

**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION FOR
APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2021 AND
THE FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE PROGRAM**

HEARING

BEFORE THE

**COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
UNITED STATES SENATE**

ONE HUNDRED SIXTEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

ON

S. 4049

TO AUTHORIZE APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2021 FOR MILITARY
ACTIVITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE, FOR MILITARY CON-
STRUCTION, AND FOR DEFENSE ACTIVITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF
ENERGY, TO PRESCRIBE MILITARY PERSONNEL STRENGTHS FOR
SUCH FISCAL YEAR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

**PART 6
PERSONNEL**

MARCH 11, 2020



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**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION
FOR APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR
2021 AND THE FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE
PROGRAM**

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11, 2020

UNITED STATES SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON PERSONNEL,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC.

**PERSONNEL PROGRAMS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF
DEFENSE**

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:34 p.m. in room SD-106, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Senator Thom Tillis (Chairman of the Subcommittee) presiding.

Subcommittee Members present: Senators Tillis, McSally, Scott, and Gillibrand.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR THOM TILLIS

Senator TILLIS. The hearing will come to order.

The Senate Armed Services Subcommittee on Personnel meets this afternoon to receive testimony on the personnel programs of the Department of Defense (DOD).

We are fortunate today to have witnesses from the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (P&R), the Services' Assistant Secretaries for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, and the Services' personnel chiefs to discuss the Department's program.

On panel one, we will hear from the Honorable Thomas McCaffery, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs; Ms. Virginia Penrod, Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs; Mr. Thomas Constable, Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Readiness; and Elizabeth Van Winkle, Executive Director of the Office of Force Resiliency. Welcome to you all.

I will introduce the second panel in transition.

The topics we will discuss today are vital to the health and effectiveness of our All-Volunteer Force. As our Nation faces a very complex global security environment, DOD's military personnel programs and policies must be agile and adaptable, always capable of responding to uncertain threats we face. Those programs and policies must increasingly appeal to the Nation's best and brightest young people, provide greater stability and flexibility to

servicemembers in their professional and personal lives, and provide compensation commensurate with the level of responsibility inherent to a military career.

I hope the P&R team will discuss the Department's efforts to prevent sexual assault and harassment, reduce servicemember and family suicides, combat domestic violence and child abuse, and assure beneficiaries have access to high quality medical care either in military hospitals and clinics or in the TRICARE provider network.

Finally, I look forward to hearing from the Services about their efforts to improve recruitment and retention of military personnel, to improve military personnel and family readiness, to improve military housing, to enhance childcare services, and to improve employment opportunities for military spouses.

I want to thank all the witnesses for being here today. I look forward to your testimony.

Ranking Member Gillibrand?

STATEMENT OF SENATOR KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you, Senator Tillis. I want to join with you today in welcoming our witnesses as we begin the subcommittee's review of the Department's fiscal year 2021 budget request.

The Administration's budget submission begins this process, but it is not the end of it, which is good because I find the Administration's budget request for military and civilian personnel programs of the Department of Defense to be lacking.

While the budget request rightfully provides for a fully funded pay raise for military servicemembers of 3 percent, it only provides a 1 percent pay increase for civilian personnel, far below the rate of inflation.

Moreover, the Administration's Budget, once again, calls for cuts to Federal employee retirement benefits and health care.

While this latter issue is not within the subcommittee's jurisdiction to change, it does have a sobering impact on the Department's professional civilian workforce, their morale, and the ability of the Department to recruit and retain highly qualified, highly talented individuals for Federal service. As the National Defense Strategy (NDS) states, "in order to achieve its many missions, the Department requires a motivated, diverse, and highly skilled civilian workforce." I agree, but the Administration's budget request does not support that aim.

I am equally disappointed in the Administration's plan to reduce funding for our military children in Department of Defense Education Activity (DODEA) schools not by cutting overhead but by cutting teachers and teachers' aides, 172 of them, in the 2021–2022 school year. The Defense-wide review calls for cutting, "lower priority," programs like DODEA to pay for, "higher priority," items in the National Defense Strategy even as the Department itself diverts funds from NDS priorities to fund such things as the border wall. The Administration prioritizes DOD funding for a border wall over the education of military children.

Further, I am deeply concerned about the impact of Secretary Esper's recent changes to priority placed on the process for DOD-

run childcare development centers, which will allow military members to displace civilian employees who already have children in the system even mid-year. While I appreciate that we should give priority to Active Duty military members, taking childcare away from civilian employees mid-year does not seem to strike the right balance of access versus stability. Our solution to the shortage of childcare within DOD should be solved without sacrificing the needs and stability of students. We must increase the capacity within the system dramatically in order to really be able to address the issue.

On a positive note, Mr. Chairman, I look forward to working with you this year as we examine the recommendations of the National Commission on Military National and Public Service, which will release its report in a couple weeks, as we look for ways to celebrate and incentivize service of all types in the Nation, including military service. As we have heard all too often in the past and probably will hear again this year and here again today, the portion of the Nation's youth both eligible and willing to serve continues to be far too low, resulting in military Services competing against each other for the same small pool of qualified applicants and competing against the rest of the Government for talented civilian employees. I hope to hear today from our witnesses how we can better incentivize service to the Nation in all forms and increase the pool of qualified applicants for military service.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator TILLIS. Thank you, Senator Gillibrand.

Secretary McCaffery, I think you have an opening statement and then we will move to questions.

