their child development centers is not applied to the family child care homes because the same level of subsidy is not given to the homes that is given to the child development centers. In general, a soldier using a military family child care home will pay about \$10 a week more than if he were using a military child development center.

It's an issue of competing priorities, and the Military Child Care Program has never been funded for that full compensatory subsidy so that we can use the same fee policy for both our centers and our family child care homes.

We see really a steady drain of our family child care providers leaving for other opportunities. Just in the Army alone over the last 5 years we've lost some 3,500 child spaces because providers have left for more lucrative opportunities elsewhere.

Senator ALEXANDER. Now, they've gone for more lucrative opportunities?

Ms. LUCAS. Well, they would go to work in the child development center.

Senator ALEXANDER. Oh, you mean you've lost the family spaces.

Ms. LUCAS. We've lost the family child care spaces, so we've seen a steady decline in the number of family child care spaces in all the Services over the years. Two years ago, the Services were asked as part of the conference report to give a report on what would be needed to help expand the family child care program, and we did provide that.

Senator ALEXANDER. Any other comments on child care?

Ms. RAEZER. Yes. I think it's important to remember we have a lot of folks who can't access either the child development center or the family child care homes on an installation, because they don't live near an installation, or because of transportation issues. An active duty marine who lives in Woodbridge and works in the Pentagon probably isn't going to find the Pentagon child development center all that attractive for their child because it means hauling them up and down I-395 every day. They need child care at home.

Senator ALEXANDER. It's not attractive, no.

Ms. RAEZER. We have a lot of our activated Guard and Reserve families who cannot access the installations, so there is this whole big population for whom the installation child development center or family care homes aren't an option, who right now don't have a military child care service or benefit, and they're asking for some kind of help in paying for the child care that they need.

Senator ALEXANDER. There are many different levels of child care in America, and many of them are adequate. Some are just better than others. Is it really necessary that the family day care home subsidy be equal to what the subsidy would be for the child development center, or is that just a matter of equity among service families?

Ms. LUCAS. Sir, it isn't that it costs. It actually is less expensive for us to provide child care in a daycare home.

Senator ALEXANDER. Yes.

Ms. LUCAS. So it is a lower amount. The equity that we're talking about is that the soldier or the service member pays the same whether they're using a family child care home or a center, so it is truly a choice and a matter of equity among service families.

I think, too, we're also concerned about when we refer military family members, for instance, through community referral service. It's one thing to refer them, but once you're out there, they need to have some kind of support so that they are using child care in the private sector, but again looking to pay something, if not ex-

actly the same as if they were on a military installation, but receiving some support for that.

We have a pilot site in the Army right now with the GSA-accredited centers, more than 100 centers throughout the country, and as part of the pilot site a service member can use one of those centers and they will be charged the same as if they were actually on a military installation, and we think that has a lot of possibilities for future expansion.

Senator ALEXANDER. That's very helpful.

The hour is late. You've been patient with your time, and most of the Senators have another vote to cast in just a few minutes, so I want to thank you very much for the comprehensiveness of your testimony.

This is the fourth in a series of hearings that we have had. Senator Nelson will have the fifth. We expect to continue our spotlight for the foreseeable future on how to help make it easier for military parents raising children. It would seem to me that a military, if we had a military child care certification that we could agree on, that might be one of the first things States might recognize, making it easier for families, spouses who are moving families to a new State to immediately be eligible for that program, if we could get the compensation part fixed.

So I thank you very much for coming. I look forward to anything you have to suggest to us on the list of items best for reciprocity, and if any of the witnesses have any other information you'd like for us to have, we'd like to receive it within about a week.

Thank you very much. The hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 5:30 p.m., the subcommittees adjourned.]

ISSUES RELATING TO THE EDUCATION OF MILITARY CHILDREN

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2003

U.S. SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON PERSONNEL,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Bellevue, Nebraska.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 1:10 p.m., in room 100, Bellevue Public Schools/Offutt Air Force Base Welcome Center, Bellevue, Nebraska, Senator Saxby Chambliss (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Committee members present: Senators Chambliss and E. Benjamin Nelson.

Majority staff member present: Richard F. Walsh, counsel.

Minority staff member present: Gerald J. Leeling, minority counsel.

Staff assistant present: Michael N. Berger.

Committee members' assistants present: Clyde A. Taylor IV, assistant to Senator Chambliss; and Eric Pierce, assistant to Senator Ben Nelson.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR SAXBY CHAMBLISS, CHAIRMAN

Senator CHAMBLISS. Good afternoon. The subcommittee will come to order. The Subcommittee on Personnel meets today to receive testimony on issues relating to the education of military children.

It's a great pleasure for me to be here in Bellevue, Nebraska, today, and I bring you greetings from the Southeastern Conference, from our Georgia Bulldogs, and our Georgia Tech Yellow Jackets from the ACC. [Laughter.]

Unfortunately, the last time, as I remember, our two schools, Nebraska and Georgia, met was in the Sun Bowl several years ago, and you all were happy after the game, and we were very unhappy. [Laughter.]

It's nice to be here in Nebraska today under different circumstances. I'm particularly pleased to be here with my good friend, Ben Nelson. As a freshman member of the United States Senate, I've had the privilege of chairing the Subcommittee on Personnel in the Armed Services Committee, and being as my ranking member, he has been my right hand, my partner in this all the way through.

The Senate is not always bipartisan, but on this subcommittee and on the Armed Services Committee, it is a very bipartisan effort to look after the needs of our men and women who serve in every

branch of our military. I can't be more proud or happier to have as my ranking member on the Subcommittee on Personnel, Senator Ben Nelson. He has been a terrific asset. Plus, he and I have gotten to be very good friends. I was telling somebody inside, we're going to be coming back out here because I'm an avid outdoorsman, as is he, and I want to get some of your pheasant under wraps out here one of these days.

I was surprised. I have an aunt and uncle who live out in Lincoln, and my Aunt Florence Anderson is here today. Florence surprised me by coming here. I was very pleased to see my mother's sister here. So we have a little bit of a Nebraska connection there.

I would like to start by stating my appreciation for the strong advocacy on the behalf of the men and women of the Armed Forces by Senator Nelson. The Committee on Armed Services has a strong tradition of bipartisanship, and that tradition could not be stronger than in the Personnel Subcommittee.

I'm sure Senator Nelson agrees it is essential that the Subcommittee take advantage of every opportunity to visit military communities and military personnel and their families where they live and where they work and hear firsthand from them about their experiences, concerns, and hopes for the future as they proudly serve in the Armed Forces.

In early June, we conducted a field hearing very similar to this at Robins Air Force Base in Warner Robins, Georgia, and received testimony on issues affecting families of soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines. A few weeks later, we joined with Senator Lamar Alexander's Subcommittee on Children and Families of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee in Washington, DC, to conduct a joint hearing on these issues.

In both hearings, we focused on various issues affecting the quality of life of military personnel and their families. We heard from military leaders in the Services and civilian officials of the Department of Defense who are responsible for programs directly serving individuals, families, and the communities that surround military installations.

We heard about such issues as support networks for family members of the deployed active duty and Reserve personnel, availability of child care for military parents, enhancing spouse employment opportunities, and improving the availability of counseling services for families in distress.

I was impressed by the programs I heard about and the dedication of those who serve military families worldwide. More can be done to ensure the best use of available resources to support military personnel in being successful parents as well as successful soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines.

Today, we focus on military parents and civilian community schools and the unique challenges they face in providing the education of military children. We expect to learn more about the problems facing civilian communities in responding to the educational needs of military families. We hope to bring back to Washington, DC, a better understanding of how Congress can assist in improving the quality of education given and received.

We have two panels of witnesses who will testify this afternoon. First, we will hear from Dr. John F. Deegan, Superintendent of

Schools for the Bellevue Public School System and the Chief Executive Officer of the Military Impacted Schools Association. Dr. Deegan is well-known to us in Washington, DC, for his strong advocacy and unflagging energy on behalf of military dependents and the community schools that serve them.

We will also receive testimony from Otto J. Thomas, Director of Educational Opportunities within the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness.

Gentlemen, welcome to each of you.

Our second panel will consist of parents of military children who will share with us their experiences and suggestions. Additionally, we will receive testimony from Sheila Murphy, a former director of a Family Readiness Network, who can speak about issues affecting Reserve component personnel.

I welcome members of our first panel, and we will begin shortly, but I would first like to recognize my good friend and colleague, and what a great host he is, in the great State of Nebraska, Senator Ben Nelson.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR E. BENJAMIN NELSON

Senator BEN NELSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is my pleasure to welcome you to the great State of Nebraska. Today we planned about as good weather as you could ever expect anywhere. I'm sure you have good weather in Georgia as well, but it would be pretty hard to top what we've been able to get for you today here in the State known for the good life.

I know you are a fan of peaches, and it's a little premature for us to determine what's going to happen at the end of the football season, but hopefully the Cornhuskers and the Yellow Jackets or the Bulldogs will get a chance to meet. I do remember that game in the Sun Bowl. I was sworn to secrecy as to the score. [Laughter.]

Perhaps we can get an honorable wager if that were to occur again.

Seriously, Saxby, I'm very pleased to have you here in the State of Nebraska, and to congratulate you and thank you for what you've recognized as an important part of providing for the military families, and that is to make sure that the educational opportunities are appropriate for the circumstances. For holding this hearing here in Nebraska, I am deeply indebted because here in Bellevue, education meets the military through the Bellevue Public Schools. What an outstanding job Dr. Deegan and his staff have done over the years to make sure that the educational opportunities are appropriate for the circumstances.

As the hearings have shown, education of our children, and particularly of military children, can be one of the most important values that we possess as Americans. Our military families are no different when it comes to that. They rank quality education as one of the most important quality-of-life issues that they face as they serve our Nation. If we can't provide a quality education for their children, our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines will choose some other vocation, with an all-voluntary source, even though in their hearts they would prefer to continue to serve in our military Services.

When we think of military families, most people first think of Active-Duty Forces. During peace time, we ask our service members to move every few years, sometimes to other duty locations throughout the United States, and other times to duty stations outside the United States.

Most of the time, the military family is able to accompany the service member as he or she moves from duty station to duty station. This creates unique challenges for their children, who move from school to school, and have to adapt to the unique culture and requirements of each new school system.

During times of conflict, the stresses on these military families are even greater, particularly when the military member is deployed to combat zones where their lives are constantly at risk. Their children at home watch the TV coverage of our military at work, and they worry about their moms and dads on the battlefields.

Our National Guard and Reserve families also have unique educational challenges. It's a dramatic event when mom or dad is mobilized and ordered to active duty, leaving the family behind. Many of these "citizen-soldiers" serve with the Active-Duty Forces right on the battlefield, and just like the children of active duty parents, children of Guard and Reserve parents watch TV and worry about their parents.

Others are ordered to active duty to other locations, but the impact on the family is the same. Mom or dad is taken away, leaving the rest of the family to deal with the problems compounded by the missing parent. These families turn to family support groups and local schools for help in dealing with the practical and emotional needs caused or aggravated by the mobilization of one or, in some cases, both parents. We need to understand better what these needs are and how we can help meet them.

Today's hearing will give us a chance to learn, firsthand, about the most important concerns regarding the education of our military children.

I'm delighted that Dr. Deegan is here to talk about what this school system has done to deal with these challenges. In addition to his full-time occupation and duties as Superintendent, as you've indicated, Mr. Chairman, he's also the CEO of the Military Impacted Schools Association. This is an added bonus for us here today because, in my view, he is the Nation's leading expert on Impact Aid, a Federal program that provides funding for a portion of the educational costs of the federally-impacted students.

We also welcome Otto Thomas. We appreciate what he brings to us, as a result of the DOD Impact Aid to Public Schools, and other educational-related initiatives, including outreach to public schools and support of military-dependent students affected by frequent relocations and deployments.

I am also very excited about the second panel. We have parents of military children from each of the Services. Ms. Bruce is the wife of Army Lieutenant Colonel Robert Bruce; Petty Officer Lemasters is our Navy parent; Sergeant and Mrs. Simon will tell us about their Air Force experiences; and Mrs. Bruno is a Marine Corps parent who has been very active in her children's various schools.

These parents are able to be here today to talk about the challenges that they have experienced.

Ms. Sheila Murphy is also going to talk to us today, and she's going to talk about the Family Readiness Network for the 155th Air Refueling Wing in Lincoln, when it won the Air National Guard's 2002 Outstanding Family Program.

Mr. Chairman, we have an outstanding array, and without taking any more time, I'm looking forward to the testimony that we are able to get. Thank you, again, for holding this hearing.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thank you, Ben. We'll talk about that wager the closer we get to the end of the hearing. [Laughter.]

In addition to Senator Nelson, my good friend and the gentleman that sits next to me on the Senate Intelligence Committee, Senator Chuck Hagel, has sent a statement. He is actually over in Germany today and sent a statement which will go into the record.

Also in my years in the House, I had the privilege of becoming very good friends with now former Congressman Bill Barrett, who I served with on the House Agriculture Committee, as well as your current Congressman here in Omaha, Lee Terry, who I know is very active regarding the issue of education of military children, and I think last night, Dr. Deegan, you presented an award to him regarding his work on Impact Aid.

Dr. DEEGAN. National award, right.

Senator CHAMBLISS. He and I worked very closely on that particular issue during my years in the House. So we also have a statement from Congressman Terry that will be inserted into the record.

[The prepared statements of Senator Hagel and Representative Terry follow:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY SENATOR CHUCK HAGEL

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Senator Nelson, for holding this hearing in Nebraska today and thank you for your leadership and commitment to military personnel and their families. Improving the quality of life for the men and women of the Armed Forces is the best way to show our support for the important work they do.

Our troops are making tremendous sacrifices in service to our country. We must not forget that their families are also asked to make significant sacrifices while their loved ones are away. As students across the country begin a new school year, many find themselves with one or both parents deployed overseas or training away from home. We must be especially attentive to the needs of these families, and to the education of their children.

As a member of the Senate Impact Aid Coalition, I have strongly supported efforts to increase funding for the Impact Aid program. Federal funding for this program ensures that schools serving military children have the resources they need to provide a quality education to all their students.

Year after year, military families relocate to new cities and towns across the country, uprooting their lives without complaint. These families should have confidence that their children will receive a quality education wherever they live. Direct funding to schools through the Impact Aid program makes this possible.

Bellevue Public Schools, and others like it, give parents the peace of mind they need to focus on their duties as members of the Armed Forces. For more than 50 years, support provided through the Federal Impact Aid program has helped more than 1,400 schools nationwide replace lost local property tax revenue due to a Federal presence.

Last week, I joined a bi-partisan group of Senate colleagues in signing a letter to House and Senate conferees to the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill regarding funding for the Impact Aid program. The letter urges conferees to provide an increase of \$50 million for the program this year, the House-passed level, which would bring total funding to \$1.238 billion in fiscal year

2004. Funding for this program is an annual battle that I intend to continue fighting until we meet our goals of fully funding this program.

I am glad to know you will hear testimony from Dr. John Deegan, Superintendent of Bellevue Public Schools, and Chief Executive Officer of the Military Impacted Schools Association, today. Dr. Deegan is a true champion of military children and has first-hand knowledge of the needs of these young people. Also, thank you for inviting Otto Thomas, Sheila Murphy, and our military families to testify here today.

Mr. Chairman and Senator Nelson, thank you again for your leadership on behalf of military families, and especially the education of their children. These individuals are our bravest Americans, we have a duty to invest in their future and that of their children.

PREPARED STATEMENT BY REPRESENTATIVE LEE TERRY

I want to thank you for your willingness to examine the issues facing the education of our military children, and for holding your subcommittee hearing in my congressional district. Nebraska's Second District is home to Offutt Air Force Base, which has more than 9,000 military and civilian personnel.

The quality of education for America's military children is one of my top concerns. We have a responsibility to the men and women of the Armed Forces that while they are busy defending the Nation, the least we can do is make certain their children receive a sound education.

One of the best ways Congress can uphold that responsibility is by providing adequate funding for the Federal Impact Aid program, which supplies important financial support to public schools near military bases. Despite the additional number students they must educate, public schools serving military children face severe limits in their ability to raise revenue, due to fewer property taxes and provisions of the Soldiers and Sailors Relief Act. Impact Aid is especially important at this time when most schools are experiencing cuts in State funding.

Earlier this year, I helped lead the effort in the House to restore funding for Impact Aid after the administration proposed a \$172.7 million cut to the program—already receiving approximately less than half of its authorized levels. As a co-chairman of the House Impact Aid Coalition, I testified before the House Budget Committee and urged Chairman Nussle to increase the program's funding by \$50 million over the previous fiscal year. I also worked with several other coalition members in urging appropriators to follow the Budget Committee plan.

As a result, the House Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill (H.R. 2660) includes this increase for Impact Aid, with the funding level at \$1.238 billion for fiscal year 2004. Unfortunately, the Senate bill contains about \$45 million less than the House bill.

I urge the members of your subcommittee to work with Senate appropriators, to secure the funding level provided by the House. These funds are critical in our effort to help schools near military bases provide a quality education for all children.

Of course, there are other means by which we can improve the education of our military children, such as the DOD's Supplement to Impact Aid, established to address overall quality of life, readiness, and retention issues in our all-volunteer service. The extra student services provided by this program, such as counseling for military children, are especially needed at a time when one or both parents are deployed. The program also allows schools near military bases to bolster safety and security measures, as well as address the needs of special education students.

School construction funding is another area of concern. Currently, I am working with Chairman Boehner of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce to reform the school construction competitive grant within the Impact Aid program. Under its current formula, the program allows for disproportionate funding between the two types of school districts that receive this financial assistance. I have proposed language to Chairman Boehner that would ensure a more equal system of funding for schools serving the children of military personnel.

To better address the needs of our youngest military children, I urge my colleagues in the Senate to support the School Readiness Act (H.R. 2210)—approved earlier this year by a one-vote margin in the House. The bill, now awaiting Senate action, would protect Head Start services for children at Offutt Air Force Base and other military installations around the country. Without passage of this legislation, thousands of military children will not receive nutritional assistance, immunizations, early academics, and other valuable Head Start services.

Finally, it is important that we recognize the bipartisan work of both chambers on the Fiscal Year 2004 Defense Appropriations Bill (H.R. 2658). This legislation

fully funds the average 4.1 percent military personnel pay raise requested in the budget, and lessens out-of-pocket housing expenses for our military members. It also provides \$128 million for the continuation of increased rates for Imminent Danger Pay and Family Separation Allowances. These measures will allow military families to devote more resources to the needs of their children.

In conclusion, I believe we are obligated to ensure that America's military children receive a first-class education; so the sons and daughters of our fighting forces are well prepared for success beyond graduation.

Again, I appreciate your attention to this important issue and respectfully request that this letter be submitted for the record of this field hearing. Thank you.

With that, I again want to welcome our first panel: Dr. Deegan and Mr. Thomas. We thank you for being here today to share some thoughts with us, and at this time, Dr. Deegan, we'll start with you for any opening comments.

**STATEMENT OF DR. JOHN F. DEEGAN, SUPERINTENDENT,
BELLEVUE PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT AND CEO OF MILITARY IMPACTED SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION**

Dr. DEEGAN. The opening comment would be thank you so much to you both and to the staff for choosing Bellevue to hold your hearing. This is a great honor to the Bellevue/Offutt community to be able to have Senators and a committee come out like this, and we're indebted to you for doing that. So thank you very much for doing that.

I know the members of our Board of Education are very proud, and a number of those Board members are here today in support of what we're saying as well. When you mention the success that I've had in this school district, it's only because of the Board of Education and the quality work they do.

I would like to begin by saying that the Impact Aid program is a program that's sometimes hard to describe to people, but I do have a way that we can go through it pretty quickly.

One of the things about the Impact Aid program is you know that there is impact in the community; otherwise, there wouldn't be any aid or help from the Federal Government, so Impact Aid is really a way for the Federal Government to become the taxpayer and to help out for all the properties that have been removed from the tax rolls, and to underwrite to make sure at least half of the cost of education is picked up by the Federal Government to help in serving these military children.

So the program has been through a number of things since it began in 1950, and actually, in the last few years, we've had great success in being able to increase the amounts of Impact Aid, and during both of your tenures, we have seen a great increase in the Impact Aid program which we're really helpful and thankful for.

I'll talk today a little bit about the Impact Aid program, and then I wanted to spend a moment just saying that part of the Impact Aid program is discretionary funding under section 8007 (20 United States Code, Section 7707) for school construction. I know you'll probably be a bit shocked, but the program that was reauthorized in 2001 basically set up criteria that was anti-military and favored other parts of the program. The basic school construction provision has been left out for military schools across the Nation, and that is something that we wanted to be able to address and deal with.

With privatized housing development going on, you'll see there's an awful lot going on with military houses, and there wasn't anybody around to look at the programs that were being affected by privatization, but the Military Impacted Schools Association went about trying to deal with what were some of the concerns, the unintended consequences of privatization. When you go to privatized military housing, all of a sudden the family, because of how the money is being handled through their pay stub, they're not eligible for all the income-driven programs for which they were eligible before. So now we're going back and we're changing those laws, with your help, and I think we really do appreciate that very much. We are getting a lot of those corners turned, and hopefully by Christmastime, we'll have a lot of those put to bed.

The DOD Supplement to Impact Aid is another program that you are particularly responsible for in your committee. That program has been extremely helpful. I can tell you as a superintendent of schools, I couldn't run the kind of school district I run for military children without that DOD Supplement to Impact Aid. It is critical. We have set the goal for some time to be at \$50 million, and I know you try very hard to get to that number. I took Otto out today and drove around the community and showed him in schools where we have made the changes and the things we did to fix windows or lights or roofs and things like that to take care of our schools on the base.

All of the DOD money, I can tell you, does not go just toward taking care of things that nobody knows about. It really takes care of military children and the places they work and they go to school.

Also, the last thing I wanted to touch on was a little bit about military families on the move. I have a packet of materials that you'll see over there on the side that contain all the information relative to the issues that I just talked about. We have some books in there that talk about: How do you solve problems for a military family on the move, a military family that might move four times during a child's high school career, like our new commander coming to this base on the 1st of November? How do you deal with the seniors? We have a way of dealing with that in the State, and it takes an initiative and an attitude to make that different, because there are 50 different States that have State-run systems, and so for you to solve it out of Washington makes it really tough. There has to be a program for working with States to help them understand the importance of that, and people step forward and say, we're going to take care of that issue, and that's what we try to do in Bellevue.

This complex that you see is really a product of what the Federal Government has been able to help Bellevue with as well. This life-long learning center, as it was put together, we went after donations, grants, every kind of contribution, in-kind, donating land. In the end, it was about \$5 million of out-of-town resources that were put into here, plus another \$8.3 million to put this complex together. You can see the great amount of help and support that has come to Offutt Air Force Base from anybody that's been a partner in this program. We're looking forward, later in the day, to hear from you at our dedication this afternoon, because we planned that

dedication right at the tail of this hearing, and hopefully that will go well.

One of the things that we've been able to do is put together a short video which shows you a little bit about the Impact Aid program and captures the essence of what we're trying to talk about. So at this time, if we could, I would like to dim the lights and show a very short, about a 6-minute video.

[The information referred to follows:]

[IMPACT AID VIDEO]

April 1, 2001, a Navy surveillance plane is forced out of international airspace—into harm's way. Its crew is detained on Chinese soil.

While the Nation watched, the schools were educating their kids . . . and thousands of other military children enrolled all across the globe . . . that's our job.

Sound Bite: "Oh, excellent . . . Good job." "It's important for them to get off to a really good start."

"Vanta, did you find another rule. . ." "For their parents to feel comfortable in leaving them here at school. . ."

The schools get a little help making the grade from the Federal Government.

Sound Bite: "Even though we are looking at a story, are we learning something, Trevor?"