STATEMENT OF HON. THOMAS P. McCAFFERY, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR HEALTH AFFAIRS; ACCOMPANIED BY: VIRGINIA S. PENROD, ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS; THOMAS A. CONSTABLE, ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR READINESS; AND DR. ELIZABETH P. VAN WINKLE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF FORCE RESILIENCY

Secretary McCAFFERY. I do. Chairman Tillis and Ranking Member Gillibrand, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. It is our distinct privilege to represent the total force, men and women, military and civilian, who serve our Nation in the Armed Forces in the Department of Defense.

We are grateful for Congress' strong support for the fiscal year 2020 National Defense Authorization and Defense Appropriation Acts. This important legislation supports vital investments in our military's readiness and modernization, enabled the creation of the Space Force, and provided our servicemembers with the largest pay increase in a decade. Your continued support is vital to ensuring our soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, civilians, and members of our newest service, the Space Force, have the tools, resources, and support to carry out their missions.

Secretary of Defense Esper reaffirmed that the 2018 National Defense Strategy is our road map to address the reemergence of

long-term strategic competition from near-peer competitors, such as China and Russia.

In implementing the strategy, the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness is consistently focused on lethality, partnerships, and reform.

We also are emphasizing Secretary Esper's renewed focus on taking care of our people and our families.

Readiness and lethality begin with our most valued asset, our people, who are inextricably linked to readiness. To attain and sustain readiness against the spectrum of threats, the Department needs to recruit and retain the best people America has to offer.

The Department understands we are facing a competitive job market and recruiting from a digital generation. With technology changing modern warfare, we are actively pursuing innovative recruiting and retention measures to attract and keep technologically inclined and savvy individuals. The Department's talent management enterprise must also keep pace with 21st century developments. Rather than using outdated models where personnel are treated like interchangeable parts from a bygone era, the Department is ushering in a new age of talent management that recognizes the unique talents that servicemembers bring to the fight.

With regard to partnerships, persuasive authority is oftentimes as powerful as any weapon in our arsenal, and building coalitions and partnerships through personal engagements is at the forefront of our efforts. Increasing partner nation access to U.S. PME [professional military education] programs is one strategic arena that greatly contributes to establishing mutually beneficial relationships, developing enduring personal connections with future leaders, and exposing participants to American values. We are ensuring rigorous vetting for partner nation participants much like we do for the U.S. recruits with whom they train. Expanding participation for our PME programs ensures we are capturing the best military minds in the U.S. and around the world.

We are also executing Department-wide reforms to ensure more effective and efficient processes that optimize the operation of our enterprise and free up resources for the warfighter.

Currently we are undertaking the most significant changes to the military health system in decades. The overarching direction of this reform is to increase the readiness of our force, better integrate health care delivery throughout the Department, and ensure all beneficiaries have continued access to high quality medical care. The reform includes consolidation of the administration and management of our military hospitals and clinics under the Defense Health Agency, the continued implementation and standardization of enterprise-wide activities in support of global medical actions, and the restructuring of the Department's medical personnel end strength. We understand that there are a lot of moving parts with this transformation. However, one guiding principle that is foundational is ensuring all beneficiaries continue to have access to high quality health care while reforms are being implemented.

The Department is also fully committed to strengthening and promoting the resiliency and readiness of the total force. Among our top priorities are to stop the crime of sexual assault and prevent suicides, which are devastating tragedies. We are committed

to increasing awareness and prevention of domestic violence and ensuring prompt reporting and response for child abuse and neglect.

The Department also understands that issues such as military spouse employment and access to quality childcare are quality-of-life issues that allow our servicemembers to remain mission-focused and incentivizes retention during their military careers.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before this committee. With continued collaboration with and support from Congress, we will do all we can to ensure our people have the resources, the education and training, and the full range of support needed to accomplish their missions.

My colleagues and I look forward to responding to your questions.

[The joint prepared statement of Mr. McCaffery, Ms. Penrod, Mr. Constable, and Dr. Van Winkle follows:]

JOINT PREPARED STATEMENT BY THE HONORABLE THOMAS MCCAFFERY, MS.
VIRGINIA PENROD, MR. THOMAS CONSTABLE, AND DR. ELIZABETH VAN WINKLE

INTRODUCTION

Chairman Tillis, Ranking Member Gillibrand, distinguished Members of the Personnel Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am joined by my team of personnel and readiness experts, and it is our distinct privilege to represent the Total Force men and women, military and civilian, who serve our Nation in the Armed Forces and Department of Defense.

We are grateful for Congress' strong support you provided in the fiscal year 2020 National Defense Authorization and Defense Appropriations Acts. This important legislation supports vital investments in our military's readiness and modernization, enabled the creation of the Space Force, and provided our servicemembers with the largest pay increase in a decade. Your continued support is vital to ensuring our soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, civilians, and members of our newest service, the Space Force, have the tools, resources, and support to carry out their missions. Our people are the backbone of our Nation's security; they protect and defend our Nation and our American way of life.

Secretary of Defense Mark Esper reaffirmed the 2018 National Defense Strategy (NDS) will remain our keystone to successfully compete, deter, and, if necessary, fight and win across the spectrum of conflict against near-peer rivals, as well as rogue nations and violent extremist organizations. We are now engaged in great power competition with an emerging China and revanchist Russia, powers that pose an existential threat to the United States and challenge American interests across the globe. Every domain is now contested—land, sea, air, space, and cyberspace—and our great power rivals continuously seek to find and exploit vulnerabilities and disrupt our institutions and their capabilities. The NDS reorients the Department for great power competition and peer conflict.