Every year \$396 million in the form of Impact Aid is put into our classrooms. This guarantees the sons and daughters of Air Force, Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard parents a quality education no matter where their country sends them.

Sound Bite: "I can't think of anything more important to our folks . . . particularly when they deploy or go away from home than to have the feeling that their children are taken care of. One of the most important things in that regard when you're the parents of school-aged children is that your kids' future is watched out for . . . that someone is there to take care of their education. When you are not there, you want to know that schools are funded properly and provided what they need."

That's where Impact Aid comes in. Here's how Impact Aid works:

The schools take a head count of military children enrolled in their district. That number goes straight to the top. From there, the Government is supposed to cut a check in place of property taxes owed the schools for educating military children. . .

Sound Bite: "It's critical to school districts like this one."

It's really pretty simple. . .

But can the schools count on the money being there when they need it the most? One look at history, and you know the answer. Impact Aid can never be taken for granted.

Sound Bite: "We had to take an unscheduled break in the spring because we didn't have the money to meet payroll, pay the utilities. . ."

It was 1970 . . . bell-bottoms and the Bee Gees were all the rage. . . Some school districts were learning a lesson in economics they hadn't planned.

Sound Bite: "It was a huge shock to everyone. We all assumed that students had to be educated, so somehow the problem would be resolved. We never dreamt that we would come to the point where we had to close school."

But it did . . . seven school districts serving military children had to lock the doors—shut down learning for weeks. There was no reading, writing, and arithmetic because there was no commitment—no cash from the Federal Government.

The stories didn't end there. Twelve years later . . . school districts serving Fort Bragg, Camp LeJeune, Langley Air Force Base, and Norfolk Naval Base had to choose between paying teachers and paying the electric bill. The Impact Aid checks weren't stuck in the mail. They weren't even on the way.

Sound Bite: "I've been in this district a lot of years, and we've had some real critical times where we had to go back in and make some major reductions in personnel and other things because of reduced funding. That's not pleasant."

That's not exactly what fathers and mothers who make the military a career want to hear.

Sound Bite: "We do this because we like to do it."

Sound Bite: "How your family is taken care of when you deploy is tantamount to how well you will perform once you're deployed. We can't have an individual that thinks things aren't taken care of on the home front."

In fact one of the first things that Army Colonel Houston checks out before settling into a new post is the schools. . .

Sound Bite: "The well-being of my family is the most important thing."

. . . and the service the schools provide.

Sound bite: "So I'm always concerned with the level of support that comes in because I know that money makes things happen."

The money that it takes to put Colonel Houston's kids and military kids like them through school is roughly \$6,400 per year.

Now figure this. The district only gets \$2,200 a year in Impact Aid to educate a military child . . . and that's if the child lives on base. Off base, the Federal Government's check drops to \$400. That's about \$2 a day. Hardly enough to buy books and supplies—not enough to buy a big mac and a coke.

Sound Bite: "I think without Impact Aid in some places, we would not be able to educate our kids to the standards we expect."

Sound Bite: "Although Impact Aid improved—I need to give our Congress credit—the coalition in both the House and Senate have been wonderful—there has been a commitment—so I do need to give credit for that. But it is still not to those levels that the original intent when Congress started this in 1950—we're not to the percentage that they felt local school districts should receive for this impact, and we would like to get there."

Right now school districts get 60 percent of Impact Aid promised by law. That's why they are always asking for more.

Sound Bite: "We're not just up there begging. This is for children and that's really the bottom line of Impact Aid. We often get distracted with legislation, authorization, appropriations, and the bottom line is the youngsters living in a school district that is impacted by Federal Government activity deserve at least a quality education as their peers at other places. That's our argument. Let's don't penalize people that are sacrificing for our country. Let's at least give them an education comparable with other districts."

You won't see Impact Aid when you walk into classrooms around the country. Schools everyday quietly go about the business of educating our children. But know this—without Impact Aid something has to go. Do you want it to be your school's computers? What about a teacher?

Sound Bite: "Very good . . . that's where the period goes . . . so let's put the period up there. . ."

As you can see, the price is too great to pay.

Dr. DEEGAN. We were hoping that that video, in a synopsis way, presents the message and the story about Impact Aid and the need for those dollars.

The program has been coming back and doing better as a result of recent years of increases in funding, but it just continues to be critical to anything we talk about here. If we talk about families moving around, if you start off with making sure that the school districts and the people that are responsible for providing those services have the adequate resources, we think we can get the job done. We thank you very much.

I would like to note, Senator, that this last summer the Military Impacted Schools group had a meeting down in Kings Bay, Georgia, and we had an opportunity to tour the military base there and walk all the grounds and see the place. We went over and visited Camden County School District and we visited with all the people. The Board at Liberty County came down and met with us, and so we had a great amount of time in Georgia, and we loved the experience and what had happened there. I know they look to your support and your leadership greatly, and they are also members of our organization and do appreciate very much what you do.

So with that, I'll say there's plenty of information here to give you a good support, but I think we're talking to people that know the right story anyway.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thank you.

Mr. Thomas, we look forward to hearing from you.

STATEMENT OF OTTO J. THOMAS, DIRECTOR OF EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES, OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PERSONNEL AND READINESS

Mr. THOMAS. Thank you. Chairman Chambliss, Senator Nelson, thank you very much for the opportunity to discuss with you issues related to the elementary and secondary public school education of children of military personnel. I very much welcome this opportunity to share with you news about the education of children whose parents serve in our armed services.

I want also to offer thanks to the Bellevue Public Schools and the entire Bellevue community for both hosting this hearing and for so generously supporting members of our Armed Forces and their families.

In the interest of time, my oral statement will be brief, and I refer you to my written statement for greater detail.

Sixty percent of military service members now have families. Our members, therefore, have many of the same concerns about the schools that their children attend that we all do. However, they have additional concerns because they are regularly reassigned to new locations and their children must so often have to adapt to new schools, new communities, and new friends.

If we are to keep dedicated men and women whom we have trained so well, we must ensure that when we relocate our personnel to new duty stations, they can expect that their children will attend good schools. Also, that the personnel in these schools will have an awareness and an appreciation of the unique challenges that face our school-aged children: Challenges that arise because our children are asked to relocate so often to schools in different States that have requirements and practices that vary so much from one another. For the Department, addressing issues related to school quality and frequent relocations is an important part of ensuring that families are provided with an appealing quality of life.

Because information about schools and local practices is so important to families who must relocate so often, we have established an Internet Web site that enables students and their parents to find out about the schools in the vicinity of their new assignments. The Web site, newly brought up just a few weeks ago, at www.militarystudent.org, does that and much more.

Students can enter chat rooms to talk with other students at schools to which they are likely to move. Students and their parents can find important information about such subjects as social and emotional needs, special education needs and services, incompatible graduation requirements, redundant/missed entrance and exit examinations, transfer of records, and extracurricular activities.

Our objective is to reach 1½ million school-aged children, and the families of 1½ million school-aged children of active duty, Reserve, and National Guard families who attend public schools not operated by the Department of Defense. About 110,000 do attend schools operated by the Department of Defense, mostly overseas, but also in some States of the union. We are especially interested in making moves easier for the 600,000 children who must relocate when their active duty parents are reassigned. We are convinced

that we can help. In my written testimony, I have identified some of the things that we have done and that we are doing.

I would like to describe our role related to the Impact Aid program. I must point out that the Federal Impact Aid program is not the program we manage. That, of course, is managed by the Department of Education and is funded currently at a little over a billion dollars. However, since 1990, we have been provided with a small amount of financial aid that we can provide to a small number of school districts that are most affected by the presence of a military installation.

Since 1990, the Department of Defense has been authorized to provide financial assistance to those school districts that are heavily impacted by the enrollment of large numbers of, specifically, military-dependent students. Currently, heavily impacted is described or defined as 20 percent. That is, for a school district to be eligible to receive DOD funds to supplement the Federal Impact Aid payments, the number of military-dependent students enrolled must be at least 20 percent of the number of students enrolled in that school district. For fiscal year 2003, \$30 million appropriated for this program was distributed to 118 eligible school districts in 34 States.

Most recently for the past 2 years, the Department has also been provided funds to distribute to school districts to assist them with paying for the costs of services provided to military-dependent students with severe disabilities. For fiscal year 2002, we distributed \$3.5 million to 47 eligible school districts, and for the current fiscal year, 2003, \$3 million was distributed to 49 districts.

We are committed to doing whatever we can to help satisfy the desire that military families have to ensure that their children receive a good education. After health and safety, perhaps no concern related to their children's development is as great as a parent's desire that their children attend good schools and receive a high-quality education that will open doors to collegiate studies and to success in a chosen profession, or satisfaction in the world of work.

Our service members have high aspirations and strong family values. They desire a fulfilling life for themselves and their families. To continue to recruit the best and the brightest, we must provide an inviting environment. This environment must include a wholesome and challenging learning experience for their children. It must include schools in which no military-dependent student or, for that matter, any child will be left behind.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to testify before you today. I very much appreciate your continued interest in and support of the educational opportunities provided to the children of our military personnel.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Thomas follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY OTTO J. THOMAS

Chairman Chambliss, Senator Nelson, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss with you issues related to the elementary and secondary public school education of children of military personnel. I welcome this opportunity to share good news with you; news about the education of children whose parents serve in our armed services.

Those who volunteer to serve our country in uniform expect to make sacrifices. However, since 60 percent of military members now have families, they must, as we would expect, give due consideration to the well-being of their spouses and chil-

dren. If we are to keep dedicated men and women whom we have trained so well, we must ensure that when we relocate our personnel to new duty stations, they can expect that their children will be able to attend good schools. Also, that the personnel in these schools will have an awareness and appreciation of the unique challenges that face our school-aged children: challenges that arise because our children are asked to relocate so often and because schools in different States have requirements and practices that vary so much from one another. For the Department, addressing issues related to school quality and frequent relocations of military families is an important part of ensuring that families are provided with an appealing quality of life.

The Department's new social compact includes objectives to address school transition issues of our highly mobile military dependent children. Many of these new initiatives leverage the power of public-private partnerships and technology to deliver services. As part of the Department's presentation before this joint committee in Washington in July, the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy, John Molino, identified a contractual partnership through which we are testing a program to provide information and referral services to marines and their families. From anywhere in the world, an active duty or Reserve marine or family member using toll-free telephone, e-mail or Internet can communicate with a professional counselor regarding myriad topics, including parenting and child care; educational services; elder care; relocation; health and wellness; and financial and legal information. Parents and students are receiving information about schools and related activities as part of this information service. Communication is confidential and services provided include a comprehensive array of pre-paid educational materials, such as books, CDs, and videos. Simultaneous translation in 140 languages is available, as is assistive technology for low-vision users. Reports about this program continue to be positive and we expect eventually to make these services available to all military families.

Because information about schools and local practices is so important to families who must relocate, we have established an Internet Web site that enables students and their parents to find out about the schools in the vicinity of their new assignments. The Web site, www.militarystudent.org, does that and much more. It is designed so that various categories of users, such as kids, teens, parents, special needs families, military leaders, and school educators can go directly to the information most pertinent to them. They can access information about important issues, by subject. These issues include social and emotional needs, special education needs and services, incompatible graduation requirements, redundant/missed entrance and exit testing, transfer of records, and exclusion from extracurricular activities.

Our objective is to reach the families of 1½ million school-aged children of active duty, Reserve, or National Guard families who attend public and other schools not operated by the Department of Defense. About 600,000 of these children come from active duty families and attend public schools. It is not uncommon for these students to attend 6 different schools before high school graduation; some have reported attending 10 or 11. As they move from school to school, students and their families encounter difficulties with credit transfers, exit exams, athletic eligibility, and unique graduation requirements such as formal study of State history.

We are convinced that we can reduce the degree to which these factors represent problems for our military dependent children and their families. We've held meetings with school leaders, parents, students and military commanders; and have found some "best practices" to be shared with other schools and communities. Last year, we published a booklet titled "Promising Practices" and have sent copies to school districts that enroll our students. The demand for additional copies has exceeded our supply. The booklet is now available on our Web site and we are adding newly found "best practices" regularly.

We are working with the Military Family Research Institute of Purdue University to study the impact that frequent moves or deployments of one or both parents have on the social, emotional, and educational success of children from military families. Our study will encompass a cross-section of children from elementary school through high school and from all four Services. The results of the study will enable us to work with schools to develop additional support programs and teacher training.

Educators, counselors, and mental health workers associated with public schools are generally not aware of the unique issues and challenges that confront military dependent students. To be effective, they must become aware of military child issues and appropriate interventions.

We have initiated several partnerships to help us address these issues with educators. We have expanded our partnership with the Department of Education's Office for Safe and Drug Free Schools to include work with the National Child Trau-

matic Stress Network (sponsored by UCLA, Duke University, and the Department of Health and Human Services). Together we developed the following information booklets: Educator's Guide to the Military Child During Deployment; Educator's Guide to the Military Child During Post Deployment: Challenges of Family Reunion; and Parent's Guide to the Military Child in Deployment. The first deployment guide is currently featured on the Department of Education's Web site. The first and third are available on the DOD Web site *www.militarystudent.com*. The remaining one will be added in the near future. We are considering publication of the booklets to ensure that the information is seen and used by educators and parents.

The Department chooses to be a good partner to local schools and is seeking ways in which we can help promote excellence in public schools, especially in those schools that educate the dependent children of military personnel.

Since 1990, the Department has been authorized to provide financial assistance to those local education agencies (LEAs) that are heavily impacted by the enrollment of large numbers of military dependent students. Currently, "heavily impacted" is defined as 20 percent. That is, for a LEA to be eligible to receive DOD funds to supplement Federal Impact Aid payments, the number of military dependent students enrolled must be at least 20 percent of the total number of students enrolled in the schools of that LEA. For fiscal year 2003, \$30 million appropriated for this program was distributed to 118 eligible LEAs in 34 States.

For the past 2 years, the Department has also been provided funds to distribute to LEAs to assist them with paying for the costs of services provided to military dependent students with severe disabilities. For fiscal year 2002, we distributed \$3.5 million to 47 eligible LEAs, and for fiscal year 2003, \$3.0 million was distributed to 49 LEAs.

We are committed to doing whatever we can to help satisfy the desire that military families have to ensure that their children receive a good education. After health and safety, perhaps no concern related to their children's development is as great as a parent's desire that their children attend good schools and receive a high quality education that will open the doors to collegiate studies and success in chosen professions, or satisfaction in the world of work.

More generally, we are committed to meeting the quality of life needs of our service members and their families. Our service members have high aspirations and strong family values. They desire a fulfilling life for themselves and their families. To recruit the best and brightest, we must provide an inviting environment. This environment must include a wholesome and challenging learning experience for children from military families. It must include schools in which no military dependent student or any child will be left behind.

Thank you Chairman Chambliss, Senator Nelson, and members of the subcommittee for the opportunity to testify before you today. I very much appreciate your continued interest in and support of educational opportunities provided to the children of our military personnel.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thank you, Mr. Thomas, and, again, to both of you gentlemen. We will take your full written statement for the record.

Dr. Deegan, let me start with you. You mentioned that the State of Nebraska does some particular things for your children, and this is something that is really unique to all 50 States, and I don't know that we will ever have the same types of benefits granted by all 50 States to our military children.

In Georgia, for example, we have instituted a new program with our legislature to allow any military child who graduates from a State high school to be treated as an in-State resident for as long as those students remain at any State university, even though the parents are likely to move within a period of time. It's proved to be very beneficial and provides a lot of stability and some help.

So what has Nebraska done to help our military children in a similar situation?

Dr. DEEGAN. We have been so focused on K-12 that I haven't focused on what we're doing after high school. I did see a recent news article regarding in-State tuition, and I've heard of other

States that are doing that. I think it is our obligation to work with State legislators to see if we can find a resolution to that matter.

It seems to me, even though we're 50 different States, there are some common principles that States may pick up on, so I think it would be important working with our delegation and others in leadership to propose that idea to the State of Nebraska. I think it's a great idea and I think that would be something we should be doing.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Do you have any particular programs in the Bellevue system that are geared towards the unique problems that military children have, particularly with the recent deployment in Iraq, as Senator Ben Nelson alluded to, the fact that it's not unusual for children now to see embedded reporters on TV every night with their moms and dads fighting in combat.

Dr. DEEGAN. That's true. As we look across the country, there are many school districts that are doing this kind of activity where they're actually providing additional counseling assistance, working with families, trying to provide support systems to young children.

In Bellevue, a lot of our work here was because of the reconnaissance mission at Offutt Air Force Base and STRATCOM; a lot of our deployments took place before the first shot was ever fired. So a lot of our people were displaced and mobile all over the country, all over the world, before the first shot was fired.

Many of the units now are involved in combat. I know Fort Stewart, in particular, has lost 23 men as a result of action over in Iraq and that's happening now. That's happening, and so the real problem is now.

Some of the issues that we try to deal with in our particular district are up-front, trying to get kids to talk about it, but try to create a normal situation for children because that's one of the things that you don't want to do is overplay the situation and overplay it for a child. You want them to have as normal of life as possible, but you want every possible accommodation made for that child. We do a number of things with that. We have a full counseling program in our elementary schools, and we have principals that are really tuned into that.

Across the country, you will find that each district, depending upon its mission or its activity at the time, will approach that differently. I do believe people are really trying very hard to do those kind of things.

One thing is that it takes money, too. Some of those resources, not only the attitude about what you're going to do, but if you want some people, like a crisis team or any counseling, that does take money. So that's one of the reasons that we've approached Congress saying, maybe there ought to be some of that \$87 billion, maybe \$20 million, given the heavily-impacted districts, for dealing with some of those emotional crisis kinds of situations. That's what we're trying to do.

I would tell you that even in our particular district, I refer to security and safety and all of those issues, but I would tell you that the DOD Supplement to Impact Aid goes to the kind of things you are talking about because districts get this money, and then they are able to spend that money on whatever they think is necessary in their district. That money allows you to be able to flex and do

different things, so you might hire counselors, you might put a team of people in place. So I think there are things being done.

We have some resources to do it, but we could use some additional resources in that area. I think it's essential that we do a great job in that area. Creating normalcy is one of the most important things we could do.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Mr. Thomas, you mentioned the fact that there are some 600,000 military children who are in the education system and how critically important this is to those active duty personnel.

Over the last several years, we have been calling on our Guard and Reserve more than ever before, and this has presented a very unique problem to us as legislators in how we deal with the benefits that are given to our Guard and Reserve members. The children, oftentimes, can get lost in this. The spouses can get lost in this process. What is the Department of Defense doing with respect to looking after these children of Guard and Reserve members who have been called to active duty to ensure that they receive the same kind of treatment as our active duty personnel families?

Mr. THOMAS. About 2½ years ago when the Educational Opportunities Directorate was established, the focus was primarily on the needs that we've talked about in terms of the active duty family members' children moving from place to place. Because of the timing, with the war coming about, clearly a need for what was happening to the children of deployed personnel became very paramount in our minds. We have done a number of things.

We've contacted and worked with people in the Department of Education that work with trauma and stress. We have written a booklet that we are distributing to schools and communities that have a lot of our children. That booklet, which essentially addresses the needs, the special and unique needs of children of deployed parents, is located on the Web site that I mentioned to you, so it's freely accessible. That work was done with a lady named Marlene Wong, who is associated with the University of California at Los Angeles, and is part of a national stress trauma group. She has worked in the President's commission dealing with the stresses created by the tragedy at Columbine High School in Colorado, for example, and at Santee in California.

Another activity that we've become involved in is that the Under Secretary of Defense, Dr. Chu, has become very interested in dealing with what happens to the children of deployed personnel. The Deputy Under Secretary, John Molino, made a presentation to the presidents and the wives of the presidents co-meeting in New Orleans a year-and-a-half ago, specifically asking these colleges, college presidents, and their wives to become actively involved in seeking out family members of deployed personnel to offer assistance in finances, for example, assistance in counseling if it were necessary, assistance with the educational planning for their children.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thank you.

Senator Nelson.

Senator BEN NELSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. Deegan, because of the significant interest in Impact Aid in so many school districts across the country, have these districts come together to share the best-ideas-under-the-best-practices ar-

rangement? Bellevue shares a lot of its wealth of educational programs and special-needs treatment with other schools, but are they sharing theirs in return?

Dr. DEEGAN. I would say that if you look in the left side of your packet that I have provided to you, in the large folder, there are three documents in that packet. One is a sheet that describes what are the different things that we can do by building a partnership between school districts. Also, there is a booklet that talks about Promising Practices, or best practices, that actually highlights a number of best practices across the country in the various school districts that we have been able to collect.

Also, we have the Partnership for a Smooth Transition of Military Families. We have developed a booklet that describes for military families how to go about making that move and making it work real smoothly.

What we've done is taken this booklet and a lot of this material is on our militaryimpactedschoolsassociation.org Web site. So we do have a number of materials that are available. As well as the video that I showed you earlier, there's a series of videos in there.

So we're trying to take what we believe are the best practices in Bellevue and share those with many other people. I think that's how you go about solving your State problems is people don't just huddle around and say, "This is what we think is the best," but we take the very best and try to spread it out. Then what is your idea, what might work in your State, we put your idea in there, too. So we're trying to build a repository warehouse of best practices that we can share with people through our Web site and through these materials.

Senator BEN NELSON. Mr. Thomas, in some respects, it's easier to deal with the special needs of active duty personnel children than it is sometimes with the Guard and Reserve because they're not all located in one particular school district. They're not in one particular area. They're all across a State. You mentioned that you are, in fact, interested in doing some things to make sure that those children are receiving the similar kind of care. I'm sure that's a daunting task, given the fact that every school district in Nebraska might have one or more of those children.

Is there a way to deal with this in a cost-effective way, to share with teachers and school districts recognizing that it will be the exception rather than the rule within their district?

Mr. THOMAS. I'd say it is a daunting task, as you've indicated. First off, we don't have a clear means of identifying exactly where all of these children are. We are offering financial assistance through a program that has been funded in recent years, that I mentioned to you, and even that program requires that the school district send in an application to us.

We sent letters to 366 school districts in the country that were indicated to us by the Department of Education as having children from military families that have special needs. Of those 366 school districts to which we sent letters, we received responses from only 49, and the money that we are distributing, we are distributing to those school districts that made the request.

In the case of Georgia, we sent 15 letters; none responded. In the case of Nebraska, we sent letters to five school districts; none of which responded.

Now, it's possible that they don't meet the criteria, which is very complicated for the program, and it may well be, as you suggest, that because we have the families of military reservists and national guardsmen so spread out throughout the country, no single school district may have enough of those children to qualify.

Senator BEN NELSON. After the hearing, we'll find out the identity of those school districts and we'll do some follow up. [Laughter.]

Mr. THOMAS. They're in my books here.

Dr. DEEGAN. I'd offer on that that the Bellevue School District received one of those letters, and we didn't qualify either for the special education dollars. That special education program; actually, I was the one that wrote that program. They wrote it so very tight and so very strict that we wanted to see what the numbers would be when we started. They only problem with that program is I didn't write in a floor to the program. It should have been at least 20 percent impacted and then put a floor in before it got going. Then, I think, it would have been more productive. Also, you had to have two children that were three times the State average in your district or five times the national average if it was outside your district services, so the criteria is very strict and very tight. We had one child that was expensive, upwards to \$50,000 to \$60,000, but we didn't have two. We have about 15 percent of our heavily-impacted children in special education when most other people have 10 or 11 percent. I think that new special education program has missed its mark in serving the military children's needs.

Senator BEN NELSON. If nothing else comes from the hearing, that might be a worthy point right there to take a look at.

Dr. DEEGAN. Yes. I think, also, the question about serving the Reserve and Guard, I think that's a huge issue that needs to be dealt with. I would like to be able to help in any way through the Military Impacted Schools Association and through Otto, if you have ideas, too, or come up with ideas for working with Guard and Reserve because sometimes the problems we are talking about don't occur between Liberty County and Bellevue or between Camden and Bellevue. They occur between Thedford, Nebraska, or Wahoo, Nebraska, and some other little town that nobody ever thought of or heard of. The kids are so few in number that nobody ever gets around to noticing them on the radar screen, so that family may be sitting there crying and carrying on, and nobody is there to help them. So how do you reach out and touch that child? How do you get resources to that parent? How do you let them know?

I think it's up to the Guard and Reserve leadership to work stronger on publicizing the Web site he's talking about or publicizing our Web site. If we can't get the Guard and Reserve leadership to direct those people toward us, it's hard for us to find them.

Senator BEN NELSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Mr. Thomas, just sitting here thinking while you were talking about the Guard and Reserve issue, that I don't know whether any study has ever been done, but it sure would be

interesting to know what has happened to the children of military families versus the general public with respect to test scores, with respect to post-secondary education; that would be an interesting issue there. I'm absolutely certain we would find that military families certainly have a greater degree of discipline, probably, than the average, normal civilian family. There are any number of issues relative to movement that would tend to at least have the opportunity to affect those children in future years. It sure would be interesting to know what, maybe, some of those statistics might reveal.

All right. If there's nothing further, gentlemen, we thank you very much for being here today.

Senator Nelson is right. Dr. Deegan, if nothing else comes out of this, that's an issue we need to look at and maybe review again because we've just gone through the reappropriating of that Supplemental Aid package, and we may need to take a look at it before next year.

Dr. DEEGAN. We'll stand by if there are any questions throughout the rest of the hearing today.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Great, thank you.

Dr. DEEGAN. Thank you very much.

Senator CHAMBLISS. I now would like to welcome our next panel. With us today, we have Ms. Sheila Murphy, whom I have already referred to. We have Petty Officer First Class Maria Lemasters, Ms. Kirk Bruno, Ms. Marion Bruce, and Senior Master Sergeant Thomas Simon and Mrs. Simon.

We thank you for your willingness to come today, and if each of you will come forward to sit in front of your nameplate there. What we'll do, we'll start, Master Sergeant Simon, with you and Mrs. Simon, and we'll move this way, and I don't know if whether both of you want to make an opening statement or just one of you, but when you make your comments, if you will for the record and so that Senator Nelson and I will be aware, also, tell us the ages of your children and what school they are currently attending, if you will. So we welcome you.

Sergeant Simon.

**STATEMENT OF SENIOR MASTER SERGEANT THOMAS SIMON,
USAF; ACCOMPANIED BY MRS. MICHELE SIMON**

Sergeant SIMON. Thank you, Gentlemen.

First off, I would like to say thank you for the opportunity to come forward and talk to you a little bit about some of the issues we have. Michele and I don't have a significant amount of issues. We've been through the military system for almost 24 years and have grown to know and understand a lot of the workings of the military system. We want to thank you all for the opportunity to come forward. We also thank the Bellevue Public Schools for inviting us.

I've been in the Service for 24 years. My dad was in the Service, so I am one of those military-dependent kids. I grew up in the school systems both in the Department of Defense Dependent Schools (DODDS), systems working as a student at Ramstein, Germany, and also in a community throughout my high school career.

We have three boys. Two of them are students at Bellevue East High School. They are 17 and 16. We have another, almost 8-year-old, a second grader at Leonard Lawrence in local Bellevue schools.

We're open and ready for questions you have. Thank you.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thank you both for being here.

Ms. Bruno, welcome.

STATEMENT OF MARIE BRUNO

Mrs. BRUNO. Hi. Thanks for having me.

My husband and I have been traveling for the past 19 years. My husband is in the Marine Corps. We've moved more times than I could even express: I guess 17 houses in 19 years, probably 14 duty stations. We've moved around quite a bit.

My oldest child is in college attending Cal State San Marcos in California. She attended seven different school districts over the course of her 12 years. We were lucky that she only attended two different high schools: One was DOD, one was out in California.

My second child, another daughter, she's 15 and attending Papio-La Vista South High School. She's attended six school districts and, hopefully, she'll finish here in Nebraska.

I bring a lot of experience with both my kids being in all the different schools that they've been in. I'm also attending college here at the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO), so I've done a little of the transfer process myself, so I can give you some input on that as well.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Great. Thank you very much.

Ms. Lemasters.

STATEMENT OF NAVY PETTY OFFICER MARIA LEMASTERS

Petty Officer LEMASTERS. Good afternoon, Senators. I thank you for the opportunity to be here today and thank you to your staff and to the Bellevue School District for hosting this.

I have been in the Navy for 12 years now. I'm married and have a 6-year-old daughter who is currently enrolled at Belleaire Elementary. This is her second school. She also attended school in Cascade, Maryland, prior to us transferring here. I look forward to your questions today.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Great.

Ms. Bruce.

STATEMENT OF MARION BRUCE

Ms. BRUCE. Thank you for allowing me to be here today. I have been an Army wife for 22 years. We have four daughters who are now 12, 14, 18, and 20. The youngest goes to Logan Fontenelle Middle School here. The next one goes to Bellevue West. The 18-year-old is a freshman at Texas A&M on an Army ROTC Scholarship. The oldest is a junior at West Point this year.

We have moved six times during their school years. They've attended schools in California, Kansas, Nebraska, and Maryland. Some twice in each State. I do have a longer statement that I've submitted for the record, and I'm welcoming your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Bruce follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY MARION BRUCE

My name is Marion Bruce. I have been an Army wife for 22 years. I have four children who have experienced six moves since the oldest began school. We have found an extreme variability in the quality of schools on or near military posts and bases.

We only experienced 3 weeks in Department of Defense Dependents Schools in Germany so I cannot comment on them. Stateside, my children have attended schools in California, Kansas, California, Nebraska, Maryland, and Nebraska, in that order. I have no handicapped or special needs children according to most State definitions. However, three of my four children have been identified as talented and gifted. I will address their experiences in this area.

From kindergarten through high school, I have found that the material covered in each grade level is vastly different in the midwest compared to the coasts. Kindergarten in California is not mandatory and therefore seems to have no required curriculum. My children experienced everything from play kindergarten to serious reading instruction at Fort Irwin, depending entirely on which teacher they happened to get. California had a policy that a child cannot be made to repeat a grade unless a parent gives permission. Many parents do not agree and even the better teachers are forced to teach to the middle of the class so quality slips more each year. There was no talented and gifted program at Fort Irwin.

When we moved to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, I had to borrow a fourth grade math book for my fifth grader because her class in Fort Irwin had only gotten halfway through the book. We studied fractions, geography, etc. every weekend for 2 months until she was caught up. At enrollment, my third grader was given the option of participating in the talented and gifted program, based on her standardized test scores from the previous year. Kansas has a law deeming talented and gifted students as exceptional students with special needs. They require an Individualized Education Program (IEP) agreed upon by the teacher, parents, administration, and the facilitator. There is a gifted facilitator in every school who runs a challenging program, pulling children out of class two to four times a week for enriching education. Although my oldest daughter's kindergarten and first grade scores would have qualified her for this program, the years of below grade level instruction in California had taken their toll. However, after 2 years in Fort Leavenworth's excellent classes, she also tested as talented and gifted. My third daughter enjoyed a kindergarten focused on reading, writing, and arithmetic. She participated in the talented and gifted program in first grade. Life was good.

After 3 years, we were sent back to California. My sixth grader came home from the first day of school and announced that she had the same math book. I said "Oh, you mean the same series. That's good. Then we know you haven't missed anything." She said "No mom, this is the same math book I had in fourth grade in Kansas." The K-8 Lockwood School near Fort Hunter Liggett had bought textbooks with all grade level references left off so that parents and students would not realize they were a year behind in all subjects except math, in which they were 2 full years behind. My eighth grader had had pre-algebra in seventh grade in Kansas. Algebra was not available here. This school did not have enough textbooks to go around. The students had to share and were not given homework because the books could not leave the classroom. Needless to say, there was no talented and gifted program. I probably don't have to tell you that when intelligent children get bored they can think of all kinds of things to amuse themselves, eventually leading to them getting in trouble. Therefore, I arranged for them to ride the high school bus 30 miles to the next town so they could walk to a middle school with higher levels of instruction which just that year began offering algebra to eighth graders for the first time. An added bonus was that they were able to be in band again and stayed after school 1 day a week for a small gifted program. I picked them up every day.

My kindergartener was in a class where she was taught less than she had been in 3-year-old preschool but liked being with her friends. The second grader was in a combination second and third grade class doing all third grade work. Then California offered more money to school districts that had less than 20 pupils in first through third grade classrooms. Her class was split up and she was left in second grade where the teacher assured me she would work with her at her level. A couple of weeks later we were told that the third grade teachers did not want this to happen. I explained we were moving again in the summer and this would not inconvenience the third grade teachers. My daughter was then given subtraction to do instead of multiplication and told to start printing again instead of writing cursive. I researched California laws and eventually took my kindergartener and second grader out of the public school to home school them so they would not be so far be-

hind when we moved. In making this decision, I joined many other military families who home school their children for consistency in curriculum.

Our next move brought us here to Bellevue. I cannot say enough about this school system. The grade level and course material is exactly what they should be learning. My children thrive on the high expectations, structure and discipline, advanced and advanced placement classes, talented and gifted program, as well as the many sports, clubs, music, and JROTC opportunities. My third daughter was allowed to skip sixth grade and finally felt as if she fit in academically and socially. My husband was able to extend for a year letting our oldest daughter attend all 4 years of high school here. She graduated in 2001 and is now a junior at the United States Military Academy, West Point, NY.

When we got orders to the Washington, DC, area, we accepted housing at Fort Meade where my second daughter began her junior year in high school. We had looked at the school Web site, spoken to them on the telephone, and believed things would go smoothly. We immediately ran into trouble getting credits accepted. In Bellevue, JROTC is a physical education substitute with one quarter of health included in freshman year. My daughter had 2 years of JROTC in lieu of PE. The State of Maryland requires 2 years of PE plus one semester of health, no substitutes. JROTC was an elective only. While we tried to figure a way to add these requirements to her college prep schedule, we were told that there were only six periods a day instead of seven as we expected. Then we were informed that all the pre-calculus classes were full so she couldn't take math this year but that was alright because it was not a graduation requirement. We finally enrolled her in what she would have taken in Bellevue except no math and only advanced English instead of AP. We tabled the PE issue until her credits could be reviewed by the PE and health instructors. We expected her English class to be American Literature instead it was speech and debate. Her third year of science in Bellevue would have been chemistry with higher level math required to do the associated complicated equations and formulas. Chemistry at Fort Meade turned out to be a freshman class about basic chemical processes that my daughter had been taught years ago. Then I attended curriculum night where the principal's topic was "What is accreditation and why do we need it?" This school was not accredited by their Regional Accrediting Association.

Meanwhile, the daughter who had skipped a grade was now in eighth grade. She was 12 and found her classmates to be not only 13 but 14, 15, and 16 years old. Many had been held back several times. She felt quite ill at ease in this new setting. My fifth grader found the class work very easy. Private schools were too expensive so we sent for correspondence courses and began home-schooling once again. This was not the optimal solution. The course work was rigorous but the girls missed band, JROTC, clubs, sports, and social interaction with their peers.

We all wanted the girls to be in a "normal" school again. We discussed moving to Virginia, starting over in yet another school district, but found incompatible graduation requirements that would make my "A" student have to be in high school 5 years. We therefore made the painful but necessary decision to split the family up. The three girls and I moved back here to Bellevue. This school district accepted the home school coursework. My second daughter lettered in Academics her senior year, graduated in 2003, and is now at Texas A&M University on an Army ROTC Scholarship in the Corps of Cadets.

My children have been successful but they have had advantages that others may not. They are lucky to be intelligent, adaptable, and have educated parents, one of whom is available to drive to another school district or home school if necessary. The great discrepancies in State standards and curriculum are a burden for any child who moves. I believe national standards are necessary to ensure a quality education for all children no matter where they live.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thank you.

Ms. Murphy.

STATEMENT OF MS. SHEILA MURPHY

Ms. MURPHY. My name is Sheila Murphy. I don't have any children, so I don't have any experience from that point of view, but I grew up with the Army. My father was in the Army National Guard, and I knew the experience of never having a vacation. I didn't even know the meaning of that word because any time from the civilian job was spent going to JAG school or camp or something else. So I've always had a fondness for the National Guard.

I had the opportunity to receive the contract to build and design and implement their family program for the Air National Guard here in Nebraska, and I took the job on just shortly before September 11, 2001. So I had a rare opportunity to really see the impact that is made in the lives of these civilian families when they suddenly have lengthy deployment in front of them, and they have to change their lifestyles so dramatically, and it is a completely different situation in many areas.

I do have a few things to say about that. I don't know if you would like me to say that now or if you would rather continue with the families first.

Senator CHAMBLISS. If you want to, say it now, it may be that we don't ask the right questions. If you have some particular points you want to make, let's do it now.

Ms. MURPHY. The situation is so different in that the children are impacted by the departure from normalcy in their lives on several levels. The decision as to whether or not that is shared with the community, even to the extent that children share it with their classmates, their teachers, this is where we run into problems because it's very subjective.

Some families feel very guarded and as they should be. It can depend on the mission; their security can be at issue. You do not want to implement programs that have families, wives, children announcing to the world: guess what, my father is out of town, and it's going to be that way for a few months, and this is where we live. You don't want to do that and you don't want children subjected to that who aren't used to it.

With the active duty children, that's the framework of their lives; that's the context in which they live. You take a Reserve or a Guard child, suddenly they're going to be subjected to a whole different kind of interaction with the community, with their peers, with people that, God forbid, may mean them harm. So you do have to take into account different security ramifications when we talk about this.

There are stresses on the Reserve or Guard child that are different on the active duty child in that this is suddenly something they may not be prepared for. That's something family programs are working on right now, to do more preparation. Family readiness means get the family ready. In the future, hopefully, the family readiness programs across the country will be able to reach out to the Guard and Reserve families and have them armed with the weapons that they need to cope if the separation or deployment should occur. If the child isn't ready, it can be very stressful, just the separation, the uncertainty.

Another factor to be considered when dealing with these children is that often they don't have a definite return-home date that they can circle on a calendar and depend upon. This is tremendously impactful in the family dynamic. The uncertainty about the return home is one of the factors that we hear about more and more often that really causes problems for families, so we have to take that into consideration.

So when you have a student that's a Reserve or Guard student in a classroom, there's probably not a financial emergency or crisis that is occurring, but there are impacts that are felt, especially by

teenagers, I have found, the lifestyle changes. Sure, they can pay the bills and pay your utility bills and buy your groceries and these sort of things, but you may not be able to have those new tennis shoes that the other kids have. You may not be able to afford the field trips that the other kids have. We have to find a way to help with these things to make sure that this doesn't further add to the suffering of these kids.

The teenagers often suffer in silence. When a military person leaves, a man or woman leaves and there's a baby or a toddler, everyone goes, "Oh, isn't that heartbreaking. Look, they have to leave their little one." Frankly, the little ones are a lot less aware of what's going on than the teens, the adolescents and the teens, who really suffer. We have to consistently make sure that just because they seem to be adult and they seem to be mature and they seem to be coping, they're not overlooked. So that is something that we need to consider when we implement and design any programs.

Right now, I am no longer with the Air Guard. I have started a nonprofit corporation called Project Home Front, and I've seen in the area of family programs that the community really wants to help. We have a great asset in the American public that really wants to support their troops, but I think we all are aware of how difficult it is for the community to actually share generosity with the military.

I'm trying to facilitate a way for the community to give things to families, and hopefully, we're just getting started. Hopefully, we will be able to help with some of the issues that have been brought up before, like additional counseling programs, maybe some recreational activities that families need; it's not a necessity of life, but it sure would be nice.

I think that as far as schools are concerned, what I would like to see happen is more organized interaction between family readiness programs and the teachers in the schools. We have an excellent family readiness program out of the Department of Defense, that they have just been building it and building it to be something that is really doing a great job. I have been very impressed with everything I've seen in my work with them. I noticed in my own program that there were no protocols in place when I came on board, who to talk to in the school: you have to figure out, who do I talk to.

Well, I would like to see some kind of protocols established where, maybe the guidance counselor or principal or whomever it is, that there would be people that would be earmarked in the school districts. It would be the responsibility of the family program, I think, to reach out to them because, as you said, how are schools going to identify the students. If our family program leaders are trained to identify the students and know who to reach out to in the school, and if there is some training that's happening for those educators, it's going to make things a lot better.

We need the educators to be aware of the changes in the dynamic of the student, and as I say, it's a personal decision. We may not want this student identified to the rest of the students, that Johnny's dad is going to be in Iraq for 3 months. We may not want that to happen, but we need administrators and teachers to be aware,

to watch for this child and to be aware that there are going to be extra obstacles for that child to overcome.

When a Reserve or Guard parent is called away, family responsibilities can change dramatically. A child's household duties can really go up, and teachers don't know. The complaint I've heard is that the teachers don't know that or don't care about that. They don't seem to realize that this child has a lot less time for homework now because he's doing a lot of things that his father did or she's doing a lot of things that mommy did. So we need teachers to be aware of that, sensitive to that.

We need them to be looking out for opportunities when there may be a financial stress or burden on the family, that they need to turn to some organization, or at least the educators need to alert the family readiness group, that this child may need some help; I don't think they can afford the new uniform; or all those little things in school that come up to make the experience all that it should be.

We do not want the children of our military to not have the optimum experience, so we need to have better communication facilitated between our family readiness programs and the schools and both of them taking a share of the burden. It's just kind of an educational, informational event. I think we just need to set up a program and keep people in and get them going on it.

We also need to caution our teachers that they should not bring their political views into the classroom. There have been some experiences where a teacher will be lecturing about how evil war is or how evil this war is, or something in particular, and start demeaning the troops. Well, that's somebody's mother or father. They're not only away from home and in danger, but now they're being demeaned as well. So we need to make sure consistently that that is not done.

That's all.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thanks very much to each of you. What I would like to do is start with the Simons and we'll go to each one of you, if you'll address this.

First of all, what are some issues or situations that you know of that you've either experienced yourselves with respect to your children being children of military parents or that you've heard other folks talk to you about or mention to you that have been unique situations that are dictated by the fact that your children are military children?

Senior Master Sergeant Simons, let's start with you all.

Sergeant SIMON. I think the first thing we think about is going from school to school. We moved here 3 years ago from Hampton, Virginia, Langley Air Force Base. My oldest son at that time was an eighth grader getting ready to go into ninth grade, so when we moved here, ninth grade was where he started. We volunteered for this assignment because that's a good transition for my son to go from starting a new school and not be the outsider. When going from eighth grade to ninth grade, no matter where you're in the local school district, in a lot of schools, that's the break between middle school and high school. That's why we wanted to volunteer and move there.

The problem is I have another son that is 1 year behind him and he has to make the adjustment of he's now supposedly an eighth grader and one of the bigger guys in school and he gets picked on or noticed. Not necessarily picked on, but he gets noticed because he is the new kid on the block. He's tall in stature and so he gets noticed very easily. Folks can easily tell that he's the new kid on the block and easily pick on him for whatever, not knowing the local policies, or whatever, that are going on in the school.

Some other things that we noticed that we were concerned about when wanting to make sure that our kids were in a stable community, which is the reason we volunteered for Offutt. There is a big, large weather organization here in the Offutt community; it can be a stable career move coming here. A lot of folks can be here for 5 or 6 years. My concern was, I wanted my boys who are going to high school to be in a stable environment for their high school because there's a lot of things that we had concerns about such as sports. Around the community, around the Nation, if you're not born and raised in the area and you're subject to moving, there's no way you're going to make some varsity sports.

Things like grades and the possibility of honors, whether or not valedictorian and salutatorian. My kid has great grades, but if he moves from another school district, who knows whether or not the classes that he's taken are going to make the grade in another school district, and so our concerns were we need to keep our guys as stable as possible as much as we can.

That's just the biggest things that we were concerned about. Our sons are great and they will adjust to just about anything that goes on, but a lot of the things that she was talking about with the Reserves are similar for the active duty. I am on deployment-capable status. If something happens and they call for a weather guy with my career field, with my grade, whatever, I'll be going to wherever.

We've talked about that in my family. My boys ask me every couple of weeks: Dad, what's the chances of your going? Not just that, but also the possibility of a PCS because I've been here in the Omaha area for 3 years now. The Air Force policy is that if you're over 3 years in a certain station, chances are you're going to move, because unless there is absolutely no need for your career field, after 3 years on station, they try to give you a little bit of stability, and then they move you. I know the Marine Corps and the Army are even worse as far as stability. We have friends that seem to move every year.

It's just things that the military understands and knows, that kids growing up in that know. Those are the biggest concerns that we had was the possibility of sports, their grades.

They also have friends, as Dr. Deegan and Mr. Thomas talked about. My kids have been in eight different schools in their high school grades, at least the senior one has. The second grader is going to continue, hopefully, in the next 5, 6 years, once I hit 30 years, I'll have to retire, and he'll have his high school years pretty much stable.

As far as finding new friends, finding a new community, when we moved here in the Bellevue area, we started living in base housing, started school in Bellevue East High School. Then a year later we moved to off-base housing. We live right in the middle of Belle-

vue West School District, but my kids decided they wanted to stay with Bellevue East because even if they couldn't drive, it was incumbent on Michele and I to get them to school, especially when they were younger, but even if they can't drive, they still wanted to continue with their friends.

They thought it was more important to have their school friends than to be away from their friends in the local area when they are off and out of school. Their school friends are the most important things in their lives, and they wanted to have some kind of stability that way. No telling whether or not Mom and Dad would move again, but they wanted to stay with their friends as much as they can.

Another thing that has been mentioned is whether or not the kids want to be noticed. The kids do not want to be noticed, that they are military kids and that they're different from anybody else out there. My sons do everything they can to fit in: Wear the same grungy clothes, baggy pants, everything that they can to fit in. [Laughter.]

But they don't want the parents to come up to them in their school with a uniform on because it shows that they are different from everybody else. They want us to stay away, and I can respect that. They want to be noticed as students, not as military students or not as somebody else that has a potential for moving 3 years from now and then their friends back away from them because I don't need to get to know you because you're leaving in a year, or something like that.

Senator CHAMBLISS. I'm curious. You, being the son of military parents, do you have any recollection of going through this same process as a youngster?

Sergeant SIMON. It was a family decision, but the main reason I thought about us moving here to Omaha was because of the stability. When I was halfway through my junior year, my dad moved from Germany to a farm in North Dakota 2 years before he retired. I swore to myself I would never do that to my kids because, first off, I go from a school that's 1,500 students in my class, just in my grade alone, down to a school where I had six. That's a big difference. [Laughter.]

There's a lot of differences in the possibility of scholarships, whether it's athletic or academic, a lot of different career possibilities all of a sudden get pushed down to almost nil because nobody notices you. You're out there on a farm, farmland doing all kinds of different things; whereas, 2 years before, I was in a large town being able to be part of a large community. Things were happening for me, and then we moved out to this farm where I thought I was at the end of the world. So that's the biggest thing that I remember about growing up in high school.

I also went through eight different schools. What I always thought was neat, especially up until I got to junior high school, we were able to live in Alabama, North Dakota, Germany twice, we lived all over the place. I thought the opportunities to move around and see things were great, but by the time I got into high school, I wanted to stay in high school and be with my friends because traveling wasn't cool anymore. The coolest thing in the world was

to be with my friends and notice what kinds of other things were going on in life besides my following my dad around.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Ms. Bruno.

Mrs. BRUNO. He hit the nail right on the head. My kids have moved quite a bit as well, and at one time they liked to travel with us and go all the different places that we went, but as they got older, they didn't want to go out with us. They don't want to go out to the zoo with Mom and Dad. They want to go hang out with their friends. Stability has always been really important to my husband and I as far as the high school years, we knew that this was going to happen.