In implementing the strategy, the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness is laser-focused on supporting the warfighter and enabling the military departments through the NDS' three lines of effort:

- Restore readiness and build a more lethal force
- Strengthen alliances, deepen interoperability, and attract new partners
- Reform the Department for greater performance and accountability

Secretary Esper articulates an additional priority line of effort—taking care of our people and their families—to ensure they have the resources they need to succeed, and the quality of life they deserve.

RESTORING READINESS AND BUILDING A MORE LETHAL FORCE

Readiness and lethality begin with our most valued asset, our people, who are inextricably linked to readiness. Therefore, to attain and sustain readiness against the spectrum of threats, the Department requires the best people America has to offer.

Readiness

Readiness recovery continues to be challenged by current operational commitments, juxtaposed with the need to modernize to meet future threats. The balance

we must find is maintaining a ready force with sufficient capability and capacity to meet current mission demands, while continuing to modernize our Total Force to fight and win against near-peer adversaries in the future.

The Department is using the Readiness Recovery Framework as an action plan focused on specific service-identified areas for improvement, such as meeting combatant commander operational demands, mitigating manpower shortfalls, enhancing training capabilities on live ranges and synthetic environments, and enhancing the planning, coordination, and execution of readiness and training activities. The DOD is also consolidating all service-specific readiness reporting systems into the Defense Readiness Reporting System–Strategic to enhance unity of effort and provide senior leaders with data-driven choices for optimizing strategic decisions on readiness matters such as resource allocation, capabilities, and personnel.

The Space Force

With the creation of our newest service, the U.S. Space Force, we are ushering in an information age service, optimized to meet the challenges of the 21st century. We expect the Space Force to be an agile and lean organization that will consolidate the majority of space missions, units, resources, and personnel from the existing military Services into the new Space Force. Although the Space Force will leverage existing expertise and infrastructure, it will establish its own identity and culture by developing mechanisms to commission, enlist, appoint, train, equip, and support its members, as well as designate specialty codes that align with the skills necessary for this new military service.

There is much work to be done as the Space Force embarks on its mission to craft the innovative strategies and tactics necessary to preserve space superiority. However, the Department looks forward to continued collaboration with Congress as we develop warfighters for the world's most capable Space Force.

Education and Training

Developing servicemembers who understand the evolving nature of the security environment and how it affects American interests, the character of warfare, and the dimensions of strategic competition requires a military education and training system that can keep pace. This system is relied upon to educate the Joint Force, develop groundbreaking concepts and strategies to implement the NDS, sustain its momentum, and ensure its approach becomes part of an irreversible cultural shift in the Department.

The NDS specifically calls on the Department to emphasize intellectual leadership and military professionalism and to revise its talent management practices to ensure the greatest return on our educational and training investments. In keeping with this NDS mandate, the DOD continues to adapt to and leverage the powerful innovations underway. Automation, digitalization, artificial intelligence, augmented and virtual reality, and collaborative tools not only dramatically alter the character of war, but necessitate a shift in the learning environment to keep pace.

The Department is also shifting its focus in curricula in joint military education programs from a topic-based approach to a focus on outcomes. We are modifying our approach to emphasize ingenuity, military professionalism, and historical insights into the art and science of warfighting.

21st Century Talent Management

The Department's talent management enterprise must continuously assess, adapt, and innovate to keep pace with 21st century developments. Rather than using outdated models where personnel are treated like interchangeable parts from a bygone era, the DOD is ushering in a new age of talent management that recognizes the unique talents that servicemembers bring to the fight by considering preferences for assignments, and the knowledge, skills, and attributes required at key points in a servicemembers military career.

Our talent management system also harnesses the relationship between military education and training and talent management. We are refining our military education and talent management processes to ensure our servicemen and women who receive relevant education and training opportunities, are then directed to the right assignments to best leverage what they have learned and effectively contribute to the body of strategic leadership.

STRENGTHEN ALLIANCES AND ATTRACT NEW PARTNERS

America's alliances and partnerships around the world give the United States an unmatched advantage over our competitors. Maintaining and nurturing these relationships is a product of a long-term effort to build trust and confidence between

nations. The NDS recognizes the human dynamic as a strategic asset to build trust and deepen relationships with international allies and partners.

Professional Military Education (PME)

In today's complex security environment, where persuasive authority is often times as powerful as any weapon in our arsenal, building coalitions through personal engagements is at the forefront of our efforts. PME is one tool that provides a powerful strategic arena for enhancing alliances and expanding partnerships, and understanding the value of developing norms within the international profession of arms.

Increased partner nation access to U.S. PME programs contribute to establishing mutually beneficial relationships, developing enduring personal connections with future leaders, and exposing participants to American values.

REFORM THE DOD FOR GREATER PERFORMANCE AND AFFORDABILITY

In line with the NDS's mandate to reform our organization to prepare the Department for great power competition, the Department is executing reforms to ensure more effective management processes and to achieve greater efficiencies to free resources for the warfighter. We will ensure we remain good stewards of American taxpayer dollars.

Transformation of the Military Health System

The Military Health System (MHS) is the most comprehensive military medical enterprise in the world. A key Department of Defense reform priority is the transformation of the MHS to ensure its ability to provide both a medically ready force to execute the National Defense Strategy, and a ready medical force to support our Armed Forces throughout the world.

The overarching direction of this reform is to consolidate and standardize military health care functions to increase the readiness of our force, better integrate healthcare delivery throughout the Department, and ensure all beneficiaries have continued access to high quality medical care.

The reform also includes the realignment and restructuring of our management processes for overseeing MTFs; the continued implementation and standardization of enterprise-wide activities in support of global medical activities; and the restructuring of the Department's medical personnel end strength. Taken together, these reforms represent the most significant change to the MHS in decades.

The DOD continues its consolidation of the management of military medical treatment facilities (MTF) under the Defense Health Agency (DHA). This allows Service medical departments to focus on medical readiness requirements while providing quality healthcare through standardized clinical and business practices. The consolidation should eventually lower the Department's costs of operating the MHS by eliminating redundancies and improving efficiency. The end state of the consolidation will result in primary responsibility for operational medical care retained by the Services, while MTF healthcare delivery is the responsibility of the DHA.

In October 2019, the authority, direction, and control of MTFs in the continental U.S. was transferred to the DHA. While DHA's headquarters management capabilities are expanded, many of DHA's functions continue via support agreements with the Services. These relationships will be phased out on a conditions-based approach as DHA's MTF management capabilities are expanded through transfer of functions and personnel, which began earlier this year. The DOD will monitor the transition closely to ensure there are no gaps in medical care for our beneficiaries.

The Department recently submitted a report to Congress pursuant to section 703 of the fiscal year 2017 NDAA. This report details the comprehensive review of 343 MTFs identified as providing healthcare services in the United States.

The Department's review identified 50 MTFs for realignment and restructuring that will increase the readiness of our operational and medical forces, while ensuring all beneficiaries receive high quality medical care. More detailed implementation plans that include MTF-specific timelines will be forthcoming. The Department will continue to monitor MTFs closely and make any adjustments necessary. *It is important to note* that all DOD beneficiaries will continue to have access to high quality healthcare, and any transitions will be conditions-based on the capacity of provider networks to absorb additional patients. This means beneficiaries in some areas could transition quickly to civilian networks, others may take years to transition as networks build capacity, and some may not transition based on local market conditions and capacities.

VA/DOD COLLABORATION

The DOD and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) are working closely together. We are collaborating to improve the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of health services and the delivery of benefits. Our Joint Executive Committee, a VA–DOD interagency coordination body co-chaired by the Deputy Secretary for VA and the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, is currently engaged on more than 20 VA–DOD joint initiatives to enhance interoperability and the seamless transition of our members from military service to post-service care, including the Federal Electronic Health Record Modernization (FEHRM).

The FEHRM serves as a single point of accountability in the delivery of a common electronic health record for DOD, VA, and the United States Coast Guard. The FEHRM will ensure each Department successfully executes their respective electronic health record deployment strategies with minimal risks to cost, performance, and schedule. When complete, DOD and VA clinicians will have the ability to share healthcare information to support continued and improved treatment for our servicemembers, their families, and our veterans.

The deployment of MHS GENESIS, the DOD's electronic health record, is currently underway. The most recent implementation wave occurred at four sites in September 2019. On our current trajectory, we will deploy MHS GENESIS at 10 installations in June 2020, and complete the deployment by the end of fiscal year 2024.

Military and Civilian Recruiting and Retention

The Department is adapting to the modern workforce as it strives to recruit and retain a diverse force that represents the best America has to offer. The current recruiting environment presents challenges due to low unemployment rates as well as a competitive job market that recruits from the same pool of candidates.

Recruits today are also digital natives that have an expectation to enter a military that uses technology that they are familiar with and that will allow them to optimize their time. In order to attract and keep these types of individuals, the Department must continue to field the most advanced, cutting edge technology.

Military

In recruiting the best and brightest for our Armed Forces, we are using marketing tools such as the Joint Advertising, Market Research & Studies (JAMRS) Program to understand factors that are critical to our recruiting goals, and ensure our efforts are conducted in the most efficient and beneficial ways. In sustaining our All-Volunteer Force, we are ensuring the public understands the importance and benefits of serving in the military through information initiatives and campaigns at all levels of our organization.

We are also ensuring our pay and benefits packages are competitive in order to attract the best candidates and compete against corporate America. The fiscal year 2021 budget request supports a 3 percent military pay raise to sustain our ability to attract a highly talented force. Congress' support for this measure will be greatly appreciated.

In addressing a broad array of retention issues for our military members—from job satisfaction to quality of life to professional development—the Department is actively pursuing initiatives to increase career path flexibility, identifying non-monetary career-enhancing opportunities, addressing operational tempo, and managing operational commitments to reduce the strain of deployments on servicemembers, their families, and employers of our Guard and Reserves. In the end, if we do not take care of servicemembers and their families, they will vote with their feet and move on to other opportunities.

Civilians

Civilians who serve in the Department share the same values, ethics, and maintain the same mission focus as our military members. Their ability to provide valued perspective through a long term lens and uninterrupted service is vital to the DOD.

The skills inherent in today's civilian workforce become even more critical when we account for complex and evolving requirements such as in the cyber and space domains. Our civilian force is a repository of best practices and the incubators of new and innovative ideas. Their skills and talents are foundational to the strategies and plans we develop.

The Department is enhancing its civilian marketing and recruitment outreach efforts, working closely with critical functional communities, such as cyber and digital to implement targeted recruitment strategies and increase awareness of the Department's civilian employment opportunities. We are also identifying and improving

ways to decrease hiring process bottlenecks, reduce the time to hire candidates, and enhance the quality of our hires. The DOD understands that as our security environment continues to evolve and straddle every sector of society, the role of our civilian force increases in importance every day.