Fortunately for us, for the oldest child, we were able to keep it to two high schools. The last 2 years were at the same high school. It would have been nice to have 3 years at the same high school for the oldest, but 2 years was good. I think we're going to be lucky and get the second child through 3 years here.

One of the reasons we came to Offutt instead of going to the Pentagon was we knew we would be here for 3 years. My husband could have gone to school and he opted out of the school so we could stay in one place for my daughter, so education has always been the focus for us.

Whenever we move to a different area, we research the schools. We look to see what's the best school district for our children, and that's how we decide where we're going to live, whether we'll live on base or live off base.

Unfortunately with both kids, we've had some problems with transferring credits in high school because each school district has a different criteria for graduating. The oldest child, she was lucky. She gained 3 credit hours. The younger child lost three, so she has to go to summer school somewhere down the line. She's not looking forward to that. So some of those issues have been covered already that you know that those are the problems.

The biggest hurdle I came across last year was that my husband was in Kuwait due for orders this year. My daughter was starting to apply at colleges, and we didn't know where to apply; we didn't know where we were moving. So that was a huge problem because you want in-State tuition and that was difficult.

I established residency in California, so she applied to California schools. She applied for Virginia schools, Nebraska schools, schools around Florida just so that she could be in and around us if that's what she chose to do, but \$250 worth of application fees was expensive, and we didn't know where our residency was going to be. So I'm glad to hear that Georgia is going to allow kids to have an in-State tuition status.

I'm not sure if I understand that correctly. Does that apply to anybody in the military, or is it just people that are stationed in Georgia?

Senator CHAMBLISS. No. It applies to anybody that graduates from a State high school while their parents are in the military stationed in Georgia.

Mrs. BRUNO. Yeah. It's difficult, though, because we didn't know where we were moving next and we would have liked her to stay in the same State as us.

Now, she chose to stay in California, maybe because it was the most familiar thing that she had just encountered. She stayed right in the same area where she went to high school. Luckily for me, I established residency in California so that she was able to stay and get in-State tuition. But it would have been nice for her to be able to apply anywhere and just know that she would get in-State tuition whether we moved there or not.

I think that would be a great service to the military, to allow at least for public schools. I know the private universities might not have that same option, but to allow the military to apply to any college and have in-State tuition, I would think that there would be some kind of rule where you can transfer your residency to that State so that they felt at least they were getting some kind of money for education. But I think that's a huge problem. We just didn't know where we were going to move next, so I'm glad she stayed where she did.

Luckily for me, I've been taking college classes since high school, over 22 years of college classes along the way, and the military has addressed those kinds of things. The University of Maryland had taken all of my credits from Rutgers University and University of Nebraska at Omaha and just transferred everything that I had as far as through the military, all the schools that I've attended, using the military education system. So that's been wonderful, so I'm really pleased with that.

The other thing I was really pleased to hear was back in January, I don't know if you've heard of One Source. It's a pilot program with the Marine Corps and it has been very helpful for relocating and finding different schools in different areas. I know a lot of the other Services are familiar with the One Source because I think it started with the Reserve program, if I remember correctly, and it's used with the Marine Corps currently. I'm really hoping that it spreads to all the other Services because it's a wonderful program and resource for the military.

That was all I had to say.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Okay. Petty Officer Lemasters.

Petty Officer LEMASTERS. Thank you, gentlemen. A number of people have mentioned different support groups and advocacy groups out there, and one of the sailors that I spoke with mentioned a group called Military Coalition that's out in San Diego, and they were working aggressively trying to get the high school credit hours to transfer and things along that nature, so that may be a benefit for coordination with as well.

My daughter is only in the first grade right now, but one thing that I found for the younger children that's been helpful for us is to have a good before and after school care program available at the school for families where both spouses work. That's been an enormous benefit for us, and luckily, Bellevue School District has a wonderful before and after school program.

Bellevue's reputation preceded it before we even got here. Numerous people that we talked to before moving here, as well as after we've been here, had nothing but positive things to say about the Bellevue School District and we also have the same feelings with that.

One concern that one of the sailors that I had talked to mentioned was regarding the sports programs at Nebraska. The Nebraska Schools Athletic Association apparently has a 180-day waiting period for students that transfer either interstate or intercity transfer before they can participate in that particular school district's sports programs.

With the military student, that becomes exceedingly difficult and is somewhat unfair to the student if they're coming from out of State due to a transfer and then they can't participate for the first half of the school year that they're there or even until the next school year if they transfer during the middle of the school year to be able to participate in the sporting programs. So if that's something that could be looked into, that might be of interest for the panel.

That's all I have. Thank you, gentlemen.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Before you leave that, I wonder if that is something unique to Nebraska. Is there a chance anybody mentioned that that had happened in any other State?

Petty Officer LEMASTERS. Not that I'm aware of, sir. It's possible, but Nebraska was the State that was cited to me on that.

Senator BEN NELSON. Dr. Deegan is shaking his head. He might have some enlightenment.

Dr. DEEGAN. I'm not sure of the exact situation.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Dr. Deegan, would you stand up?

Dr. DEEGAN. Excuse me. I'm not sure of the exact situation, but I believe that any military family that comes in, the day they get here, they can begin to participate and take part in sports. The issue becomes whether you can transfer from one school to another and I think that's the waiting period that people get into. But actually, a military family moving into the area can begin sports that very day, but I think it's the transfer issue. It has to be an agreement between the two districts before they can play. Sometimes the district doesn't want to lose their best players so they'll say, no, we're not going to agree to that, so it's a competition between districts. Actually, for new military coming in, they can play the first day they're here.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Okay. Ms. Bruce.

Ms. BRUCE. The biggest problem that we have run into over the years is moving from the middle of the country to either coast. We found that the schools in Kansas and Nebraska are quite a ways ahead, curriculum content, for each grade than California or Maryland where we were stationed. The most glaring example is when we moved from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, to Fort Hunter Liggett, California. My sixth grader came home the first day of school and said, Mom, I have the same math book. I said, "You mean the same series, that means you haven't missed anything; that's good." She said, "No, Mom, this was my fourth grade math book in Kansas." They were 2 years behind in math and a full year behind in all the other subjects. They had textbooks with no grade references on them so the people that lived there didn't know, but military moving in and out did know. They also didn't have enough textbooks to go around. The kids had to share, so there was no assigned homework. Numerous other problems.

I ended up home schooling two of my kids that year and put the two middle schoolers on the high school bus so they could go 30 miles to the next town and attend a middle school that had algebra for the eighth grader, a decent curriculum, a small talented and gifted program, band. None of which was available in the other school.

Lots of problems trying to transfer one of my daughters during high school. It's a little bit easier when they're younger, but still if they're 1 or 2 years ahead or behind, when they get to a new school district, kids end up skipping grades or repeating grades. My oldest was lucky enough to be here 4 years in high school. She's the one that got into West Point.

Two years ago we moved to the Washington, DC, area. We took housing at Fort Meade. I had tried to call, look at the Web site. Administrators don't tell you that their school is not a good fit for your child or it's not as good as where you came from. We arrive and certain credits aren't accepted, other things have to be substituted. You do the best you can and enroll them and then you find out even the class content is different. Chemistry, there's a junior class which requires a higher level math to do all the formulas and equations. The chemistry there was a freshman class, basic chemical process. English was speech and debate there, and here it is American literature; completely different content.

Once again, we home schooled for a year. We didn't like that. The kids miss all the activities. They don't get leadership positions. They don't get the sports and activities that you put on a college application.

I managed to get the correspondence courses for my high schooler from the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, high school correspondence, and worked with that, so when we decided to split up the family, leave my husband in Washington, DC, bring the other three kids back here to a decent school system, they accepted those credits. She was able to have a great senior year, lettered in academics here and did get into a good college. It's been an effort every time we moved, whether to home school, whether to drive them to a different school, what programs were like.

They're lucky. They're smart. Three of them have been identified as talented and gifted. They have parents that are educated. They have a mom who can stay home, do home school. A lot of other kids don't have those advantages. They're stuck with whatever is outside the gate when they move.

I would love to have national standards. I've talked to many families that say that in the military. I don't know if that's reasonable. I think a lot of the perception is we don't want the Federal Government telling us what to do in our local school district, but anybody that moves, not just the military, has to deal with widely different curriculum. The perception is, there's a perfectly good public school outside so we don't need a DOD school here on our post as well. But we all know that there's no such thing as perfect. Anything good is not realistic in some places.

Mrs. BRUNO. I've seen a lot of home school children more so recently.

Ms. BRUCE. They're not home schooling because of religion. They're home schooling because of consistency in curriculum.

Mrs. BRUNO. Exactly.

Ms. BRUCE. They want their kids to go through and know that they're not missing anything or repeating anything.

Mrs. BRUNO. We've also had the experience of the same book 2 years in a row two different course titles, same book, so that's hard and it can be very difficult.

Ms. BRUCE. Very difficult.

Mrs. BRUNO. You can't get around it.

Ms. BRUCE. My husband comes from Texas, and he's never changed his residency for 27 years, and we still had to fill out a 5-page questionnaire on when he entered Texas, does he still have his driver's license there, does he vote there, et cetera, and have it notarized in order for my daughter to get in-State tuition down there. So that's another concern people have brought up to me.

I know at least five other families that have split up for their kid's senior year of high school, sent their kid to boarding school, sent a child home from Germany to Kansas to live with the ex-husband because the school didn't mesh. There was no consistency.

Mrs. BRUNO. I think high school, by far, was the hardest time.

Ms. BRUCE. Yes.

Mrs. BRUNO. When they were younger, it was easier; they adjusted. We supplemented at home. As soon as we hit high school, for both of them, it was a totally different ball game on different issues, a lot of different curriculums.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Ms. Bruno, Senator Nelson and I are familiar with One Source, and I hadn't thought about this aspect of it, but does One Source attempt to address this problem, because this is a common problem that I'm sure all of you, if you hadn't experienced it, you're going to experience it the older your kids get. Does One Source attempt to address that?

Mrs. BRUNO. They have counseling for kids; the kids can call themselves.

Senator CHAMBLISS. If you're going from Marine Corps Logistics Base (MCLB) in Albany, Georgia, to Offutt, is there anything on that computer system, on the web page that will tell you what curriculum is used?

Mrs. BRUNO. Not only do they have a Web site, you can call up on the phone and speak to a person. You don't get a recording. They will do all the research for you as far as the school districts, give you all the statistics for grades, give you the demographics if you're interested in that. It's a wonderful source, and if people use it, I think it will be wonderful for the military.

I know friends that were moving to a new area, and they had preschoolers, and I don't know if you've experienced preschool waiting lists but they can be very lengthy, if you want to get your child into a good preschool. I referred a friend with a key volunteer network and readiness group last year, and I referred several people over to this One Source, and they would actually do the legwork and find out where the preschools were and what it entailed, how to get on the list, what's the cutoff, or how much it costs. They'll do all of that research for you so you don't have to sit there on the phone for hours. They'll do it all for you and call you back. They'll call you back or they'll e-mail you. So it's a great program and I

really hope it's utilized and it spreads throughout the Service because I think it's going to help a lot.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Another question, and I'll just throw this open to any of you who have had the experience and you might shed some light on it: DOD versus non-DOD schools. Do you find more consistency within DOD schools if you transfer? Is there less consistency? Is there a difference in the atmosphere? Are your children, because they're with military children day in and day out, do they seem to be better off, do better in school versus being in civilian school? Anybody care to comment on that particular issue?

Mrs. BRUNO. I've never had two DOD schools together. We've gone from Department of Defense school to a public. However, my children adjusted better in the military school system because all of those kids have the similar circumstances. They're all moving regularly. They tend to know what each other is thinking when they move.

When you move into a public school system, it seems that the military kids kind of come together as well. The civilian kids just kind of push them away a little bit. It's really difficult for them to form friendships with the civilian kids because they just don't understand where they're coming from, so they tend to. I'm not saying my kids have never had civilian friends, but they tend to stick together with the military kids. I guess it's just because they have similar interests.

Sergeant SIMON. My son has never attended a DOD school that I can remember. I know when I did, eighth through tenth grade, I attended a school over in Ramstein, Germany, and I always thought the education that I received from the DOD school was at least equal to any of the education that I received anyplace else.

I know at times DOD schools have been dinged and dinged hard-est for the level of education they provide, but when I PCS'd back to North Dakota, I was at least at equal to if not above the education level that I had had, because some of the classes that I had were maybe not the same classes or even the same textbooks, but they were very comparable with the courses I had taken previously, and I was taking those as an eighth or ninth grader, sometimes, and they were being offered to me as a ninth or tenth grader.

Mrs. BRUNO. I guess my older daughter was in school in Rhode Island, and they have a pretty good curriculum in Rhode Island. When we moved to Yongsan, Korea, she had the same textbook for eighth grade and then she had the same textbook for ninth grade. So I don't know. I guess that can happen in any school district, so I don't necessarily say it's a Department of Defense problem. I think it's just there's different curriculums in different States.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Senator Nelson?

Senator BEN NELSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First, I want to thank all of you for sharing your personal experiences with us.

Sergeant Simon, you came because of the schools, but I thought perhaps you came partly because of the weather as well. [Laughter.]

Sergeant SIMON. I would like to take credit for that, but I think it was more the chaplains than the weather guys. [Laughter.]

Senator BEN NELSON. We thank the chaplain in that regard.

Ms. Murphy, having had so much experience with the Guard and Reserve units, do you have any thoughts from your experience what the recent deployments, what affect those deployments might have on the children of Guard and Reserve members?

Ms. MURPHY. I think that as the deployments have gone on since September 11 and since our activity in Iraq, we have a different problem now. I'm seeing that a lot of kids, there's no distinction now between war time and peace time. There's no time that these kids feel that they can totally relax. They're starting to key into a climate of global terrorism and starting to feel that even if their parents are on peace keeping missions somewhere where there is not supposed to be combat, there is still danger. So what I've noticed is the stress is becoming more consistent and it's not peaking in a lot of the lives of these kids, but it's a consistent level of stress. I think we have to maybe look at our counseling programs from that point of view and see that for the older kids we address it that way. For the younger kids, they don't make any differentiations. They see military people in combat and instantly it's their families. I do think we need to step up some counseling.

However, that said, I think that we always have to remember that when we approach all of these programs, we have to prepare for stress and prepare for problems in the lives of our families but never design things so that we invite it. I should have been worried about that. Now, I am. So we have to remember that. We always have to be very supportive in our tenor, in the words, in the ways that we choose to communicate with the families, to tell them that we're there if they come, if they need us, that we know that they're strong and capable people. That especially goes for the kids, too. Kids will reflect what you give them.

Beyond that, I think the overriding thing that I believe we need is to keep expanding and developing our family readiness programs and linking them more to the schools because in my own program, as I built it and set it up and was soliciting information from the families and information from the military members in trying to assess their needs and build programs to face them, the school had so many people in so many different areas, that dealing with the schools is really a daunting task for Guard and Reserves. They're going to need some help, and they're going to need some protocols and a lot of cooperation on that, but I think that is right now because of the gap that I see.

Senator BEN NELSON. I want to congratulate you for your work already as Director of the Family Readiness Network for the 155th Air Refueling Wing.

Ms. MURPHY. Thank you.

Senator BEN NELSON. It received the National Guard's 2002 Outstanding Family Program award and if you can continue your work in readiness to reflect that kind of outstanding output and have the excellence associated with it, I think our Guard and Reserve units will be better served. It certainly helps us to understand what we can do to help in that regard.

Ms. MURPHY. Thank you very much, Senator.

Senator BEN NELSON. Thank you.

Sergeant SIMON. Sir, one thing I would like to mention, also, is Dr. Deegan mentioned that there was a Web site. Mr. Thomas also

mentioned a Web site. In this information age, there are tons of different information that are available. I would like to push, if we could, the Family Support Center. Most military bases, whether it's Army or Navy, have a Family Support Center that should be able to provide a lot of that information.

I've been over to our Family Support Center and some of the things are out there as you travel from base to base, and a lot of the same programs are there, but it depends on how active or creative the director of the Family Support Center is on whether or not some of the information is out there.

I'd just suggest to Dr. Deegan to continue to work with the Family Support Center in Offutt and just get a lot of the information out there, because a lot of us are going to continue to move on to different assignments. We're going to continue to have stress in our lives. If we can find one place to go to, instead of having to go through a network of 15 different friends, because it depends on which friend you're talking to on whether or not you're going to get the right information, if we could get the Family Support Center to be that one center for each base, post, Army installation and we can maybe get the information and be a little bit less stressful, because it's the parents that are going to have to go out and get that information.

The kids may have a lot of stress in their lives, but they're not going to tell anybody about it. They're not going to go surfing the web to find information about what the schools are for the next place. They're not going to try to find the information about what the community is like, what activities there are to do in another community. It's the parents who have to go look, and if we can keep the Family Support Center focused in the process, we need to do that.

Mrs. BRUNO. I think one of the things that the One Source Web site or community was trying to do is do just that, to link each base's family readiness program to their Web site. I found it a wonderful program, and if it goes, I would be really happy for the military. I think it would be a great program for all of the Services, because they were providing links for us. If we called them or if we went to the Web site, it would provide us links to the family readiness organizations. So it is one place that I think would be a great start. I don't know if it will continue, but I really hope it does.

Senator CHAMBLISS. It is a program that Senator Nelson and I have keen interest in and has been developed through a hearing that we had in Washington, DC, with all of the Services, and it's a program that seems to be working.

The one thing that we have been concentrating on, particularly in this session of Congress because of the Iraqi situation, that's given it even an higher profile, and that is trying to make sure that we do a better job of allowing you to do a better job of dealing with these kinds of issues.

Master Sergeant Simon, it may have been of concern to you. I know it was of concern to your parents and you coming along, but times were different then, and kids were different. We all know that our children are much brighter than we were coming along. They have different interests and different assets that they're able

to use. Thank goodness a computer works the same way in Korea as it does in Omaha, Nebraska, but that doesn't account, it doesn't make up for the difference in textbooks and other day-to-day things that, gee-whiz, you have to put up with.

My dad was a minister and we moved five times. I went to five different schools, so I share some of those same problems. But you folks know that as long as you're in the military, these are going to be continuing problems.

I think Senator Nelson will agree with me. I can't tell you how much we appreciate you all coming in and baring your soul with us today. I assure you, we're going to take this information back to Washington and try to incorporate your thoughts and your ideas into some overall programs, along with what we've heard in other parts of the country.

We're working very closely with Senator Lamar Alexander of Tennessee and Senator Chris Dodd of Connecticut, who are the chairman and ranking member on the Education Subcommittee within the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, to try to develop some programs that will allow a smoother transition for our military children because we don't want there to be that difference. We never want your kids to have to think about them being in a little different situation from the civilian kids when they're in a civilian school.

We just appreciate very much your being here today and sharing these ideas with us.

Master Sergeant and Mrs. Simon, I need to tell you all, it sounds like you have a couple of young men coming along that are great athletes, and we have Robins Air Force Base. [Laughter.]

Great school systems and we'd love to have them, so we may find a weather station that needs your talent. [Laughter.]

Senator BEN NELSON. I think we'll get your tour of duty extended here. [Laughter.]

I might mention one thing. About the equalizing the tuition for in-State purposes for someone who begins their college in Nebraska while finishing high school here, we have two State senators here. I never want to pass the ball off if I can run with it, but in this case, I think I have to pass it off. We have State Senator Nancy Thompson here and State Senator Paul Hartnett was here earlier.

This area is in their district, and I think it would be an excellent topic for them to take back to the Nebraska Legislature to take a look at what Georgia is doing and see what some other States are doing because it can—switching from University of Nebraska at Omaha to University of Nebraska at Kearny to University of Nebraska at Lincoln or to one of the State colleges in Nebraska could present a challenge that is not currently being handled in a way that it is being handled elsewhere. I haven't thought about it until it came up as a result of this get-together. So I appreciate that opportunity and always want to hand the ball if I can't run with it, and this is a local issue, primarily.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Yes, it is, and you're absolutely right. There are a lot of other things like this and some thoughts that you all have come up with today, and you stimulate some ideas in my mind and I know in Senator Nelson's that we're going to be able

to take back. From a practical aspect, this was not a difficult thing to do, for the Georgia Legislature to do.

It was not difficult for Senator Nelson and I to agree that our Guard and Reserve folks ought to have use of the commissary and exchanges. I mean, when we're calling on folks, we just need to do those kinds of things to attract you, to retain your families, because even though it's your spouse, we know that this is a military family situation.

So we're going to continue to work to make life better for you, and again, I appreciate very much your testimony here.

To Mr. Thomas and Dr. Deegan, we thank you very much for being here to give us your thoughts and your ideas on the issues that we have discussed.

With that, this hearing will be adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:00 p.m., the subcommittee adjourned.]

ISSUES AFFECTING FAMILIES OF RESERVE AND NATIONAL GUARD SOLDIERS, SAILORS, AIRMEN, AND MARINES

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2003

U.S. SENATE, JOINT HEARING OF THE
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON PERSONNEL,
AND
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION,
LABOR, AND PENSIONS,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES,
Chattanooga, TN.

The subcommittees met, pursuant to notice, at 10:08 a.m. in the Drill Hall of the National Guard Armory, 1801 Holtzclaw Avenue, Chattanooga, Tennessee, Senator Saxby Chambliss (chairman of the Subcommittee on Personnel, Committee on Armed Services) and Senator Lamar Alexander (chairman of the Subcommittee on Children and Families, Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions) presiding.

Armed Services Committee member present: Senator Chambliss.
Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee member present: Senator Alexander.

Armed Services Committee majority staff member present: Richard F. Walsh, counsel.

Armed Services Committee minority staff member present: Gerald J. Leeling, minority counsel.

Armed Services Committee staff assistant present: Michael N. Berger.

Armed Services Committee members' assistant present: Clyde A. Taylor IV, assistant to Senator Chambliss.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR SAXBY CHAMBLISS, CHAIRMAN

Senator CHAMBLISS. Good morning. This joint hearing of the Subcommittee on Personnel of the Senate Committee on Armed Services and the Subcommittee on Children and Families of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions will come to order.

It is a pleasure to be here in the National Guard Armory Drill Hall with my long-time good friend and now my colleague, Senator Lamar Alexander, of the great State of Tennessee. I can't be here without telling the people of Tennessee what a great job you did in sending both Senator Bill Frist as well as Senator Alexander to

us in Washington. Senator Alexander and I are classmates together. It is one of the more experienced classes of freshmen in the United States Senate, and he is certainly at the top of that class. He has been my good friend for many years. It is a privilege to have the opportunity to serve with him and a privilege to be able to get around the country, as well as hold hearings in Washington, to work on an issue that we have a common interest in, not just from a legislative standpoint, but also from a very personal standpoint. We are both extremely interested in what we are going to be talking about.

Our previous joint hearing took place in Washington, DC, on June 24 and it gave us the opportunity to gain important insights into the Department of Defense programs and the service that is being provided to military families. It is always beneficial, however, to travel to great communities like Chattanooga and visit military personnel where they live and work and hear directly from them about the challenges they face.

In addition to that joint hearing, the Subcommittee on Personnel of the Armed Services Committee, which I chair, previously conducted two field hearings. The first on June 2 in Warner Robins, Georgia at Robins Air Force Base. It focused on issues affecting families of active duty military personnel and included testimony from a panel composed of spouses of Army, Navy, and Air Force personnel deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Our second subcommittee field hearing was conducted on August 7 in Omaha, Nebraska at Offutt Air Force Base. The principal focus of that hearing was on education, impact aid, and the challenges that civilian communities and civilian school systems face in serving military families with school age children. In Omaha, we heard from a panel consisting of parents, including a Navy first class petty officer, an Air Force chief master sergeant and his wife, and the spouses of active duty Army and Marine Corps officers whose children had attended many different schools, both civilian and military schools within the Department of Defense system. These parents gave us a better understanding of the difficulties they and their children had faced in moving from school system to school system during the course of their careers.