TAKING CARE OF PEOPLE

Our people—Active, Guard, and Reserve servicemembers, military families, and our civilians—are at the core of the NDS. We could not accomplish our missions in the Department without the dedication of our people who sacrifice every day to protect our Nation. It is imperative we remain committed to each and every one of them.

Secretary Esper's additional priority line of effort—taking care of our people and their families—ensures they have the resources they need to succeed, and the quality of life they deserve. The Department is acting aggressively on this priority to ensure our people have the care and support they deserve, and uphold our core values of good order and discipline, and treating all with dignity and respect.

Force Resiliency

The Department is fully committed to strengthening and promoting the resiliency and readiness of the Total Force. Among our top priorities are to stop sexual assault and prevent suicides.

Sexual assault is destructive and undercuts our ability to keep a mission-focused, ready force. We are committed to preventing this crime, encouraging increased reporting, caring for victims, and holding offenders appropriately accountable. Most recently, we launched the *CATCH a Serial Offender Program*, and we continue to implement recommendations from the Sexual Assault Accountability and Investigation Task Force.

The Department is grateful to all Members of this Committee, in particular Senator McSally's leadership, for your partnership on the Task Force. The efforts of the Task Force are driving improvements in leadership, process timeliness and accuracy, fairness and due process, and our overall system's credibility and transparency. We are grateful for Congress' support of many of these recommendations in the fiscal year 2020 NDAA.

We are also emphasizing mental health and resiliency for our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines as we strive to prevent suicides. Suicides decimate lives, families, and units. The Department is committed to supporting our servicemembers and preventing these devastating tragedies.

Our efforts in suicide prevention are focused on increasing help-seeking behaviors, targeting efforts to our servicemembers at highest risk, and ensuring all members of the DOD family are part of the solution. In September 2019, the Department released its inaugural Annual Suicide Report for Calendar Year 2018. The data from this and future reports will assist in targeting the areas of greatest concern as we strive to eliminate suicides within the Department of Defense.

Domestic Violence and Child Abuse

Domestic violence is a serious national issue and the military community is not immune. We are focusing on collaborating with civilian partners to increase awareness of domestic violence, prevention, and support services available to servicemembers and their families.

The Department's public awareness campaign promotes a military community culture that reduces the stigma for seeking help and normalizes support for domestic violence victims. The Family Advocacy Program (FAP) provides education about available services through military and civilian communities, and educates commands on warning signs of domestic violence and the command's responsibility to encourage servicemembers and their families to seek help.

The DOD is also committed to ensuring prompt reporting and response to all allegations of child abuse and neglect. The FAP uses a coordinated community response model, in collaboration with law enforcement, legal, medical, command, and civilian child welfare services. The FAP also works closely with the Defense State Liaison Office on reciprocal reporting issues between State Child Protective Service agencies and the military. This collaboration has resulted in 24 states revising their statutes to develop laws and policies to comply with reciprocal reporting.

Military Spouse Employment and Licensure

Military spouses face barriers to employment due to frequent relocations and extended periods of family separations. Delays and expenses associated with re-licensure cause many military spouses to put their careers on hold or not to practice in

their professions at all. This financial and quality of life issue impacts the desirability of remaining in the military for many servicemembers.

The Department is dedicated to supporting military spouse employment. Recently, the Secretary of Defense directed the Secretaries of the military departments to include military spouse employment assistance as a criterion in future basing decisions. The DOD is also working with State governments to develop legislation and policies that grant licensure reciprocity between States. Additionally, the Department provides military spouses with education and career guidance through comprehensive tools and resources to support career exploration, education, training, licensing, employment readiness, and career connections. By assisting our military spouses and our families, we allow our servicemembers to remain mission focused and incentivize retention in their military careers.

Access to Childcare

Secretary Esper recognizes the importance of providing military families with access to quality, affordable childcare. Access to childcare is a workforce issue that directly impacts the readiness and retention of the Total Force. In February of this year, Secretary Esper issued a directive prioritizing uniformed servicemembers' children in installation childcare programs.

The Department is committed to meeting the increased demand for childcare services. Initiatives, such as the establishment of a joint-service working group to look at ways to recruit and retain quality childcare staff, will continue to be pursued to ensure we can meet the rising demand. At the same time, we understand this challenge requires multi-pronged solutions and are also looking at other strategies to increase childcare capacity and decrease waiting lists.

WHERE CONGRESS CAN HELP

The Department of Defense is tremendously appreciative of the support you provided in the fiscal year 2020 National Defense Authorization and Defense Appropriations Acts. We are hopeful Congress will provide us with on-time authorization and appropriations legislation for fiscal year 2021 so we can capitalize on the vital investments in defense the American people have already made, and ensure the predictable and timely funding the Department requires.

We would also appreciate the Committee's careful consideration of the DOD legislative proposals that will more effectively enable the Department to carry out its missions.

CONCLUSION

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before the Committee to represent the soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and civilians who have volunteered to dedicate their lives to protecting our freedoms and our way of life. Their sacrifices are awe-inspiring and deserve the gratitude of all American citizens. With the continued collaboration with and support from Congress, we will do all we can to ensure our people have the resources, the education and training, and the full range of support needed to accomplish their missions.

Senator TILLIS. Thank you, Mr. McCaffery, and thank you all for being willing to be here today.

Mr. McCaffery, I have a question. The President's fiscal year 2021 budget request included a little over \$33 million in savings from beginning the implementation of right-sizing military hospitals and clinics. I believe this decision came out of the Defense-wide review that you mentioned.

The question I have—as somebody who spent most of my career doing right-sizing in the private sector, you've got to go through and do an analysis. The question is after you capture the data, figure out how to right-size and smart-size, then you go through and try to identify the sources of the savings.

So can you give me a little sense of how the Department went about identifying what are the key sources of savings that serve as the basis for the \$33 million savings?

Secretary MCCAFFERY. Sure. So as you indicated, this was part of a directive coming out of the NDAA [National Defense Author-

ization Act] for 2017, as well as the Defense-wide review. In essence, the review that was directed was to look at all of our military hospitals and clinics to ensure that they were matched with their readiness requirement. What I mean by that is our hospitals and clinics are there and exist for two primary missions, to ensure that it is a training platform to train our providers so that they are skilled in those efforts that they are required to do their job down range, and it is also to ensure our servicemembers have quick and easy access to health care so that they too are ready to do their jobs down range.

So we looked at all of our U.S.-based facilities. From that initial look, we did a deep dive on about 77. The key thing, in terms of making any proposed changes to better match the services that are provided in those MTFs [military treatment facilities] to that readiness requirement, is the ability for that civilian health care community around that MTF, their ability to receive additional caseload. Our commitment in any of these changes is while we do these reforms, including this MTF right-sizing, that we will continue to commit to providing access to our beneficiaries. We made it very clear in our submission to Congress that as we implement these changes, if that access is not there, we will rethink our approach.

With regard to the savings that are in the budget, roughly \$36 million, for the end of fiscal year 2021, that is based on looking at the roughly 48 facilities that we proposed some level of reduced services being provided. We believe in those areas with the most robust civilian health care market in place that can take on additional caseload those would be the first facilities that would actually see this implementation. That is our projection of what we could see by the end of fiscal year 2021. Those numbers will be updated as we continue this process over the next 2 to 3 years.

Senator TILLIS. Thank you. I understand as part of the methodology you engaged an outside firm to assess some of the private provider market, and I am sure that you have tiered it in terms of risk, low to high risk. I think that we have had a couple of facilities in North Carolina designated.

I am more interested in the nationwide impact, and maybe our offices can get together and talk specifically about the ones where you are moving forward because you think the risk is low. The provider networks are there. So thank you for that. I just want to be able to provide assurance to those who potentially would be affected that we have done the homework and that we can realize the savings where it makes sense and the risk is low.

One area that I have opined a little bit about in various Armed Services hearings is military housing. This is an area that I have focused a lot of attention on because we had absolutely unacceptable conditions down at Camp Lejeune, over at Fort Bragg, and to a lesser extent some of the other bases in North Carolina.

So I guess one thing that I really want to get ahead of—I do these town hall meetings, and sometimes they are surprised. Sometimes I give them a few weeks. All the time, the providers do a wonderful job of draining the queue before I get there. But I still hear these stories of people that, at least over the past year, have been in settings that were unhealthy, and so I am trying to get an idea of the guidance that has come out of DOD to let these housing

providers know if you tell somebody to shut a door and maybe tape it shut because it is unsafe to go in there, that is probably a house that should not be lived in with the adults or children.

So have the providers gotten the message that if I go down to Fort Bragg or Camp Lejeune again and I hear another story like that or a dehumidifier that is about the size of a dishwasher that is in a hallway literally capturing so much moisture that they are piping into the tub because the retainer tub fills up too quickly, can I be reasonably assured that the DOD has let them know that is unacceptable?

Secretary MCCAFFERY. I believe you can be reasonably assured, and actually the health system role in making that connection is when we have patients that present into one of our medical facilities, we are very clear in our guidance to our hospitals and clinics what to be looking for. If a patient comes in and complains that they perhaps have a health condition tied to a household exposure hazard, not only do we do all the appropriate medical screening and treatment, but one of the key things, in terms of direction, is for our provider to make sure that the installation commander and the military department is aware that that individual, based upon their housing, has registered that concern and that complaint so that there is a back end communication so that we can track then to follow up on dealing with the actual source of the exposure.

Senator TILLIS. Thank you.

My time has expired. If I have an opportunity, I may come back and ask about readiness for coronavirus and a few other questions.

Senator Gillibrand?

Senator GILLIBRAND. The purpose of the Department's Defense-wide review was to find savings and programs deemed lower priority or not supportive of the goals of the National Defense Strategy.

As I mentioned in my opening statement, one program identified as a low priority source is the Department of Defense's Education Activity and specifically the number of teachers employed. According to the Defense-wide review, the Department plans to reduce 172 teachers and aides for school years 2021 and 2022, yielding savings of \$18.6 million. This funding will be realigned to higher priorities.

Would you characterize the education of our military children as a lower priority?

Ms. PENROD. Senator Gillibrand, absolutely not. Education of our children is absolutely a higher priority, and I can tell you in meeting with Secretary Esper himself, he will tell you that is one of his top priorities, supporting our families.