Today our focus is on families of the National Guard and Reserve personnel. We understand that while striving each day to be superb soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines, many guardsmen and reservists strive with equal commitment and dedication to be superb spouses, parents, and providers to their children. The programs and problems that we consider today directly impact the ability of our guardsmen and reservists to successfully fulfill these all important roles.

Families of mobilized National Guard and Reserve members have been placed under tremendous stress in recent years. Even before September 11, 2001, and the global war on terrorism, the high tempo of operations affecting both active duty and Reserve military personnel was a source of concern. Since September 11 our active duty, Reserve, and National Guard personnel have performed magnificently in every mission they have been assigned. However, the sacrifices they have made, the long and continuing separations they have endured, and the problems in their personal

lives resulting from these realities of military duty must be understood and carefully evaluated. We in the Senate must make every effort, working closely with the Department of Defense, the Department of Education, employers in the private sector, and advocates for families in all walks of life to respond in helpful ways.

My expectation today is that we will continue to gain insight into the programs and initiatives of the Services, into the formulation of policies at the headquarters level, and also into work that remains to be done on behalf of individual members and their families.

I am delighted that Senator Alexander, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Children and Families, joins me today as co-chair. I am pleased to be back in the great State of Tennessee, having graduated from the University of Tennessee 1 or 2 years ago. [Laughter.]

It is a real pleasure for me to have the opportunity to be back here, but a special pleasure to be here in the presence of my good friend, Senator Lamar Alexander. At this time I will turn the microphone over to him for any opening remarks he might have.

**STATEMENT OF HON. LAMAR ALEXANDER, U.S. SENATOR
FROM TENNESSEE**

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

It is a pleasure for me also to serve with Senator Chambliss. As he said, we have been friends. We have a common border between Georgia and Tennessee, particularly in southeast Tennessee. All the way down to Atlanta we have a lot of common interests and common opportunities to work on.

I am especially glad to be here with Senator Chambliss because he has been a leader from day one on the issue of military families raising children. He has been a tireless advocate on their behalf. He is Chairman of the Personnel Subcommittee of the Armed Services Committee in the United States Senate, which has been a very active subcommittee this year under his chairmanship. He was recently awarded the Military Coalition's 2003 Award of Merit for his work in strengthening the TRICARE system to support the health-care needs of our troops and their families.

No time of the year reminds us more of our loved ones than this time of the holiday season. It is an emotional time. So it is appropriate that we spend some time in December talking about military families, because many of them are separated this holiday season. Their loved ones are away defending us.

This hearing, as Senator Chambliss said, is part of a series of hearings that Senator Chambliss and I, Senator Dodd, and Senator Ben Nelson have held in different parts of our country to focus on the broader issue of military parents raising children. Today we want to especially focus on families of National Guard men and women and members of the Reserve.

The hearings have already had an impact. Here are just a few. We learned about the Defense Department's exemplary programs on child care and also some ways that child care could be improved. In responding to the needs for troops to visit their families, Congress and the President have provided funding this year, so troops on a 2-week leave through the revived R&R, rest and recreation

programs, can have travel expenses covered when they fly home. That is in the process of being implemented now.

We addressed combat pay by increasing the families' separation allowance. Families have additional needs during times of deployment which costs a little bit of extra money. This \$250 a month makes a difference, and Congress has funded that this year.

We in Congress have also addressed health care concerns of soldiers and their families. Senator Chambliss especially has been in the leadership on this issue. The Department of Defense authorization bill included \$400 million for this year so that when reservists are called to active duty they become eligible for TRICARE coverage. Additionally, when reservists return from active duty, instead of having TRICARE coverage for only 60 days reservists will be covered for up to 6 months.

Finally, during our earlier series of hearings the issue was raised of soldiers and families losing certain benefits such as Headstart when they begin receiving extra combat pay. It wasn't really the intention of Congress to penalize members of the armed services by giving them extra money, but that was the effect of it. The Headstart legislation recently passed by the Senate HELP Committee included a provision pertaining to this Headstart eligibility problem. As our soldiers are away fighting to defend our freedom, it is our responsibility to make sure we help in taking care of their children. The fact that they are receiving combat pay because they are working in dangerous situations should not adversely affect their children. Therefore, I proposed language to the Headstart reauthorization bill ensuring that a military family otherwise eligible for Headstart would not lose its eligibility because a member of that family is receiving combat pay.

Today we are shifting our focus slightly. As I mentioned earlier, up to this point we have focused mainly on families of active duty troops. Today we are talking more about families of Reserve and National Guard. The American troops serving in Operation Noble Eagle, Operation Enduring Freedom, and Operation Iraqi Freedom, more than 300,000 are from the Reserve and National Guard. This is mostly since September 11, and this includes those men and women who have gone to Iraq, who have gone to Afghanistan, and the large number of Reserve and Guard men and women who have been called to staff the bases while the active duty people have gone overseas. In Tennessee since September 11, more than 6,200 troops from the Reserve and Guard have been mobilized, including 644 troops from here in the Chattanooga area at last count. So it is important that we consider their needs.

Some of the needs of Reserve and Guard men and women are different. When a reservist is deployed on a full-time military duty he or she is not only away from their family, but also from his or her regular job, a job which would normally provide income to the family, as well as important benefits like health care coverage. Because the families of reservists do not tend to live in military communities such as those that live on or near Fort Campbell, Reserve families do not have access to the same support network for needs like child care, counseling, or even just getting news about their loved ones. So we have a lot to learn today and two great panels of witnesses to help us do that.

Since 1997 we have had what we like to call a fully integrated armed services. We think of our active duty and our Guard men and women and our Reserve men and women as all part of the same unit more than we did before. That means if we are going to expect more, we are going to have to give more. One example would be in terms of the numbers of troops going overseas, I heard one report that pointed out that over the next few months there would be about 100,000 service members coming back from Iraq and about 100,000 going over. About 25 percent of those serving in Iraq and Afghanistan today are Reserve and National Guard and the number who will be serving with this 100,000 or more going over will be higher than that.

I look forward, Senator Chambliss, to learning today, and I look forward to the questions. Chattanooga is especially an interesting place for us to talk about reservists and guardsmen. One of the most impressive stories coming out of Chattanooga has been the seven fathers and sons who are a member of the same Army National Guard artillery unit. The last time I checked, they were all at Fort Campbell. Seven fathers and their sons all serving together in the same unit. Some of them were preparing to go to Iraq. I imagine they have by now. That is just one indication of the tremendous patriotism and volunteer spirit that exists in the Chattanooga area, which is something we are very proud of with our National Guard and Reserves.

Senator CHAMBLISS. You are right, it is fitting that we be here. You and I have a very good friend in the Mayor of Chattanooga, Bob Corker, who has done such a great job here. We appreciate Chattanooga hosting this, particularly Colonel Robert Harris, the brigade commander here at the armory. We appreciate you and all of your staff for the great work you have done in making this armory available to us today.

While he could not be here today, I also want to recognize my ranking member, Senator Ben Nelson, who is from the great State of Nebraska. Senator Nelson and I, just like Senator Alexander and Senator Dodd on his subcommittee, have just a great working relationship. These committees are bipartisan committees because we are not here talking about Republican issues or Democratic issues. We are talking about quality of life issues for our military men and women and their families. Senator Nelson has just been such a strong advocate as the ranking member of the Personnel Subcommittee on Armed Services for families, as well as for the active duty members. I regret he could not be here, but he is certainly here in spirit.

We have two panels of witnesses who will testify this morning. First, we will hear from Dr. John Winkler, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs (Manpower and Personnel); and Colonel James Scott of the Army National Guard who serves as Director of Individual and Family Policy within the Office of the Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs. We will also receive testimony from Bob Hollingsworth, the Executive Director of the National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve. He will testify about vital work he does working with private sector employees and employers.

Our second panel will consist of an Army reservist who has served in southwest Asia; the spouse of a guardsman who was mobilized earlier this year; the family programs coordinator from the Tennessee Guard; and an employee of the Chattanooga Police Department. Senator Alexander will introduce these witnesses upon conclusion of our first panel.

I welcome the members of our first panel. Your written testimony has been entered into the record, but we would be pleased to hear from you now with respect to any comments you wish to make summarizing those written statements. So Dr. Winkler, why don't we start with you.

STATEMENT OF JOHN P. WINKLER, Ph.D., DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR RESERVE AFFAIRS (MANPOWER AND PERSONNEL)

Dr. WINKLER. Good morning, Senator Alexander and Senator Chambliss. Thank you for inviting us here to Tennessee to share some of our thoughts with you.

I want to start by acknowledging the support that your committees in Congress have given to our National Guard and Reserve members and their families. Your support has contributed to the increasing effectiveness of family readiness and quality of life programs for our military personnel.

As Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Personnel, I am responsible for the full range of manpower and personnel issues within the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs. This includes, along with Colonel Scott, our Directorate of Individual and Family Support Policy that's in our office. In that capacity, I am keenly aware of the importance of family readiness and also how much our families contribute to supporting the total force mission of our Armed Forces.

In my prepared testimony, I shared some of our points on what the Department sees in terms of Reserve family readiness and quality of life issues, as well as some of the critical challenges facing National Guard and Reserve component military parents. I describe policies, programs, and partnerships we have established in the Department to assist families in preparing for the absence of their military family member and sustaining them for the duration of that absence, as well as the return, reunion, and reintegration resources to reunite families and reestablish Guard and Reserve members in their civilian jobs and in their dual civilian/military careers.

As you both mentioned, we have recently seen reservists called to active duty under the partial mobilization authority as a result of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and western Pennsylvania, as well as continuing their contributions to Presidential Reserve Call-ups in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Southwest Asia. Since September 11, according to our latest accounting, nearly 325,000 Guard and Reserve members and their families have supported the global war on terrorism. This includes about 6,300 citizen soldiers from the State of Tennessee.

World events and our Nation's response have presented many challenges to the men and women who serve in our Reserve components. Contingency operations challenge our service members and

their families and demonstrate that mission readiness and family readiness are extremely intertwined. We can't continue to rely on the reservists who now comprise about half our total force if their families are not ready for the stresses and strains of separations and deployments. We are closely monitoring the impact of increased use of our Guard and Reserve members, on them, their families, and their employers while taking a proactive approach to identifying established new programs and modify existing ones.

The mission of the individual family and support policy directorate in my office is to ensure total force family readiness. Our goal is to support mission readiness through the Reserve component family readiness programs. Colonel Scott, to my right, is the director of that office. Now he will share some of the specific programs we have implemented to support our total force members.

Thank you.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thank you, Dr. Winkler.

Colonel Scott.

STATEMENT OF COL. JAMES L. SCOTT II, ARNG DIRECTOR, INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILY POLICY, OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR RESERVE AFFAIRS

Colonel SCOTT. Yes, sir. Good morning, Senators.

Today, I would like to share with you some of the critical challenges facing National Guard and Reserve component military members and their families and explain some of the policies, programs, and partnerships we have established in the Department to assist them in preparing for the absence of their military family member and sustaining them for the duration of that absence as well as the return, reunion, and integration resources to reunite them with their family and to reestablish them in their civilian jobs and their dual military civilian careers.

The good news is we have received positive feedback on how joint and cross component initiatives can improve the overall ability to deliver services to members and their families. One example has been the Military One Source, a confidential service that is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This is an employee assistance type program that is available to the Services as a total force program for all members and their families. Another example is the partnership that our office has formed with the Secretary of Defense's Office of Family Policy in order to approach family readiness issues from a holistic perspective.

Guard and Reserve families are widely dispersed geographically and live and work in over 4,000 communities across the Nation. Often these families do not live near military installations where family support readiness services are most readily available and they may not know what services are available. Even when military families are aware of available services, they often encounter difficulties in accessing them. They are in their civilian communities with their children in public and private schools where there may be little experience or knowledge of the impacts of mobilization and deployments on parents and children.

The Office of Educational Opportunity has worked with our office and in collaboration with the Department of Education to provide information and materials that appear on both the Department of

Defense and Department of Education Web sites, that enables administrators, faculty, counselors, and staff in school districts throughout the United States as well as parents, to begin to understand and address the needs of children of deployed Guard and Reserve members. These products include an educator's guide to the military child during deployment and a parent's guide to the military child during deployment and reunion.

The Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Labor last July signed a memorandum of understanding which provides the framework for a broad range of continuing and new partnership efforts between the two departments to ease reentry into the civilian workforce and ensure military skills are translated into civilian employment. This agreement will also strengthen the Department of Labor's efforts to support returning reservist job searches, expand employment infrastructure to support military spouse employment, and encourage corporate America to hire returning reservists and military spouses.

Significant results of our partnership are the publication of the first Guard and Reserve Family Readiness Strategic Plan, 2000 through 2005; Publication of a Fifth Edition of a Guide to Reserve Family Member Benefits in May 2003. This guide provides family members with information about military benefits and entitlements including medical and dental care, commissary and exchange privileges, military pay and allowances, and reemployment rights. I have provided copies for your staff this morning for each of you.

We also publish the Joint Service Total Force Guard and Reserve Family Readiness Programs Toolkit, a comprehensive guide on pre-deployment, deployment, and post-deployment information for commanders, service members, family members, and family program managers. The toolkit is based on best practices from the field as identified by active and Reserve components. As with other informational products, the toolkit can be accessed on the Reserve Affairs Web site at www.defenselink.mil/ra.

Veteran services organizations have come forward with initiatives to support active and Reserve families. The Department is also partnering with the Department of Veterans' Affairs and other agencies to ensure that demobilizing Reserve component members have access to their post-mobilization and transition counseling, and we recently conducted a child care summit to determine the significance of child care requirements for Guard and Reserve families when the military member is training at home station and also the additional requirements when the military member is mobilized and/or deployed. These efforts and cooperation have allowed us to keep Reserve component families in the mainstream of current initiatives to support all military families.

Another concept that has been emphasized by both the Department and the Services is expanded outreach. Outreach means delivering services into the communities and increasing awareness of existing programs to those families that live far from military installations. The National Guard has been a huge player in expanding this outreach. National Guard family programs are almost everywhere and are supported by a State family program coordinator in each State and territory. Additionally, the National Guard has established over 400 family assistance centers in communities all

over the Nation. The Tennessee Guard is a strong player in this effort, and I think you will hear from Major Ward a few more details about that program here.

Over the past few months, they have opened 17 family assistance centers with 20 full-time contracted workers. Typically the centers cooperate and coordinate with existing units' family readiness groups to assist their families by providing answers and serve as a resource for solving problems at the lowest possible level. The family assistance centers are a very valuable resource, and they are able to provide a more comprehensive approach to family support, which results in enhanced family satisfaction and readiness.

The family support offered by the Guard is available to all military families, regardless of component or Service. We have received feedback that indicates that this expanded outreach has contributed to more families being better prepared for the challenges they face. Often when we do not hear complaints, we know that family readiness programs are working quite well.

The Department advocates a 100-percent contact goal for all families. We realize that this goal is worthy but it is also a moving target. Constant attentiveness must be maintained to connect all families with the family readiness network.

We also launched another Web site, deploymentconnections.org, emphasizing joint readiness for service members, families, parents, spouses, and children. One of the lessons of Operation Iraqi Freedom and other recent wars is that effectiveness in combat depends heavily on jointness, how well the different branches of the military communicate and coordinate their efforts on and off the battlefield. It is eminently clear to us that achieving jointness in war time requires building that jointness in peace time.

Providing the necessary resources for our mobilized Guard and Reserve members and their families is a top priority for the Department. While we can draw on our experience from past call-ups, we continue to examine our policies and programs to ensure that our mobilized reservists do not feel disenfranchised and that we have the family support systems in place that they require.

Your committee and Congress have been very supportive of our Guard and Reserve members and families and on their behalf, I want to publicly thank you for all your help in strengthening our Reserve component. Our military personnel and their family members are very grateful.

Senators, this concludes my prepared remarks. Thanks to you and your fellow Members of Congress for having us here to talk with you today. We certainly appreciate it.

[The joint prepared statement of Dr. Winkler and Colonel Scott follows:]

JOINT PREPARED STATEMENT BY DR. JOHN D. WINKLER AND COLONEL JAMES L. SCOTT II

Good morning Senator Alexander and Senator Chambliss. Thank you for inviting us here to Tennessee to share some of our thoughts with you. As the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs (Manpower and Personnel), and with Colonel Scott as the Director of Individual and Family Support Policy in our office, I am keenly aware of the importance of family readiness and also how much our families contribute to supporting the total force mission of our Armed Forces. I also want to acknowledge the support your committee and Congress have given to our National Guard and Reserve members and their families. Your support has contrib-

uted to the increasing effectiveness of family readiness and quality of life programs for our military personnel.

The Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs has a supervisory role in the Department of Defense for National Guard and Reserve issues and has been an advocate for all seven Reserve components. Noting that we have about 160,000 Reserve component members currently mobilized in support of Operations Iraqi Freedom, Enduring Freedom, and other contingencies, this is a very important role. I am responsible for manpower and personnel issues within the Reserve Affairs, serving as the principal staff assistant and advisor to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs for all manpower, personnel, compensation, and medical matters.

Today, I will share some points on what the Department sees in terms of Reserve family readiness and quality of life issues as well as some of the critical challenges facing National Guard and Reserve component military parents. In addition, I will also explain the policies, programs, and partnerships we have established in the Department to assist families in preparing for the absence of their military family member and sustaining them for the duration of that absence, as well as the return, reunion, and reintegration resources to reunite families and to reestablish Guard and Reserve members in their civilian jobs and dual civilian-military careers.

We have recently seen reservists called to active duty under the partial mobilization authority as a result of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and western Pennsylvania, as well as continuing their participation and commitment to Presidential Reserve Call-Ups in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Southwest Asia. Since September 11, 2001, nearly 310,000 Guard and Reserve members and their families have supported the global war on terrorism. Approximately 4,400 citizen-soldiers from the Tennessee National Guard have been called to support this global war. Currently, Tennessee is providing nearly 3,000 Guard and Reserve members from communities all across the State including Alcoa, Boliver, Camden, Chattanooga, Columbia, Dickson, Dresden, Elizabeth, Jackson, Johnson City, Kingsport, Knoxville, Lebanon, Lexington, Lobelville, Millington, Murfreesboro, Nashville, Oak Ridge, Ripley, Smyrna, and Tullahoma. Each of these members and their families are a vital part of their communities, and are making critical contributions to preserving the peace and freedom of our country and the world.

World events and our Nation's response have presented many challenges to the men and women who serve in our Reserve components. Contingency operations challenge our service members and their families, and demonstrate that mission readiness and family readiness are inextricably intertwined. We cannot continue to rely on our reservists, who now comprise approximately half our total force, if their families are not ready for the stresses and strains of separations and long deployments.

When mobilized, reservists and their families face unique challenges and barriers. Guard and Reserve families are widely dispersed geographically and live and work in over 4,000 communities across the Nation. Often, these families do not live near military installations where family support readiness services are most readily available and they may not know what services are available. Even when military families are aware of available services, they often encounter difficulties in accessing them. More often they are in civilian communities with their children in public and private schools where there may be little experience or knowledge of the impacts of mobilization and deployment on parents and children.

We are closely monitoring the impact of the increased use on our Guard and Reserve members, their families, and their employers while taking a proactive approach to identify and establish new programs, modify and adapt existing programs and resources, and expand partnerships in and out of the Department to enhance our military members' and their families' ability to cope with the challenges of military service in defense of our Nation and our communities.

The mission of the Individual and Family Support Policy Directorate in my office is to ensure total force family readiness; and our goal is to support mission readiness through Reserve component family readiness. The military of the 21st century is a total force military, and the Department realizes this fact. Our total force is easy to recognize when we look at the mix of active and Reserve members that make up the joint forces that are serving across the globe on any given day. We are making a push to broaden the total force mindset to the benefit of the overall force. We are obviously better than we were 20, or even 10 years ago, but we are still working towards closer integration in quality of life and family readiness programs and their impact on mission readiness.

The good news is that we have received positive feedback on how joint and cross-component initiatives can improve the overall ability to deliver service to members and their families. One example has been the "Military One Source," a confidential

service that is available 24 hours a day; 7 days a week. This is an Employee Assistance Program that is available to the Services as a total force program for all members and families. Also, the Secretaries of Defense and Labor just last July signed a Memorandum of Understanding, which provides the framework for a broad range of continuing and new partnership, efforts between the two departments to ease re-entry into the civilian workforce and ensure military skills are translated into civilian employment. This agreement will also strengthen the Department of Labor's efforts to support returning reservists' job searches, expand employment infrastructure to support military spouse employment, and encourage corporate America to hire returning reservists and military spouses.

Another example is the partnership my office has formed with the Office of Family Policy in order to approach family readiness issues from a holistic perspective. Colonel Scott, my Director of Individual and Family Support Policy, and Meg Falk, the Director of the Office of Family Policy, are the co-chairs of the Joint Family Readiness Group that meets quarterly to discuss high-level policy issues with the family program managers of all the Services and their respective Reserve components. These offices illustrate examples of teamwork in preparing policies and programs because we know it is beneficial to begin with a total force perspective.

Another significant result of this partnership was the publication of the first Guard and Reserve Family Readiness Strategic Plan 2000–2005. It provides a blueprint for offering greater support to National Guard and Reserve families and assisting them in coping with the stresses of separations and long deployments. The plan sets out specific goals and milestones and we have already accomplished a number of those goals. Also, it established a link between family readiness and unit mission readiness. This plan and the products established as a result of its implementation are a direct result of partnership efforts within the OSD staff to include the Office of Military Community and Family Policy and their Quality of Life, Family Policy, Children and Youth, Community Support and Continuing Education offices. Their efforts and cooperation have allowed us to keep Reserve component families in the mainstream of current initiatives to support all military families.

Another concept that has been emphasized both by the Department and the Services is expanded outreach. Outreach is one cornerstone of the Department's new "Social Compact," in that future programs take aim at the two-thirds of the military population that resides off base, as well as National Guard and Reserve members and families. Outreach means delivering services into the communities and increasing awareness of existing programs to those families that live far from military installations. The National Guard has been a huge player in expanding outreach. National Guard family programs are almost everywhere and are supported by a State Family Program Coordinator in each State and territory. Additionally, the National Guard has established over 400 family assistance centers in communities all over the Nation. The Tennessee Guard is a strong player in this effort. Tennessee has opened 17 Family Assistance Centers with 20 full-time contracted workers. Typically, the Family Assistance Center workers cooperate and coordinate with the existing units' Family Readiness Groups to assist families by providing answers and as a resource of solving problems at the lowest level possible. The Family Assistance Centers are a very valuable resource. They are able to provide a more comprehensive approach to family support, which results in enhanced family satisfaction.

The family support offered by the Guard is available to all military families, regardless of component or Service. We have received feedback that indicates this expanded outreach has contributed to more families being better prepared for the challenges they face. Often when we don't hear complaints, we know that family readiness programs are working well.

However, we are aware that not all families are being reached. The foundation for support of family members lies in the preparation and education of professionals and family members alike, well before a reservist is called to active duty or actually deployed. The ability of Reserve component members to focus on their assigned military duties, rather than worrying about family matters, is directly affected by the confidence a member has that his family can readily access family support services. This is why the Department advocates a 100-percent contact goal for all families. We also realize that while this goal is worthy, it is also a moving target. Constant attentiveness must be maintained to connect all families with a family readiness network. Most of this work is conducted at the battalion/squadron level and below, and it is often volunteers that do the work. They do a tremendous job! There are isolated families who are not reached, but there are also dedicated people working on reaching them. It also helps us to be able to come to a forum such as this and tell the story. In addition to family program managers, the unit commander, the service member, and the spouse all have a responsibility in making family readiness a reality. Family readiness is not something that just happens. It takes multiple

parties at all levels to build a robust network. Support for unit-level programs is the key to building a network based upon personal contact. The Department is a strong supporter of the family programs managed by each Service and their Reserve components. Furthermore, we seek to implement policy that will support efforts being made at the unit-level.