When we were asked to look at our programs to possibly reduce our programs for modernization and readiness, we were asked to look at where could we possibly tighten our belts but not harm our programs. What we did is looked at our teacher-to-student ratio and staff ratio and found that we could add about 2.2 students per class and still be under what the public schools offer. We do not think we will have degraded classrooms, and we think we still will provide a high quality education for our dependents.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Well, I do not know that increasing pupil-to-teacher ratio increases performance in classrooms, and I think

all educational experts agree that having a smaller class size is beneficial for kids.

I know that the DODEA schools—we have got 16 in North Carolina. We have got two in New York. So are we then asking servicemembers who are deployed to smaller bases in remote locations to sacrifice the quality of their children's education with these cuts?

Ms. PENROD. No, ma'am. I do not believe we are sacrificing the education with these cuts. In many cases, we looked at schools where we had classrooms with 10 students in them. As you looked across our programs, we felt we could increase the student-teacher ratio size and still provide a quality education.

Senator GILLIBRAND. This is for both Ms. Penrod and Mr. Constable. Last year when President Trump raided the DOD budget to fund border wall construction, there were hundreds of millions of dollars in the DODEA budget, school construction budget, that were diverted. In fact, 15 percent of the total amount was diverted from military schools. Many of these schools are half a century old, and some were slated to be replaced altogether.

Can you discuss the importance of quality schools for military children and the impact that has had on retention and readiness?

Ms. PENROD. Yes, ma'am. First, I believe when we looked at our schools and what we could, we say, move to the right as far as construction, there were schools that were not ready to begin construction. So as we programmed construction, we look at those programs that we can actually start in that fiscal year or calendar year.

We are improving our schools. We are building new schools. We still believe we have the highest quality of education in the country in our DODEA schools as witnessed by reaching the best in the country on the report card for fourth grade and eighth grade math and science.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Mr. Constable?

Mr. CONSTABLE. Thank you, Senator.

In the course of the decision to reprogram, the Secretary turned to the Chairman who did a full assessment of force readiness and looking at the accounts that would be used to transfer, determined that the transfer would not have immediate or foreseeable impacts to defense readiness.

Senator GILLIBRAND. In 2018, the Air Force Academy adopted a policy of not punishing cadets for minor infractions such as drinking or fraternization if the discovery resulted from reporting a sexual assault. This year's Academy report showed a 73 percent increase in reports of sexual assault at the Air Force Academy, while reporting was flat for the previous 2 years. While there was an increase at both West Point and the Naval Academy, they were negligible when compared to the Air Force Academy.

I introduced language in the fiscal year 2020 NDAA to expand this policy to the entire DOD, and we have identical [language] in the House. Yet, this language was removed in conference in favor of a report. The academies' reports show that while we are waiting for implementation reports, dozens of assaults have been unreported.

Ms. Penrod, would you agree such a dramatic increase shows that there was a large number of not only cadets but

servicemembers who are not reporting sexual assault for fear of the impact it will have on their career?

Ms. PENROD. Senator Gillibrand, I will defer that question to Dr. Van Winkle.

DR. VAN WINKLE. So I think that the safe-to-report policy is a good one because it addresses collateral misconduct, and your support of it has been beneficial in that space.

As with everything in my portfolio, there are some legal nuances to it. So specifically while we do hear from some victims that that protection will give them the confidence and the assurance to come forward and report, which we need considering the vast majority of our sexual assault survivors do not report, we also know there are some victims who say that they would like to face the discipline for any infraction so that the defense cannot use that as a reason for why they are coming forward with a report. So that is the legal nuance there.

Overall, I think the safe-to-report policy is a good one and appreciate your support to it. We just want to make sure we get the language right to support both sides.

Senator GILLIBRAND. We might be able to do that in the next NDAA too. Thank you.

Senator TILLIS. Ms. Penrod, one thing I would be interested in, we have been tracking closely any of the military construction money that was affected by the executive order in North Carolina. In one case it was a school that I think had been determined that—a project for a school that they determined they were not moving forward with. I think it would be very helpful if we could run down the construction projects you were saying that provided future funding. It is not disrupting the ultimate time that these schools will come on line. It would be very helpful if we could get that report specifically for the schools in the U.S.

Ms. PENROD. Senator Tillis, I would be happy to provide that report.

[The information referred to follows:]

Ms. PENROD. In 2019, DODEA had \$559 million of military construction funding deferred from 10 approved projects to pay for border wall construction. In 2020, funding was restored for the Fort Campbell Middle School project; that construction contract was awarded in September 2020. In 2020, funds were deferred for another project; the amount of deferred funding is currently \$516 million. The table below provides a listing of the affected projects.

Project Title	State/Country	Location	\$ in Millions
Butner Elementary School Replacement	NORTH CAROLINA	Fort Bragg	32,944
Kinnick High School Increment 1	JAPAN	Yokosuka	40,000
Clay Kaserne Elementary School	GERMANY	Weisbaden	56,048
Robinson Barracks Elementary School Replacement	GERMANY	Stuttgart	46,609
Bechtel Elementary School	JAPAN	Camp Mctureous	94,851
Spangdahlem Elementary School Replacement	GERMANY	Spangdahlem AB	79,141
Ft Campbell Middle School	KENTUCKY	Fort Campbell	62,634
Croughton Elementary/Middle/High School Replacement	UNITED KINGDOM	Croughton RAF	71,424
Ramey Unit School Replacement	PUERTO RICO	Punta Borinquen	61,071

Project Title	State/Country	Location	\$ in Millions
Europe West Distric Superintendent's Office	BELGIUM	Chievres AB	14,305
			\$559,027

Senator TILLIS. Thank you.

Senator McSally?