Moreover, many of the Veterans Service Organizations have come forward with initiatives to support active and Reserve families left behind. One example is the Veterans of Foreign Wars, which provides coordinators in each State to ensure that volunteer efforts and donations are channeled to families who have the greatest need for assistance. The Department is also partnering with the Veterans Administration and other agencies to ensure that demobilizing Reserve component members have access to their post-mobilization and transition counseling benefits through the Federal Occupational Health Services and the Veterans Rehabilitation Counseling Centers across the Nation. The Office of Educational Opportunity has worked with our office, and in collaboration with the Department of Education, to provide information and materials that appears on both the Department of Defense and Department of Education Web sites that enables administrators, faculty, counselors, and staff in school districts throughout the United States, as well as parents, begin to understand and address the needs of children of deployed Reserve members. These include an Educator's Guide to the Military Child During Deployment and a Parent's Guide to the Military Child During Deployment and Reunion.

We also recently conducted a Childcare Summit to determine the significance of childcare requirements for Guard and Reserve families when the military member is training at home station, and also the additional requirements when the military member is mobilized and/or deployed. The summit determined that childcare requirements for Reserve families vary dramatically between the Services and are largely determined by the families' ability to provide childcare from internal resources. Each of the Services has addressed these varying requirements by conducting pilot programs to assist and expand child care services and resources for Reserve component families when and where needed. These programs have been largely successful and will likely be embedded in future planning and programming.

We also published the 5th Edition of "A Guide to Reserve Family Member Benefits" in May 2003. This guide provides family members with information about military benefits and entitlements, including medical and dental care, commissary and exchange privileges, military pay and allowances, and reemployment rights. I have copies available for each of you today. The Department funded the printing of 696,000 copies of this booklet to allow every family of a deployed or potentially deployed Guard or Reserve member to have their own personal copy. From our surveys of spouses of deployed Reserve component members, we know that information and communication are essential to Reserve families. In addition to information concerning their deployed spouse, family members request information on available benefits, services, and programs, to include locations of commissaries, exchanges, healthcare, and other facilities. Communication through an established unit or organizational point of contact is also key. We use a constant stream of updated information on benefits and entitlements disseminated through informal e-mailing lists, news releases, and personal speeches to ensure that Reserve component members and their families have the most current and accurate information possible.

The Department's path is one of continuous improvement in family readiness and quality of life policy and programs. We need strong family readiness and complementary quality of life programs that are built for the long term. The global war on terror will not end tomorrow and neither will America's global responsibilities. Deployment and mobilization are realities in the current strategic environment. Therefore, it is critical that we set realistic expectations for our families and build a foundation of readiness that they will maintain throughout a military career. This is accomplished by making information available to and through the chain of command, facilitating open communication, and supporting families throughout all phases of the deployment cycle.

We have also launched another Web site, "deploymentconnections.org" emphasizing "Joint Readiness for Service Members, Families, Parents, Spouses, and Children."

One of the lessons of this, and other recent wars, is that effectiveness in combat depends heavily on jointness—how well the different branches of the military communicate and coordinate their efforts on and off the battlefield. It is eminently clear that achieving jointness in wartime requires building that jointness in peacetime. That includes jointness in mission readiness, family readiness, and all quality of life areas of concern. We recently published a Joint Service/Total Force Guard and Reserve Family Readiness Programs Toolkit. It is a comprehensive guide on pre-deployment, deployment and post-deployment information for commanders, service

members, family members, and family program manager. It contains checklists, pamphlets, and other information, such as benefits and services available that inform family members how to prepare for deployment. The Toolkit is based on "best practices" from the field as identified by the active and Reserve components. As with other informational products, the family readiness tool kit can be accessed on the Reserve Affairs Web site at <http://www.defenselink.mil/ra>.

DOD guidance on Reserve Family Readiness is provided in DOD Instruction 1342.23, which encourages commanders at all levels to support Total Force Joint-Service family readiness efforts in maximizing regional cooperation, planning, and information sharing. The Department encourages participation in InterService Family Assistance Committees at the State and regional level rather than reliance on single Service or component programs to meet the needs of a divergent and geographically dispersed force.

Providing necessary resources for our mobilized Guard and Reserve members and their families is a top priority for the Department. While we can draw on our experience from past call-ups, we continue to examine our policies and programs to ensure that our mobilized reservists do not feel disenfranchised and that we have the family support systems in place.

CONCLUSION

Your committee and Congress have been very supportive of our National Guard and Reserve members and families, and on their behalf, I want to publicly thank you for your help in strengthening our Reserve components. Our military personnel and their family members are grateful.

Senators, this concludes my prepared remarks. Thanks to you and your fellow Members of Congress for having me here to talk with you today. Once again, thank you for all you do for the men and women of our total force military and their families.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thank you, Colonel.
Mr. Hollingsworth.

STATEMENT OF BOB HOLLINGSWORTH, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR EMPLOYER SUPPORT OF THE GUARD AND RESERVE

Mr. HOLLINGSWORTH. This is just an absolutely exciting time in America today, and the fact is that you all have been so kind and generous to bring us out here so we can have another opportunity to tell America about the wonderful things that are going on as we prosecute the war on terror. It certainly is a privilege today to have the honor to come and give you all some information about what we at the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) perceive to be really a good news story in today's employer support across America.

In my prepared statement, it was pointed out that our vital mission in ESGR is the sustainment process of the global war on terror. ESGR focuses on the employers of America's Guard and Reserve to ensure that they clearly understand their obligations under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act, which we commonly call USERRA.

The global war on terror will require our deep and enduring commitment. Indeed, 46 percent of the manpower of the total force is shared manpower, shared with America's employers, large and small, public and private. This inextricably links America's employers to our national defense.

ESGR and its 4,200 volunteers across the Nation continually focus on our employer outreach mission. We act as the Department's early warning relative to employee support. We are a vital communications link, directly relating to retention.

We look at it in terms of a three-legged stool. The priorities in an individual guardsman and reservist's life. There's the family, his obligations to his employer, and his obligations to his country. Oftentimes, we reverse those priorities and we put the call for the Nation to be number one and sometimes the family slips because they go off to do the things that their country calls them to do. In the middle of this, the employer is a key part of this three-legged stool, and we understand that we have a vital part in ensuring that that third leg of that stool remains intact.

Through our symposium initiatives, we bring employers together with senior Department officials to discuss and help resolve issues. Communication is a vital link in our success. So far, the most significant issue expressed is expectations. When will the guardsmen and reservists go, how long will they be gone, and when can we expect them to return?

Many employers across this great Nation continue to provide beyond the requirements of USERRA. They provide pay differential, they provide extension of insurance benefits, and they form family support organizations within their own corporations.

ESGR's award program recognizes employers. Their significant contributions were just recognized by President Bush at our Secretary of Defense Freedom Award banquet that we held in Washington in relationship with our strategic partner, the Chamber of Commerce. Simultaneously, as the President signed a proclamation indicating that the following week would be dedicated to America's employers, we did that throughout all States in the union, throughout all 50 States on 1 day. It was an historic event in our Nation recognizing the vital role that these employers play in our national defense.

ESGR continues to be the key problem solver. We want to be known as the go-to organization as these issues arise. We aggressively pursue programs that educate, that continue to allow them to understand their vital link in our national security.

Some of our corporations have just been magnificent. Just to name a few: Home Depot, Sears, Verizon, General Motors, Boeing, hundreds of municipalities that employ guardsmen and reservists as policemen, firemen, and EMS folks throughout our country.

Just to give you one little example of a company called Merritt Medical, their CEO personally put up a huge amount of money for the guardsmen and reservists in his organization that says if there are any problems, you can draw on this particular money to help you through your financial crisis. The same situation occurred from the Board of Directors. They also sent out a letter to all their suppliers and said if you want to be a supplier for our organization, your human resource policies will be exactly the same as ours. For the folks that are their vendors that can't afford, because of the size of the company or whatever the situation might be, to provide that pay differential for those guardsmen and reservists, to extend those medical benefits, his parent corporation Merritt Medical, provides them the financial resources in order to do that. Those are the really neat stories that are occurring throughout our country today to show the support of our Guard and Reserve.

ESGR will continue to aggressively work to ensure that this global war on terror is supported by America's employers.

In conjunction with our strategic partner, the Department of Labor, which also really works with us in the enforcement part of the USERRA, I think we have seen some real successes during this last couple of years of mobilization and demobilization.

Thank you so much for your continued support of our organization and its mission because it does remain a critical aspect of retention of our guardsmen and reservists. We have a Web site that is esgr.com, that employers, family members, or any other interested people throughout America can go to to see what some of the issues are. In addition, if you want to contact us with any particular issues, you can call our toll free number at 1-800-336-4590.

Thank you again for the opportunity to be here today. It is an exciting time in America.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Hollingsworth follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY BOB G. HOLLINGSWORTH

It is indeed an honor and privilege to address this esteemed body of Senators regarding the critical role of the National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR). The events of September 11 fundamentally changed our way of life. ESGR has never been faced with a more challenging and critical mission.

Our Reserve components are serving a Nation at war. This war requires that all elements of our national power be applied in a broad, unyielding and relentless campaign. This campaign will take time and will require our deep enduring commitment.

The success of the Nation's defense depends on the availability of highly-trained members of the "total force." Currently 46 percent of that total force is shared with our Nation's employers.

Under the auspices of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, ESGR has the very important mission of gaining and maintaining active support from all public and private employers for the men and women in the National Guard and Reserve as defined by demonstrated employer commitment to employee military service.

ESGR is a nationwide network of volunteers operating from the Office of the Secretary of Defense. ESGR ensures employers understand their vital role in national defense and informs employers and their Guard and Reserve employees alike of their rights and responsibilities under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act. This act is commonly known by the acronym "USERRA."

The military draft ended in 1972 and a presidential proclamation formed ESGR that same year. ESGR was originally composed of a small number of volunteers from the business and military community led by James Roche, Chairman of General Motors.

The Department of Defense realized that with an all-volunteer force, support from employers and communities would be instrumental in maintaining Reserve component recruitment and retention. ESGR was created to obtain this much-needed support and to promote the role of our Guard and Reserve Forces.

Today, ESGR's national headquarters is located in Arlington, Virginia. A joint staff of uniformed service professionals administers ESGR services and programs in support of the 55 State committees consisting of more than 4,000 volunteers located throughout each State, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and Europe.

Now, more than ever, ESGR's services and programs are educating employers and community leaders about the important role they have in our Nation's security. Indeed, without employer support of the Guard and Reserve, nearly half our uniformed service members would not be available to conduct the global war on terror. America's employers are inextricably linked to our national security.

We have a number of innovative initiatives to facilitate the accomplishment of our mission. ESGR ombudsmen mediate misunderstandings between employers and Guard and Reserve members. We have over 540 fully-trained ombudsmen throughout the Nation. They are doing an absolutely superb job providing information and counsel related to compliance with USERRA.

To modernize our capability to handle the increased volume of calls coming into our headquarters, a call center operation was developed to efficiently handle em-

ployer and employee queries related to USERRA. This center was established in conjunction with the USN Call Center in Millington, TN.

This single entry point for all calls allows the center to collect the necessary data to track and categorize cases from beginning to end. ESGR ombudsmen respond to nearly 2,000 inquiries per month, both by phone and email. Associated software allows management of cases to focus other ESGR efforts to specific markets. Seventy percent of all calls are handled by providing information to address the caller's issues. Approximately 25 percent requires informal mediation. Less than 5 percent of our total calls result in referrals to the Department of Labor for action. Despite the fact that there have been more guardsmen and reservists called to duty in the war on terrorism than during Operations Desert Storm and Desert Shield, there have been far fewer complaints during this current deployment. This is particularly significant because the guardsmen and reservists called up for the war on terrorism have been serving much longer than the forces called up during Operations Desert Storm/Desert Shield.

Employers recognize their importance in our national defense after being educated by ESGR. They are then motivated to publicly sign ESGR statements of support. The statement of support is a meaningful and symbolic way for an employer to recognize the sacrifices made by employees who are guardsmen and reservists. Employers across the Nation show their appreciation for the sacrifices their guardsmen and reservists employees make by offering such benefits as salary differential pay, extension of medical coverage, and establishing family support networks within their companies.

To date, thousands of employers and more than 1,200 chambers of commerce have signed statements of support. The President of the United States and governors from all 50 States also signed statements of support or proclamations as well. On November 14, 2003, ESGR coordinated a simultaneous signing of governor and presidential proclamations.

Another helpful program is entitled, "Patriot Award." Guard and Reserve members can recognize employer commitment by recommending them for a Patriot Award. The award then becomes the basis for consideration in selecting individuals and companies for higher-level awards.

The Secretary of Defense employer support freedom award and the home front awards are the pinnacle awards in ESGR's employer recognition program. These awards recognize the Nation's top employers who have provided outstanding support to their National Guard and Reserve employees. Employers are judged based on corporate actions, which go above and beyond the requirements of the law in support of Guard and Reserve employees.

President Bush underscored the vital role of our Nation's employers by saying, "When employers support our Guard and Reserve members, they are helping to advance freedom and democracy around the world."

Employers are also encouraged to attend "Boss Lifts." Boss Lifts are essentially field trips enabling employers to see firsthand the leadership, performance, technical training, team building, and organizational skills in tactical demonstrations. Boss Lifts inevitably lead to a sense of pride and urgency for employers to ensure company personnel policies are conducive to employing and retaining members of the Guard and Reserve. In all these services and programs ESGR promotes and fosters a spirit of patriotism that fulfills and exceeds the requirements of the law. Boss Lifts are also a great source of obtaining volunteer support for ESGR committees.

Guardsmen and reservists have rights and responsibilities just as employers. Our efforts are primarily stateside but we have deployed an ESGR team to Central Command's area of operations to further awareness of ESGR services and programs among deployed troops. The team conducts briefings at key sites informing incoming and outgoing Guard and Reserve members about their USERRA rights and responsibilities.

DOD recognizes the sacrifices that all our citizen soldiers, their families, communities, and employers continue to make in support of the global war on terror.

Our men and women are performing magnificently around the world. Are there employer problems? Yes! ESGR is the DOD agency that provides solutions. Let me share a couple of letters with you.

Most Calls Require Information Only Or Informal Mediation:

ESGR ombudsmen intervened recently in a company's alleged "termination" of an employee while he was on duty in Southwest Asia. Once involved in the mediation it was determined that the company was applying the term, "termination" when in fact they were treating the individual as if he were on furlough. The company immediately changed their policy and will now place all military members in a 'military leave of absence' status during their full term of military service. As a side note—

it was discovered during our discussions that the company was already exceeding their requirements under USERRA by offering differential pay and other benefits for a 6-month period. Further discussions with our ombudsmen have resulted in the company extending these benefits through the duration of an employee's military mobilization.

Unfortunately a small fraction of our inquiries must be referred to the Department of Labor for resolution. One such example came to us from a large city's comptroller office.

The service member was in a management position with approximately 56 employees reporting directly to him. The service member was mobilized and upon demobilization, he was not placed in a comparable position (the law requires placement in a position of like-seniority, status, and pay). He was placed in a cubicle, with no telephone and no employees reporting directly to him. His supervisor has made derogatory comments in the past concerning his military duty. Our ombudsman spoke with the comptroller as well as the city attorney, and their position remained the same. They refused to place this service member in a 'same status' position. The service member had documentation showing the supervisor counseled him about being "gone too much" for military duty. Once it was absolutely clear that the employer was not open to the informal mediation services that ESCR could provide, we recommended that the service member contact the Department of Labor Veteran's Employment Training Service representative in their area. They have the authority under USERRA to receive complaints, investigate, seek voluntary compliance and, upon the request of the complainant, refer cases to the Department of Justice or the Office of Special Counsel for possible litigation.

We Frequently Enjoy Victories and Occasionally We Receive Thanks and Praise:

A service member writes, "Gentlemen, this email is to express my gratitude to a woman in your employ. Had it not been for the swift actions of Barbara Leonard, I would most likely be jobless at this point in time. In my opinion, Barbara is nothing short of a guardian angel. She has protected me; she has advocated on my behalf, and for that I will never forget her or your office. I do not have the words to express how I feel. I can only hope that you will convey to her personally and in front of her peers my family's elation. I hope she has the same smile with her all day that I carried when she won my job back for me. I know it doesn't seem like much but for a dad who has two growing girls who depend on him, who has recently been deployed two times in 1 year, and has a wife who suffers from serious health issues this victory is like winning the lottery. The past 3 months have been filled with much worry for all of us here in my house. Although I know the battle with my employer is not over . . . it's very nice to have a friend in your corner for once. Thank you all so much for what you do for us up there. You are truly the unsung heroes. We will never forget what you have done for us."

Our strategic partner, the Department of Labor, Veterans Employment Training Service, continues to provide education and counseling for both employers and Guard and Reserve members and is quick to act when our mediation efforts fail. ESCR's focus is to ensure employers understand the law so our Reserve component members can focus on their mission.

When I ask employers what we can do to sustain their patriotic support, they state to "just give us an expectation of when they will depart, how long they will be gone, and the date they will return to the workplace." Senior DOD leadership realizes that if you lose the employer, you lose the guardsmen and reservist. If you lose the guardsmen and reservist, you lose the force. If you lose the force, you lose the war. ESCR is providing a critical service to ensure that America will win this war and rise to any new threat that our guardsmen and reservist are called to meet.

Increased reliance on the Guard and Reserve will continue to stress employers. ESCR efforts to reach the over 600,000 employers of Guard and Reserves take on a greater significance. Currently less than \$7 a year per guardsman and reservist is budgeted to ensure employers support remains high. Your continued fiscal support is appreciated.

Esteemed members of the committee, I thank you for your future support.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Bob, thank you very much for your always great work on behalf of our employers and our Guard and Reserve.

The CEO of Home Depot, Bob Nardelli, was in Washington to receive the Employer Support Freedom Award that you just alluded to at the White House. I happened to be with him that night and there was no more excited man in the United States of America than Bob Nardelli that day. He is proud of the work that Home

Depot does with respect to encouraging his employees to be active Guard and Reserve personnel when called upon. It is a great program, we appreciate your encouragement and support.

Colonel Scott and Dr. Winkler, there is a lot of anxiety out there today among our guardsmen and reservists and in particular their families about the repetitive call-ups that we have seen over the last several years. There is particularly some anxiety about the fact that there may be a one in six call-up. I know you two gentlemen are not primarily responsible for making the decision on who is called up and when, but I do know that you are participants in the ongoing discussion about that issue.

Could you all enlighten us and maybe alleviate some of the concerns that are present among guardsmen and reservists and their families relative to what is ongoing relative to this issue?

Dr. WINKLER. Yes, Senator, thank you for bringing up the issue.

I think I want to start by stating that from the perspective of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, we are also concerned about the degree to which Reserve component members may be called up too often. I believe, the Secretary of Defense, Secretary Rumsfeld, has expressed similar concerns that he thinks perhaps we have some balances and some rebalancing needs to be accomplished and perhaps shifting some of the workload and demand away from heavily taxed Reserve component capabilities.

The one in six rule that you have alluded to is a planning construct that the Secretary asked the Services to use in reviewing their overall force structure and capabilities with the idea of using it as, if you will, a force sizing construct. In other words, if you can foresee a demand on certain Reserve component capabilities that would exceed the need to call up a given individual more often than one in every 6 years, that is an area of your force structure that needs to be reviewed and examined in terms of whether there are alternatives other than relying on Reserve capabilities for that. That does not mean there is a plan to use people 1 year out of every 6, it is just sort of a mark, that you can use to review your force structure allocations of capabilities and then see where you may have excess demands that need to be addressed.

Overall, we think our policy is reflected well in our mobilization personnel policy which really emphasizes judicious use as a guiding construct for utilization of Reserve component capabilities. Reserve component members should be called up only when absolutely necessary for the shortest period required and be allowed to return to their homes and families as soon as possible. That principle should guide the Services as they employ their various respective forces.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Colonel Scott, do you want to add anything to that?

Colonel SCOTT. No, sir. I think Dr. Winkler addressed that very well based on the Secretary's guidance and the Services' transformation policies as they look to the future programming for troop requirements.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Dr. Winkler, Colonel Scott, you are responsible for the formulation of family support policy for OSD and the Services and clearly you monitor performance. However, the execution of family programs, including providing necessary employees and resources, remains in the hands of installation commanders.

What measures do you use in monitoring the implementation of personal readiness, community liaison, and family support, and what means do you have to ensure that necessary community support resources flow to National Guard units, and just as importantly, the quality of services being provided is sufficient?

Dr. WINKLER. Let me begin, but I think that Colonel Scott can provide a great deal of additional information on that.

I think from the perspective of the Department, Senator, we are responsible for overall policy, setting guidance, oversight, assuring resources. In that regard, I would say part of our charge is to be aware of and to identify problems as they arise and then effect solutions to those problems. Now, the tools that we use at the Department level, obviously we try to maintain a very active network of communication throughout the components, throughout the family support arena, so that we are aware of what is going on, and if issues are beginning to bubble up we try to become aware of it as soon as possible.

We will use whatever other tools we can. Studies and analyses, for example, in order to try to keep our finger on the pulse. We recently completed a survey of Reserve component spouses, the results of which are shown on our Web site, for example, which for our purposes tends to highlight emerging problems or areas of concern that we would then in turn try to work with.

Colonel SCOTT. Other programs have been put into effect to help us monitor, in addition to the surveys, that communication network that Dr. Winkler referred to. I spend a great deal of time in the field, as you do, and work with individual families to attempt to identify systemic issues. Our oversight policy responsibility is to advise, assist, and through partnerships and associations, make sure that the correct policies are in place.

It is the parent Services and the parent Reserve components that actually provide those products and services. We have assisted them, as I mentioned, with several tools and additional programs, the most significant of which is the partnership program that we have established most recently with the Department of Labor and the Department of Education. That has actually been effected through that partnership with the Secretary of Defense's Office of Family Policy. We established that partnership in 1999 and they are the ones that assisted us in putting the strategic family plan together for Reserve family readiness. It is through those associations and networks and partnerships that we do most of our work. We do publish formal guidance. We have regular meetings. Immediately after September 11 and the closure of the Pentagon Family Assistance Center, we called all of the Services and Reserve component family program managers together and established what we call the Joint Family Readiness Program Working Group. Through that working group, we find out what their program requirements are and try to identify resources to assist them in implementing those programs. That is where the Military One Source program came from, the employee assistance program that is available 24 hours, 7 days a week. That is currently being implemented. It was piloted through the Marine Corps, currently being implemented in the Army, and we are working with the Air Force and the Navy to get their programs in place.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Programs that OSD and Services have initiated to support active duty families are impressive. But what about community support for National Guard and Reserve personnel? Chattanooga, Tennessee, is not Hinesville, Georgia. Hinesville has a great community support program for Fort Stewart, but here we have an armory where men and women from all over southeast Tennessee as well as north Georgia come to serve in this unit, and many of these individuals do live far from the bases where family support centers are located.

What initiatives have OSD and Services taken to open up new lines of communication and support to the spouses and children of deployed guardsmen and reservists, and how much of this mission is supported by the Reserve components themselves, and what kind of collaboration do you think is needed between your office and the service Reserve chiefs?

Colonel SCOTT. Just as I mentioned, Senator, we put that Joint Service Family Readiness Program Working Group together and they are the ones that are emphasizing the community outreach program. There have been a number of programs implemented. We have always had the 1-800 telephone numbers, but we put more emphasis on marketing and communicating that information to the individual families out in the communities. This is just as true for the active component as it is for the Reserve component. Now 60 percent of active component families live out in the communities, they do not live on the bases any more. That is an extreme hardship for young families that cannot afford two cars and the military member has to use one to go to work and sometimes the spouse has to work. It just creates real challenges for them. So we are trying to put emphasis on that community outreach and many of the Services are actually requiring their full-time active component civil servants that work on an installation to establish community outreach store fronts, actually get out into the communities so that they do not have to go onto the base to access the services.

We have used other programs in many creative ways. Some of the contracted funds that were provided for supplemental support the families because of the contingency forces that were being deployed. One of the Service's Reserve component family program hired three contractors and the only thing that these three contractors did for the first 3 months was make sure that they had either personal or telephonic contact with every member that either had been deployed or was currently deployed.

In addition, there is a very large electronic network through e-mail systems. I participate in this myself, and every time I go out in the field and visit with folks either in the family program business or just family members, I pass my card out and ask them if they want to get the most current news, let me know via e-mail. I put them on what I call my family issues mailing list and when information from Congress, information from Capitol Hill, information from ESGR comes out that might be important to those folks, I send those messages out electronically immediately when they hit my desk. I can tell you quite honestly that in spite of all of the other programs that we have implemented, we get more positive feedback on that information and communication hot line, if you will, than we do on any of the other programs. People really appre-

ciate being communicated with and having current important information available to them rather than having to wait for it to filter down through the paperwork process, which is extremely slow. The electronic capability has really made the most difference. That deploymentconnections.org Web site is a collaborative effort between the Department of the Navy, OSD, our office, and the other Services, and that was actually designed and implemented by members of that Joint Family Readiness Program Working Group that I talked about. We spent about 3 months designing it, another 2 months implementing it, and it has been up and in operation with everything from news banners to interactive networks for the ability of what we will call chat rooms and live communications from the Reserve component chiefs, the Reserve component program managers. Their senior enlisted advisors have town hall meetings. It is really quite an impressive operation.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Mr. Hollingsworth, I am impressed with what you have been able to accomplish on what by any standard would have to be said to be a shoestring budget. I am interested in how you allocate your resources and how you would spend any additional money or allocate any additional funding if you had that funding.

Mr. HOLLINGSWORTH. Yes, sir. As we did our strategic planning and we looked at just that very issue, how do we allocate our resources, we realized that there are some external factors that we can't control that we have to continually react to. We figured we had to have some type of contingency that allowed us to do that. We have a certain amount of contingency money that we set aside so that if there are some special issues that come up, we have to really develop some other methodology of doing something we have not done before. We have that little contingency set aside to do that.

Primarily we resource about 75 percent of our dollars to employer outreach programs, and those things are where we reach out in the community and touch those employers. The reason we have been so successful in taking the money that we do get from Congress and make it as effective as it is is because our program is basically volunteers. We have about 4,200 volunteers throughout the Nation and territories and Washington, DC, and then of course the committee that was formed last year in Europe because we realized that there were some employer needs over there.

But those are the vital links to making our mission successful, those volunteers. That is why we are so efficient, because these people, these men and women across America, are so dedicated. It just amazes me every single day when I see how much time and effort these volunteers put towards coordinating those employer issues out in the community.

Our ombudsman program is an important part of this. We are currently developing some ways as the early warning system within the Department of Defense, that we can predict trends as to what is happening in the employer community. We have never really had an electronic capability to track those things, so we have committed some of our resources to developing an information technology capability so that we can track these issues that do come

up from employers and guardsmen and reservists from cradle to grave.

Our goal in those things is if a guardsman or reservist calls up with an issue or an employer calls up with an issue to our ombudsman, we want to have that completely put together in 3 days, and in 10 days if there are some extenuating circumstances where it requires a lot of coordination. We find this is the case, because there are always two sides to any story. That is where our ombudsman and our volunteers really find out that they have to spend a lot of time, because if an employer calls up with an issue, we go to the Guard and Reserve, and we look at those folks there. We look at the command. We get the command involved in what the situation is and how it may have developed based on what has happened in the local Guard and Reserve unit, and we go back and forth as a mediator to try to resolve these issues.

I can tell you that I was just over at the Department of Labor the other day with Secretary Chao, and she presented us with a nice certificate of appreciation for the things that we have done to coordinate their efforts with our efforts, because the more successful we are at the ESGR, the less work they have to do. If we can mediate all these caseloads that come up, that means we do not have to refer them to the Department of Labor. She pointed out from looking at the statistics in Operations Desert Shield, Desert Storm, and the numbers of guardsmen and reservists that were mobilized there and the number of issues that had to be dealt with by the Department of Labor that litigation is down significantly from what it was then. It was something like about a 26 or 27 percent decline in their caseloads, and they attributed that directly to what our volunteers in ESGR are doing.

Another way we allocate some of the resources is to try to get the employers out to the Guard and Reserve units so that they clearly understand what a valuable asset they have to their particular organization, because now that they can see that this young man or young woman brings to them leadership and additional technical skills. They have a worldwide vision because of their requirements to be informed about things in the military. They are disciplined. They are physically fit. They are just a different breed. They suddenly realize as they get out and look at their guardsman and reservist taking those leadership roles at a very young age, they have a new appreciation for that. So that has been a very successful program for us.

We also go out throughout the communities and take some of those resources to put on symposiums. That is where we get with the community leaders, with the local employers in the community, and we find out and pulse them as to what their issues are with the use of the Guard and Reserve. That is where we find out exactly where we need to focus our other efforts, and then we provide the information back to the Department so that they clearly understand what it is causing in the employer community.

So those are some of the really vital things that we do that as we go out into the community and in our employer outreach program. We examine HR policies for the companies. If their HR policies are not compatible to supporting the guardsmen and reservists, then we provide them with some of the good things like Home

Depot has and they say “gosh, I never thought about this.” We find it is a communications thing. So it is about spending our money and our resources to do the outreach and to get eyeball to eyeball, develop those relationships within the community.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Great, thank you.

Senator Alexander.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Senator Chambliss. I have enjoyed the discussion.

I wanted to compare some of the information that we learned in our earlier hearings discussing active duty personnel with the different status of Reserve and Guard families. For example, in active duty families for families with children, there is a plan on file for what happens to the children if the parent, who might be the only parent, or in a few cases, both parents, are deployed. Does the same sort of plan exist for Reserve families with children?

Colonel SCOTT. Yes, sir, it does. Our Department of Defense instruction and the Services regulations mirror that requirement in the Reserve components and the Guard as well as the active component. That is a result of the partnership with the Office of Family Policy. One of the things that we try to do in every case where we possibly can, we make the regulations and requirements parallel for the Reserve components with consideration of course that the Reserve components are unique because they are community-based as opposed to being active duty installation based.

That requirement is just exactly as you described it for the Reserve components for single parents and for dual military parents. We have different varieties of dual military parents in the Reserve components. We find we have one active-duty spouse and one Reserve component spouse who also has a civilian job. Sometimes we find that a Navy reservist is married to a National Guard member, but the requirement is exactly the same.

Senator ALEXANDER. Now we found in the hearing that I held at Fort Campbell that worked pretty well for most families, but there were some problems because some active-duty members of the Armed Services had not taken that requirement as seriously as they should have, and then when they were suddenly ordered to go to Iraq, there was really no plan for the child.

I would expect that might be a larger problem with Reserve or Guard families because the expectation of being called up is less. Or am I wrong about that? I'm just guessing. My question is has there been a bigger challenge with Guard and Reserve families because unquestionably not many families in Guard and Reserve expected they would be called up for training for 6 months and to go to Iraq for 12.

Colonel SCOTT. I believe that may have been true prior to Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm but since Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm, we find very few instances in the Guard and Reserve components where the family care plan is not properly managed. That family care plan is actually a command requirement, and the commander or his representative is required to review and test that family care plan on an annual basis and make sure that it is updated and it is part of the mobilization processing as well.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you. One of the most impressive benefits that we found, both at Fort Campbell, Senator Dodd of Connecticut and I went to Groton to the naval base there, and we found that the Services have made exemplary process in child care. Some of the child care facilities on base are among the best in the country. Anyone would be happy, feel fortunate to have a child there.

We found in a number of cases that the Services were doing an increasing amount of child care off the base or in the homes of, say, a spouse of a service person, who might care for two or three or four or five children, and that provided a source of income for the family and good reliable care for the children. Still, there were some areas in which child care could be improved on active duty.

Now what about child care for Reserve and National Guard families? In a way, child care would be an even bigger challenge for a family who might not have been as prepared to be called up and who might be away from a post or a base.

Colonel SCOTT. Sir, I am glad to report that I have good news, and I have better news.

We most recently conducted our child care summit that I mentioned in my testimony, and what we found out is that Guard and Reserve child care requirements run the spectrum from no child care requirements to, as you suggested, very complicated where we have dual spouse employment and a military member who used to be called the shadow child care for emergency situations, the spouses would back each other up. The Air Force was the first to include the Air Guard and the Air Force Reserve in a pilot program where they provided additional funds to offset additional child care requirements for Guard and Reserve members. What they found out was that most Guard and Reserve family members actually do a pretty good job, and it is only in those extreme situational requirements where they run into emergency requirements that they had not anticipated and they have to rely on those additional resources.

The thing we have to understand about Guard and Reserve families is that they are basically community-based. They are civilians, and they know how to live their lives, and they know how to take care of their families. I will use what I commonly refer to as the snug rule. Normally, everything goes quite well. We are there to provide resources and programs for Guard and Reserve that we call the emergency net, and it is for those situation where they had not anticipated requirements or had not anticipated problems or challenges, that we try to put the bulk of our resources. Our objective is to make and to allow and to assist Guard and Reserve families to be self-sustaining, get them ready in advance, and then when they have a problem, have the resources in place that they can call upon to assist them.

The better news, and this is an active duty story, I was with Secretary Molino last week and we visited Norfolk Naval Air Station and Navy Base and they have constructed right next door to their child development center a secondary facility that is based on a home living environment that operates 24 hours, 7 days a week to address some of those problems that you heard in your earlier field hearings where a child care center might only be open from 6:00

in the morning until 6:00 in the evening and for the military members that work second or third shift or 12 hour operations or in some cases 24 hour operations, it just did not meet the requirement. So the Department has piloted this program, and I can tell you that it sent chills up and down my spine when I walked in because I thought I was in an expanded home. It is just beautiful. They have a capacity of 54 children on a 24-hour basis. They currently had 41 children registered, because it has only been open for about 3 weeks and they are expanding that capability by three children a week for those that need it.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you. I have two other questions and then I think we will get on with the next panel, if that is all right, Saxby.

I am just curious, there are 530 guardsmen or reservists currently activated from the Chattanooga region, I am told. I am wondering, is this a typical number? Compared with other areas of the country, is this a larger number compared to the population? If there are areas of the country that are more heavily impacted than others, have you done any thinking about how to help the families or the communities in a regional way?

I guess I am trying to focus specifically on are there some areas more impacted than others, and if so, are you doing anything special for those areas, and is Chattanooga one of them?

Dr. WINKLER. I do not know on a percentage basis whether Chattanooga or the State of Tennessee, for example, where it compares to the others.

My general impression is that the demands on Reserve component capabilities and people being mobilized is spread across the country, really basically rooted in where the units are. In that regard, as we go forward and as Army National Guard enhanced brigades are going to be assuming duties in Iraq, those States, like North Carolina, that field the enhanced brigades are likely to see a greater impact. We will definitely pay close attention to these instances and see if problems emerge, and be proactive.

Colonel SCOTT. Actually we already have paid attention to that. One of my conversations with the National Guard family program director had to deal with that very issue. The 400 family assistance centers that I mentioned that the National Guard have established are allocated based upon troop demand, and they are very flexible. Because they are operated by contractors and managed by each of the State family program coordinators and those coordinators are managed by the National Guard family program office, they monitor and look out to the future to see where the troop requirements are going to be pulled from. They allocate those resources for those family assistance centers based upon densities of families that will be left after their military member departs.

I mentioned that Tennessee has had 17 family assistance centers. We have some States that have had as many as 20. States such as New York, North Carolina, Texas, and California, where we certainly have drawn on more troops to meet the requirements, we allocate more resources.

Senator ALEXANDER. My last question would be for any of the witnesses. One of the privileges I had as Governor was being commander in chief of our Guard. We felt that it was the best in the

country, and there is a tremendous spirit among Tennessee guardsmen and women. They knew why they were there, and they were ready to go if they were called.

One hears in the news reports of stories of guardsmen or reservists being called up for 6 months of training, and being sent for a year's duty in Iraq, and my question is has the increased deployment of guardsmen and of reservists in our armed services affected reenlistment? Can you tell anything about that at this stage?

Dr. WINKLER. Yes, I can address that because that is something we watch very closely. To this point in time, we have not seen problems emerging with respect to attrition exceeding expectations. Generally all Reserve components have met their end strength goals. We obviously have to continue to watch this very closely going forward and at the first indication of problems be prepared.

I would just add, however, that as we look backward, our general experience has been that as members of the Guard and Reserve have become more and more incorporated into the total forces missions over the 1990s, we did not see a drop off in terms of people leaving the force. We believe that what is very important for Guard and Reserve members is that they have meaningful missions, that we manage the force well in the sense of setting realistic expectations and sticking to those expectations. Guard and Reserve members rise to the challenge, and in fact, it is good for morale and good for retention to be involved in meaningful missions.

At the same time, there are limits. We are aware of that, but what I think we see today is a very high spirit among members of the Guard and Reserve who have been called to duty, and so far, it is reflected in the force sustaining itself.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you. Thank you very much. Senator Chambliss, do you have anything else to say to this panel before we bring up the next panel?

Senator CHAMBLISS. Dr. Winkler, with reference to your last answer to Senator Alexander's question, that is the key as I see it to where we need to go in the future and the things that we need to be thinking about. He struck right at the heart of the issue. You stated in your opening statement that we must relieve the stress on families.

I know Lamar and I both have talked to active-duty members of the Guard and Reserve who have been called to active duty. They love what they are doing; that is what they signed up for, just hoping they would have a chance to go to an Iraq to carry out their duties. But it is those mothers and fathers who are left behind with those children that are feeling the stress. We do need to make sure that we are doing everything legislatively, and obviously that is a goal of these hearings.

So we appreciate your professional testimony and the great work all of you do. Thank you very much.

Colonel SCOTT. Thank you, sir.

Dr. WINKLER. Thank you.

Senator ALEXANDER. I would now like to ask the second panel to come forward, please.

Thank you for being here. We will move right along. Our goal is to end our hearing by noon, so we have another 45 minutes. The second panel gives us an opportunity for a more local focus on what

is happening here in Chattanooga and this area as well as in our States of Tennessee and Georgia. I would like to introduce our four panelists and then we will ask each of them to say whatever they would like. I have the statements that you sent in before and Senator Chambliss and I have both read those. So you are free just to comment on those if you would like to. Then we can get into a back and forth on questions. Whatever you are most comfortable doing.

Major Scott Hardin, United States Army Reserve, has a distinguished career, 17 years of commissioned service, many decorations, currently assigned as environmental engineer with the 416th Engineering Command, Detachment F, Facility Engineer Center Southeast. He served in Operation Desert Shield, Operation Desert Storm, and Operation Iraqi Freedom. He has just come home after 11 months and 15 days in Qatar. Welcome home. A native and resident of Chattanooga, graduated from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. In civilian life, he works for U.S. Express, Incorporated.

Major Terry Ward, Tennessee Army National Guard, 16 years commissioned service, 30 years total military service, many medals. Assigned to the State Family Program Coordinator at Headquarters, State Area Command, Tennessee National Guard in Nashville, a graduate of Salisbury State College in Maryland. He resides in Nashville.

Lieutenant Larry Schroyer, Chattanooga Police Department. During his military career, Lieutenant Schroyer has earned numerous Federal awards and decorations for leadership. He retired in August 2000 was placed in retired Reserve with 21 years of active and Reserve service, retired with a Federal recognition as a field grade officer, in the rank of major. In his civilian life, he has effectively transferred his military law enforcement experience to the police department. He has attained many professional distinctions there. Welcome, Lieutenant, and thank you for being here.

Ms. Denise Lindsay, thank you for coming. She serves as the Battalion Family Readiness Group Representative for 1st and 181st Battalions. Since 1988, she has worked as a real estate agent and currently is with GMAC Realty Center. Her husband, Dennis, who has been in the military since 1986, was mobilized during Operations Desert Storm and Enduring Freedom. Ms. Lindsay resides in LaFayette in Georgia. How do you say it? Do you say LaFayette?

Ms. LINDSAY. It is LaFayette.

Senator ALEXANDER. We say things like that a different way in Tennessee. LaFayette, Georgia. Denise and Dennis have been married 30 years; they have two sons and four grandchildren.

Thank you very much for being here, each of the four of you. Starting with Major Ward, why do we not just move right down the line, and Senator Chambliss and I look forward to hearing whatever you have to tell us about Reserve families and guardsmen and women and the impact of their service. What should we know?

STATEMENT OF MAJOR TERRY WARD, TENNESSEE NATIONAL GUARD

Major WARD. Yes, sir. Thank you, Senator Alexander and Senator Chambliss. It is an honor and a privilege for me to appear before your subcommittee to testify today on the importance of pro-

viding family assistance centers and other benefits to the spouses of deployed soldiers in our great State.

Sir, first I would like to give you some totals of the Tennessee Guard, particularly those that have been affected by these recent mobilizations and that we have experienced in Operations Enduring Freedom, Noble Eagle, and Iraqi Freedom.

Since September of last year, the Tennessee Guard, Army and Air, have deployed over 4,400 men and women. Currently, we have 1,307 soldiers who are overseas and 380 on duty in our Nation. We also have an additional 385 men and women who are in alert status, and we anticipate additional requirements in the coming year.

Senators, these numbers represent a substantial number of soldiers who, for the most part, were very accustomed to their former existence as a Guard soldier. That former existence being the required one weekend a month and a 2-week annual training. Now that these dedicated guardsmen and women are being challenged with a larger piece of our Nation's defense package we must also recognize that their families are now part of that deployed status as well. These deployments are putting a high degree of stress on the families that are left behind, but I am not sure that you are aware that this type of stress is unique to the Guard and has different features to its nature, especially in comparison to our active component counterparts.

Our post covers, as you know from your prior service as our governor, 41,220 square miles. An active component post is typically measured by acres. Our soldiers and airmen come from every imaginable corner of our post, sir. Some of these soldiers have been in service with the Guard for over 30 years. I am sure you are aware of the number of years an active component soldier is typically assigned to a unit is about 3 years before they are moved to another unit. These Guard soldiers have brothers and sisters, sometimes sons and daughters, that are in their unit with them, and are proud to be there. Their spouses do not even know that a commissary exists, nor would they want to drive the 6 hours to go to that commissary. That is an important thing, sir. The nature of our Guard is quite different in many ways, as you well know.

Sir, since last spring, Congress took a substantial leap forward in recognizing some of the differences between the active component and the Guard and that was accomplished by the funding of our family assistance centers. As we have heard earlier, sir, we have 17 family assistance centers open across our State and over 20 workers. Their sole purpose is to provide services to families of soldiers and airmen and to provide a dedicated, committed worker who works with the concerns of just the families. We now have a person who is there to work those concerns from start to finish and someone who is knowledgeable about the military and knows how to fix things that are wrong and when to refer a problem to a higher person.

Sir, my family assistance centers are taking on the role of being a one-stop shop for all concerns whenever they possibly can.

I would also commend the Department of the Army, sir, for their forward approach in the deployment cycle support model that they have recently adopted that deals with joint deployment phases, as we heard Dr. Winkler comment about earlier. This initiative re-

sulted in a new program that you have funded called "Army One Source," and if you are not familiar with that, sir, somebody from Buck Snort, Tennessee, would be able to call One Source and within 20 seconds have someone answering the phone and talking to a real person without going through the press one sequence of phone calls, and be able to deal with real concerns. If this individual needed child care, then they would be able to have referral in that community for qualified child care. If they had a concern about their returning spouse who might be acting a little different than they expected, then this source will also be able to provide counseling for the Army component through a professional health care worker, mental health care worker. That is a great initiative to be able to offer that in conjunction with the TRICARE benefits that the returning soldiers would have as well. So that is a substantial leap forward, sir.

Equally, this source will also be available on the internet, so that spouses can go in when they have the ability and be able to converse with someone in perhaps a chat room or with an individual that has a Masters in social work, a person with a Master's degree, and be able to communicate with those people on a one-to-one basis. So that is quite a substantial leap in the benefits that we do provide.

This commitment to improve the quality of life for the active component and the Guard has the foundation to be an excellent resource for all families, sir.

Sir, I also commend your efforts to provide health care to our traditional members to improve their quality of life. This initiative offers a great potential to our many self-employed soldiers who were finding health care costs beyond the point of affordability, and as was referred to earlier, that is a substantial benefit.

The largest problem that I have experienced is the lack of communication between Guard soldiers who have been activated and fall under an active component commander and the Guard's traditional National Guard chain of command. This failure to communicate is evidenced in most National Guard families' ability to be able to tell what is happening with their soldiers and what the future may or may not hold.

In today's cell phone-rich culture that we live in, the Guard is often looked at as not having any knowledge, sir, basically clueless as to what is happening with our soldiers who are deployed. Many spouses resent being told that their soldiers are part of the big Army now or the active component and that we have no control over anything that happens to them while they are gone. Although that is the truth, the spouses do not like to hear that and that most certainly undermines our credibility and creates animosity towards the Guard's role in the deployment picture.

The second item is in our future role in our Nation's total defense package. It appears that we are just seeing the tip of the iceberg for the many future deployments with quite possibly a very minimal amount of time between a deployment, coming home, and then being redeployed. I do not believe that is the intent of the Guard for us to take on the part of the active component force.

Other concerns many spouses are concerned with is the impact that that would have on their soldiers when they return, of course with their employment, and with their family life as well.

Sir, subject to your questions, sir, this concludes my briefing and I thank you on behalf of the families and the soldiers of the National Guard for this opportunity.

[The prepared statement of Major Ward follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY MAJOR TERRY S. WARD

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is an honor and a privilege for me to appear before your committee to testify today on the importance of providing Family Assistance Centers and other benefits to the spouses of deployed soldiers in our great State.

Sir, first I would like to give you some totals of the number of Tennessee Guard soldiers that have been affected by the recent mobilizations we have experienced in support of Operations Enduring Freedom and Noble Eagle.

Since September of last year, the Tennessee Army and Air National Guard have deployed over 4,400 men and women. Currently we have 1,307 soldiers who are overseas and 380 on duty in our Nation. We also have an additional 385 men and women on an alerted status and we anticipate additional requirements into the coming year.

Senator, these numbers represent a substantial number of soldiers who, for the most part, were very accustomed to our former existence as Guard soldiers. That former existence required one weekend a month and a 2-week annual training. Now that these dedicated guardsmen and women are being challenged with a larger piece of our Nation's Defense Package, we must also recognize that their families are now part of that deployed status as well.

These deployments are putting a very high amount of stress on the families that have been left behind. But I am not sure that you are aware that this type of stress is unique to the Guard, and has different features to its nature, in comparison to our active component counterparts. Our post covers 41,220 square miles of our great State, where most active component posts are separate communities within themselves that are typically measured in the number of acres they cover. Our soldiers and airmen come from every type of imaginable corner of our post. Some of these soldiers have been in the same unit for over 30 years. I am sure you are aware of the number of years an active component (AC) soldier is typically assigned to a unit. This Guard soldier has brothers who are members in his unit, and their sons and daughters are too. Their spouses do not even know what a commissary is, nor would they want to invest a 6-hour drive to use it, if they could. The nature of our Guard is quite different in many ways from that of our active component brethren.

Last spring, our Congress took a substantial leap forward in recognizing some of the differences that exist between the AC and the Guard and Reserve. That was accomplished in the funding of Family Assistance Centers for our deployed units.

Currently we have 17 Family Assistance Centers open across the State, and we employ 22 workers. Their sole purpose is to provide services to the families of soldiers and airmen and to provide a dedicated commitment to working the concerns of our families. We now have a person who is there to work concerns, from start to finish, and someone who is knowledgeable about the military and knows how to fix things that are wrong, or when to refer the problem to another professional. Sir, my FACs are taking on the role of being a one-stop shop for all concerns, whenever they possibly can.

Sir, I would also commend the Department of the Army for its forward approach on the Deployment Cycle Support model they have adopted that deals with the Joint Deployment Process Phases. This initiative has resulted in the new program you have funded that is titled "Army One Source (AOS)." AOS offers the opportunity for any soldier, AC, Guard, Reserve, any where in the world, to call or contact them on the Internet, and have a professional counselor help them with anything they have a concern with. This will be very beneficial to all of my families that have a deployed soldier and offers another tool of assistance to my FAC workers, in helping their families. This commitment to an improved quality of life for the AC and the Guard and Reserve has the foundation to be an excellent resource for our families.

Sir, I also commend your efforts to provide health care to our traditional members, to improve their quality of life. This initiative offers great potential to our many self-employed soldiers that are finding health care costs almost beyond the point of affordability.

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Sir, the largest problem I believe we are experiencing is in the lack of communication between our Guard soldiers who have been activated and fall under an AC command and the Guard soldier's traditional National Guard chain of command. This failure to communicate is evidence the most the National Guard ability to tell the families what is happening with their soldiers and what the future may or may not hold. In today's cell phone rich culture, we (the Guard) often look like complete idiots who are clueless as to what is happening to our soldiers while they are deployed. Many spouses resent being told that their soldiers are part of the AC now, and we have no control over anything that happens to them while they are gone. This most certainly undermines our credibility and creates animosity towards the Guard's role in the deployment picture.

A second item is in our future role in our Nation's total defense package. It appears that we are just seeing the tip of the iceberg of many future deployments, with quite possibly, a very minimal amount of time at home between deployments. Sir, I do not believe the original intent of Guard was to make it an Active Force. Equally, this seems to be a fear that many spouses are concerned with, considering the impact it will have on the soldier's employment requirements and his or her family life too.

Sir, subject to any further questions, this concludes my briefing. I thank you on behalf of the families and soldiers of the Tennessee National Guard for your dedication and commitment to improve their quality of life.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thanks, Major Ward, that is very helpful and candid and very useful. We look forward to the questions too.
Ms. Lindsay.

**STATEMENT OF DENISE LINDSAY, 1ST AND 181ST BATTALION
FAMILY READINESS GROUP REPRESENTATIVE**

Ms. LINDSAY. Thank you, Senators, for the privilege to appear before you today to speak on behalf of the importance of the family readiness and support program. My intention is to provide an overview based on my years of experience as the spouse of a soldier who has been mobilized twice; once to serve in Iraq and Saudi Arabia during Operation Desert Storm and recently for Operation Enduring Freedom. I am also his battalion volunteer leader here in Chattanooga for the 1st and the 181st.

National Guard and Reserve families are special. When a spouse, parent, or child joins the Guard, the family members will also be impacted, regardless of whether their soldier is deployed or at home. Our family readiness groups exist in peacetime to provide a framework for self-help and support that becomes critical to the unit's success upon mobilization.

Our active-duty counterparts also have family readiness groups for this very same reason. However, as you well know, the challenges we face in the Guard and Reserve are unique. While active duty soldiers' families live on or near their assigned bases and are immersed day in and day out with military life, our Guard and Reserve often have little or sometimes no experience with the military. While the active duty family's focus is entirely upon being ready should their soldier be called up for active duty for a long period of time, the reservist family's focus is on jobs and family activities, while living their civilian life. Our families do not live close necessarily to the place where our soldiers train. In fact, we are spread out over several States.

It is important for family readiness group volunteers to be active and to get to know one another during peacetime, to maintain the framework of support that families will need during a mobilization and a deployment. Good groups with active volunteers during

peacetime become a strong, cohesive group upon mobilization. Units that are created from scratch during a deployment are often the dysfunctional ones, because they have not had time to get to know and trust each other and to work out conflicts.

I serve as a volunteer leader, because I have seen the importance of this group first-hand and have taken part in helping families with their emotional and physical needs. We are there to help with the business end also of when we welcome a new member into our group. We have had our fusses and our fights just like any family, and unfortunately that is what is remembered sometimes. It is the day-to-day stuff of life that does not make the news that makes our job fulfilling.

We provide assistance and support to relieve the burdens of deployed commanders, first sergeants, and the soldiers themselves, because our goal is for us to help each other take care of matters at home, so our soldiers can focus on their jobs. We do not want them worrying about who their wife is going to call if the car breaks down or if there is enough food in the house.

When my husband was mobilized this past March, my neighbor and good friend volunteered to come and help make yellow ribbons and make phone calls, and she said something that I think is very relevant. She said she could volunteer to work to do whatever needed to be done but she could never really be a part of our group because she was not living it. She was not living every day knowing her husband was about to leave to put himself in harm's way. We are a special family and we share unique, special circumstances.

In closing, let me just stress the importance of the family readiness group by saying that we consider ourselves a vital part of our Nation's Guard and Reserve units and we consider the Guard and Reserve components a vital part of our Nation's military. I just want to thank you for allowing me to express my opinions to you today.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Ms. Lindsay.

Major Hardin.

STATEMENT OF MAJOR SCOTT HARDIN, UNITED STATES ARMY RESERVE

Major HARDIN. Yes, sir. Good morning, Senator Alexander and Senator Chambliss and distinguished members of the subcommittee. Thank you for coming to Chattanooga this morning with your busy schedules and giving me the opportunity to discuss my role over the past 2 years as an Army Reserve officer. I would also like to thank the Reserves for allowing me the opportunity to tell my experiences during my deployment during Operation Enduring Freedom.

First, I would like to thank my wife, who is in the audience today, Susan, and my son, Eli, and the rest of my family for the support and sacrifices they have made while I was deployed to the Middle East, and continue to make at the times I am away from them to perform my duties as an engineer officer in the Army Reserve. Without their outstanding love and support, I would not be able to perform this important service to our country, which is one of the main reasons why I stay in.

As a member of the Army Reserve, it is a special honor for me to spend some time today representing my fellow soldiers presently deployed within the United States and the ones that are deployed in harm's way during the holiday season. They are fighting the global war on terrorism and the quest for freedom in the countries of Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere. Their presence is a testimony to our military's will to stay the course and accomplish this important mission. To these brave men and women who are about their duties, my prayers, my family's prayers, and the prayers of a grateful Nation hope for a quick and safe return to their families.

As events of September 11 and the aftermath unfolded, we in the military knew it was just a matter of time before the call would come. It was not a matter of if, but when, we would get the call. Just as emergency workers responded to the Twin Towers, my unit was also prepared to perform its mission. The facility engineer group is headquartered in Chicago, and I am assigned to a detachment in Southeast Center in Decatur, Georgia. Our peacetime mission is facility management, maintenance, and environmental compliance issues. Our wartime mission includes this with the addition of developing forward bases within an area of operation, developing a master plan, and overseeing its construction.

My detachment was alerted on 1 March 2002 and activated on March 15. We deployed to Fort Stewart and deployed to Kuwait on April 6, and we were prepared to go to Afghanistan. To our team's surprise, we were routed to the country of Qatar, Camp Obsolea in a little known site that was to become Central Command (CENTCOM) Forward.

We set up the first Directorate of Public Works in the camp and prepared for CENTCOM's deployment in October. Our team oversaw \$25 million in construction in a 10-month period. We designed and built dining facilities, recreation facilities, lodging, and life support systems on the camp. We built the headquarters for CENTCOM and the coalition headquarters. We even built General Frank's office and the media center for General Brooks to give the now famous daily briefings you saw every day during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

On January 17, 2003, our unit was replaced, and we returned to Fort Stewart, returned home on 1 March 2003, 15 days short of being on active duty for 1 year.

I look forward to answering your questions and providing one small voice representing the soldiers in the Army Reserve.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Major Hardin.

Lieutenant Schroyer, it is interesting to me you are from the police department. My impression after going to Fort Campbell was I was not sure Fort Campbell could operate if it were not for the Chattanooga Police Department, there were so many people up there. I hope some time in this discussion we can talk a little bit about how the police department copes with that, with so many people being called up. So thank you for being here.

STATEMENT OF LT. LARRY SCHROYER, CHATTANOOGA POLICE DEPARTMENT

Lieutenant SCHROYER. Thank you, sir. As a member of the Tennessee Guard, I would like to thank you and your committees for

the opportunity to speak on behalf of the city of Chattanooga, and also the Chattanooga Police Department, to discuss some programs that we have implemented and also some concerns that we have.

The Chattanooga Police Department currently has 36 employees who serve in the active Reserves and the National Guard. We currently have four sergeants and seven patrol officers who are serving on active duty. The city of Chattanooga and the Chattanooga Police Department are very proactive in their support of the employees and their respective families serving in defense of the United States.

This administration currently ensures the employees and families are retained under our insurance plan while on active duty, provides supplemental pay to offset any cut in pay an employee may sustain when ordered to active duty, ensures that families of military personnel are kept abreast of any changes in pay or benefits, allows activated personnel to draw on accrued personal leave time any time, and supplements the pay and benefits of military personnel with 15 days paid military leave.

Mobilization of military personnel employed by the Chattanooga Police Department does have the potential to drastically impact services we provide, if all were mobilized at one time. To date our department has been able to successfully manage to shift personnel to fill vacated positions by activating employees and has done so without any loss of the excellent services we provide to our community. Our department does have concern and interest in obtaining Federal funding to offset city expenditures if available, and would also request that the military be able to provide more advance notice on orders of employees who are about to be mobilized.

I would also like to thank Mayor Bob Corker, who is not present, and also the personnel director with the city of Chattanooga, for all the support that they have given members of the military, because I can tell you that in the past, 15 to 20 years ago, it was not always that way. But they unequivocally support all of our military personnel and their families.

This concludes my brief, and I will answer any questions you might have, sir.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you very much.

In the active-duty Army, a lot of attention is paid to helping families with reintegration, when a military man or woman comes home after a long time away, we have learned over time that re-entry into the family is a little more complicated than it looks. Is there being attention paid to the same issues for guardsmen and women and reservists?

Major WARD. Yes, sir. As soldiers return they go through a briefing, a demobilization briefing. There are chaplains that are provided that do a one-on-one briefing, also counseling with those individuals. Obviously, there's going to be a limited amount of time that is available based on the number of soldiers that are going through that briefing. But if anything is identified, then they go back and they will spend more time. We are also told that when they come back that we are to watch them and to advise the spouses that if anything unusual is occurring that they can go back and have resources made available to them for that special counseling as well. I would say with the TRICARE benefits, that with your

extension now to 6 months of benefits, that would be an additional service that we could provide to them in the event that their lives were just not back in control.

Senator ALEXANDER. Major Hardin, you have just returned after a long time away. What is your report about morale of our reservists and national guardsmen and women especially, and about their reenlistment prospects?

Major HARDIN. I think overall the morale of the troops is very good. I know being away from family members is not a very good thing, but overall, I think the morale is very high. As a former commander of units before and being deployed for Operations Desert Storm and Desert Shield and coming back with the unit, I do not see retention is that big a problem right now, because most people who are in the Reserves or National Guard, a lot of them get in for the educational benefits, to go to school. Most of them are in it for the love of the country. In my unit it was a smaller unit, 15 men and only 7 got activated and went over. No problem at all. In fact, in most of our units that are deployed now, I do not see anybody coming back and getting out of the Service or the Reserves.

Senator ALEXANDER. Ms. Lindsay or Major Ward, do either of you have any comment to make on morale or reenlistment? You both see it from a little different vantage point.

Major WARD. I will defer to you first.

Ms. LINDSAY. It is an adjustment and it is not only an adjustment for the families and the soldiers, but almost even for the community as well. We were so excited when Dennis came home from Operation Desert Storm that, of course, we were planning this big party, and everybody wanted to see him, and we never thought that might not be the best thing for him until I went through this class that was sponsored by the Family Readiness Program that said do not do that. Give them time to adjust to being back with family. Then the adjustments we went through, taking care of everything while they are gone, and to be sensitive to turn back over the duties that they had before in the family to them and how that whole process works. So I think that even during Operation Desert Storm, the Guard was doing a really good job of letting us know what to expect. I think it is even better now, because they are even more aware, more sensitive to the needs of the entire family.

Major WARD. Sir, I would share with you that I have had some concerns voiced by some spouses, perhaps more disappointment in the lack of communication that is not coming from the theater, coming back through the chain of command about events that are going on with their families. Recently you have become aware that a few of our units were extended for an additional 6 months and just the timeliness and all, the way those orders were generated and that information came down created some disappointment on the side of families. I hear from the spouses, and we realize that spouses vent well. Some of them have told me, and I do not want to speak for the whole Guard, but their intent is to try to persuade their husband that he does not need to be quite so actively involved in the future. Now I just share that with you. I do not have any statistical data for that. But I am hearing that there is intent to end their service.

Senator ALEXANDER. Before I go to Senator Chambliss, let me ask each of you a question. I will start with Lieutenant Schroyer in a minute. A question that I asked at Fort Campbell when we were talking about active-duty families and their children. If you could wave a magic wand and do one thing that would make it easier for the families of reservists or national guardsmen and women, what would that one thing be?

Lieutenant Schroyer, may we start with you?

Lieutenant SCHROYER. Yes, sir. I really cannot think of anything that could be done that has not already been implemented through our personnel director, Donna Kelly. As I stated before, things are so much better, the cooperation, the benefits, the information that is provided. I would consider our personnel director and her office to be the civilian equivalent to an employer support group for the officers that are on active duty now, sir.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you.

Major Hardin.

Major HARDIN. I would think that the Army, the Reserves, and the National Guard, it has come a long way with the family support group that they sponsor. Maybe a little bit more programs. Basically the family support group, it all depends on what the unit puts together. It is what you can have all these neat programs and stuff, but basically it is the wives and the spouses that get together and form a bond and that is what really pulls the soldier through his deployment. So I think it is very important to have a real strong family support group.

Senator ALEXANDER. Ms. Lindsay.

Ms. LINDSAY. I agree with Terry Ward wholeheartedly. It is communication. We must communicate better. There is confusion. Our husbands leave here as a member of the 181st under the 196th, and then they are under a different brigade, and we do not understand that exactly. Then we do not know who we get our information from, so we wear him out. We just need more communication. We want to know what is going on. We want to know where they are and how they are doing, and we want to know how to reach them if we need to. I know there are emergencies and that kind of thing. But I do believe that communication is our biggest need.

Senator ALEXANDER. So when they are not on active duty, then it is Major Ward and others who are with him who have the information about where they are and what they are doing and what is expected and that is where the answers come from?

Ms. LINDSAY. Right.

Senator ALEXANDER. When they are activated, they are turned over to other commands and that is confusing to the families who are accustomed to calling Major Ward and getting an answer, and they do not know who the other major is to call, I guess.

Ms. LINDSAY. It is an entirely different chain of command, and we do not know. We want accurate information and timely information. That is really what we want more than anything. I think having timely and accurate information and communication would stop some of the rumors, and it would stop some of the disagreements and the frustrations. It is when you are frustrated that you become angry, when you do not know what is happening.

Senator ALEXANDER. Yes.

Ms. LINDSAY. As long as we know what is going on we can deal with it.

Senator ALEXANDER. Major Ward, if you had a magic wand, what would you do?

Major WARD. You provided it, sir, in the Army One Source that I referred to, the telephone number and the internet.

Senator ALEXANDER. Oh, yes.

Major WARD. That in a way was a magic wand to connect families with each other and with the military and to provide services to them. I am very pleased obviously with what you have done there through funding that program, sir.

Senator ALEXANDER. That is helping you with calls from spouses who cannot get an answer? You tell them to call Army One Source?

Major WARD. No, sir. What I tend to do is just communicate that that it is there and allow them to decide when they want to call. They need to know that that option is available for them and that it is a resource for them to be able, in a confidential way, to seek out something as simple as child care, or if they are thinking of suicide, or if the soldier comes home and is acting weird, and they think suicide is a solution, that there will be a professional person that can help them immediately and not go through a series of interviews and go through all this stigma that is attached with admitting that you are having some problems and thinking through problems.

Senator ALEXANDER. How quickly does someone actually get a real person when they call Army One Source? Do you go through a lot of buttons and recorded calls?

Major WARD. No, sir. They are saying that within 20 seconds you should speak to an actual voice, a person who is going to interact with you.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thank you. Very interesting testimony from all four of you. Thank you for your enlightenment to us.

Pressing on a little bit with One Source, of course the Marine Corps is where we initiated that program, and we had some testimony out at Offutt relative to One Source and what they are doing there, and it is really a tremendous asset. I am certainly pleased to see the Army moving forward. I know with the Navy and the Air Force we are going to take that on in short order.

Do you have a Web site for One Source yet in the Army?

Major WARD. Yes, we do.

Senator CHAMBLISS. The reason I asked that, I will just give you a quick anecdote. I remember one lady told me that she was being transferred to another base, and she pulled up the One Source Web site for the Marine Corps and, she was able to decide where they wanted to find off-base housing, because she knew because of that Web site what school delivered the type of education that she wanted her children to have. It was neat that she could pull all of that up, in addition to the location of hospitals and recreational activities, as well as shopping. I think that is a huge asset. It really brings it home to all of our service men and women as to what they can expect when they come to a new location.

Ms. Lindsay, you have heard the testimony of both this panel as well as the previous panel, relative to information that is available

to you. I am sure there are things that you thought of because you have been there. Your neighbor was exactly right. None of us can appreciate the role that you serve in. We do emphasize from the standpoint of teamwork that it is family teamwork and you are a part of that team.

Could you give us some information maybe relative to things that you know from a practical experience standpoint that we do not provide that maybe we ought to be providing, or are there things that we do provide that are of particular benefit to you that we ought to do a better job of promoting and educating our men and women about?

Ms. LINDSAY. I am sure I will think of something on my way home. But the family assistance center I think has been invaluable, because it provides a consistency that we did not have before, because our groups are all volunteer leaders. Their husbands get transferred, they go out. They retire, we get new ones in, and they have to be retrained. We did not have that consistency, that one place or that one source that kept an eye on the whole picture. So the family assistance center, I think, really does that. It is one place with a consistency and a source of information that we can go through no matter the transfers and no matter the retirements. So I really think that has been a big deal and it is very timely.

Senator CHAMBLISS. How old were your children when your husband was deployed to Operation Desert Storm?

Ms. LINDSAY. They were teenagers during Operation Desert Storm.

It was more difficult having children at home than during this last mobilization when they were gone, because it is just more difficult having children at home and you are doing it by yourself, as well. I believe the younger the children and the more children you have, the more difficult it is to try to do it by yourself.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Yes. One issue that has come to the forefront relative to military children, particularly in this last conflict, this is the first time we have seen embedded reporters on site in Iraq.

Major Hardin, I might address this to you. How old is your son, Eli?

Major HARDIN. He will be nine in a couple of weeks.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Okay. You were in the midst of the conflict, and Eli was looking at the news, I assume every night, and seeing some pretty tough stuff on television. How did he fare, and were there any services provided by the Army that were available to your wife relative to the needs that Eli might have as a result of what he saw or what he heard in school or how he was treated by his friends?

Major HARDIN. Actually, Senator, I was fortunate that I came home January before the conflict started, so I was gone the year before. With an 8-year-old in the house, we watched the news. I had friends over there during the conflict, and are still over there now, and we watched, and we explained stuff. He had questions. All children are going to have questions like those. I think he had a better understanding of what was going on, because I was home and understood I had already done my time, and somebody else was over there doing it.

As far as the services that the Reserves have, there's something that was sent out about 2 weeks ago that I received at my house. It was an interactive CD that the Reserves had sent out. We heard a lot about what the National Guard is doing for their soldiers, but this is something that the Reserves sent out. General Helmly was concerned about the reservists being deployed. His initiative was we will not be deployed maybe once in every 5 years and trying to get the force structure to change so there are not so many skilled sets out of the Reserves needed on active duty. My wife, I, and Eli sat down and watched it. It was interactive, and it had a thing for the kids to go on and draw and they could send e-mail to their parents, Christmas cards and things like this. So the Reserves are very proactive in what they are trying to do with family support and helping the deployed soldiers these days.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Mr. Schroyer, you have been on both sides of this. You were active in the Reserve military for 21 years, I believe, before going with the Chattanooga Police Department, and now you are looking at it from an employer's standpoint. What assets from both sides of the picture that you are able to see have we done a good job with, and where do you see deficiencies relative to the current system of activating our men and women in the Guard and Reserves?

Lieutenant SCHROYER. Hopefully I can answer your question adequately. Based on what I have heard today, as I have said before, the work that you and the other Senators and the committees are performing to support members in the Guard and Reserve is just totally overwhelming. I cannot tell you how much that is appreciated, not only by me looking at it as a prior service member, but also representing the police department. I hope I am answering your question.

Also, as to what I have heard are the concerns that not only our department but any other business, but especially a police department or fire department would have in regard to future mobilizations, I am sure there will be more of them coming up next year. The more people that we have that we lose that are mobilized, it affects the quality of services that a police department or a fire department can provide to the community that they represent. That also takes into effect the terrorist activities that may be anticipated in the future. But at the same time, we gain from knowledge that these individuals bring back from the units that they served with.

As I stated previously, we have not been impacted so badly yet that it has affected our service to the community. If all of our members were all activated and mobilized at the same time, we do have some contingency plans that are going to be put in effect, such as recalling retirees to come back to work, volunteers, and other civilian volunteers to come and assist us, so that we can shift and allocate our personnel where they will be necessary.

I do not know if that totally answers your question but hopefully it will, sir.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Let me just say to each of you how much we appreciate your being here today.

It has been very important to provide enlightening testimony to us. On behalf of the President and every member of the United States Senate, the Vice President who is the President of the Sen-

ate, how much we appreciate the contribution that each one of you, as well as your colleagues, have made to winning this war on terrorism.

Without your contributions, both on the civilian side and the military side, we would not be winning this war, but thanks to you we are. We appreciate you very, very much.

To my good friend, Senator Alexander, thank you for hosting us here in Chattanooga. It has been a pleasure, as always, to be with you and be a part of this hearing. Thank you.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Senator Chambliss. It is a practice we ought to continue. There are a lot of mutual interests between Georgia and Tennessee in this direction, and Chattanooga is doing so well right now. It is a joy to work with the leadership in the community here.

I want to echo what Saxby said about your service, Ms. Lindsay, and that of your husband and to the families who support you. We are all proud of you, and we are grateful for it. We are proud of our Tennessee National Guard, of our reservists in Tennessee, the rate at which they volunteered. For most of them it is an unexpected responsibility. Most of the guardsmen I know would not have expected to serve this long, this often, and this quickly. But most of the guardsmen and reservists I know are prepared to do it and proud to do it.

Senator Chambliss and I will continue our work to try to identify those areas where we can be more supportive. We have heard today about child care; we have heard about clearer communications; we have heard about setting expectations, so families can make plans; we have heard about the family readiness centers and how helpful they have been; and we have heard about the challenges that are presented when a police department or a sheriff's office which has within it exactly the kind of men and women who we might be glad to have activated, suddenly finds more people activated than they can handle and the question whether there is a Federal responsibility there to make it easier for the Chattanooga Police Department, for example, to be able to continue to do its work at home while some of its members are doing work overseas. That would be true here, true in Bradley County, and wherever that concern might arise.

It has been a very useful hearing. Thank you for your time. I want to especially thank the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga for the use of their sound system and the technical help we have received.

Senator Chambliss, do you have anything else?

Senator CHAMBLISS. I do not think so.

Senator ALEXANDER. If not, the hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12 noon, the subcommittees adjourned.]