Senator MCSALLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate it.

Thanks, all, for being here today.

Dr. Van Winkle, good to see you again. I want to talk about Active Duty military suicide rates. When I was a cadet at the Air Force Academy, one of my fellow cadets in my squadron took his own life. Since then, we have each had way too many experiences of our fellow servicemen and women who survived combat, who survived the enemy trying to take their lives, and they come back home and they take their own lives.

Just like sexual assault, saying that the prevalence in society is a similar rate is not acceptable. Once they are under our watch, once they are a part of our team, we are responsible for making sure that they have everything they need in order to live a good life and to get the care that they need in order to prevent these tragedies from happening.

The rates keep going up, and I find this just so utterly unacceptable and unconscionable, both Active Duty and veterans.

I met with a veteran last week, Zach, who survived—I should not have said his name. Sorry. I am not giving you his last name, but either way, a number of his fellow servicemen did not survive deployments that he was on. He survived, but several of his other teammates took their own lives when they came back home. He shared this harrowing story of him hitting that point himself, but somehow the gun did not go off. He is still with us today by the grace of God.

But hearing stories like that—and again, the ones that we each know personally as well—it is urgent and we have got to do more together between Active Duty and the VA [Department of Veterans Affairs]. I appreciate the President creating a task force last year on this. The report is overdue. It is urgent. There are lives on the line every day.

So what is being done? What have we learned from the task force? What else can we do to address this urgent issue?

DR. VAN WINKLE. Senator, I appreciate the question, and you are right on all accounts.

We released the first-ever annual suicide report and saw a few things in the data. We saw the increased risk in our 17 to 24-year-olds and our youngest military members.

We also saw a concerning trend within the National Guard that we are also supporting.

In order to get after this, we are doing a number of things. Within the Department for military members, there are a few things we have to address that we are going after. The first is making sure that we are giving our youngest servicemembers the skills, the basic, fundamental skills in terms of problem solving, managing crises, emotional regulation.

We also need to make sure that we start to remove barriers to getting help, to receiving care. That is extremely complicated. I

would say across my portfolio, I do not necessarily need anybody to go to one of our official resources to get help. There are a number of other resources they can go to that are confidential, including chaplains. So we are really working with our youngest folks to understand what resources are out there for them, understanding that as humans we all face crises and tragedies and that we can get through it and get through it stronger.

The PREVENTS Task Force that you mentioned is obviously coled by the VA and the White House, but we are an integral part of that. I cannot speak to when the report will be released, but I can say that once it is released, that is not the end. I work very closely with Dr. Van Dahlen on enduring efforts to take this on in the Nation writ large.

Senator MCSALLY. Great. Thank you.

I want to follow up also on sexual assault. Working together with you last year and the task force that was created, we got 17 of those 18 provisions in my bill into the NDAA. So I would like to hear about implementation of those and then also one of them we did not, which was criminalizing of sexual harassment which the task force recommended. But we did say we wanted you to report back to us on progress on this and what else needs to be done. So can you share an update?

DR. VAN WINKLE. Absolutely, and I want to start by thanking you for your initiative and your partnership on that task force. I have been a part of lot of efforts in the DOD on this, and this was one of the more rewarding efforts that I have been a part of.

As you know, we had 22 recommendations. They all were approved into policy. So we are now working on the implementation. The sexual harassment one—we are on track to deliver that report to you. In the meantime, we have submitted language for an executive order so we could get this moving. That is currently with the Federal Register for public comment. We are expecting that back in April, and I would be happy to come back out and speak to you about the status of the recommendations that we have.

Senator MCSALLY. Great. Let us do that. Thank you.

I yield back.

Senator TILLIS. Thank you, Senator McSally.

If we can go back, I think Senator Gillibrand is also interested in this. With the spread of the coronavirus, I spoke with General Rocco before we got started here talking about how they are standing up and making people aware down at Parris Island. But what is the DOD doing across the globe to ensure best measures are taken to avoid it and provide treatment and testing where it is necessary?

Secretary MCCAFFERY. So, Senator Tillis, a good question, and maybe I can spend a couple of minutes with the status in terms of what we are doing across the DOD.

As you can quite imagine, when we look at this virus, the threat and what we need to do, we have three priorities. Basically we want to make sure that we maintain the health and safety of our military forces and our civilians. Very importantly, we want to make sure that we maintain that staff to support mission assurance. Then finally, we are obviously part of the whole-of-govern-

ment effort in looking at how we as a Government combat the virus.

In January, we issued force health protections guidance very much along the lines of CDC [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention], going after the field in terms of what folks need to be aware of, self-hygiene, prevention efforts, and screening. We at the DOD need to go a little bit beyond that, and we have issued guidance across the globe to installation commanders with regard to what they need to be doing based upon their unique circumstance in their particular location. It is very consistent. We have authorities under existing DOD policy on public health emergency management, and we have outlined guidance that is basically risk-based so that, again, based upon the situation on the ground, gives guidance to commanders to take actions to prevent the spread.

So, for example, the Indo-Pacific geographic combatant command, based upon that guidance, has done things like restricting all non-official travel to the Republic of Korea, China, and Mongolia. They have also directed that all U.S. naval vessels maintain a minimum 14-day period between port calls in their area of responsibility. They are limiting non-mission essential travel, increasing guidelines with regard to access to installations and screening the folks before they get onto those installations. A number of other geographic combatant commands are taking similar steps in terms of limiting travel for their military members outside of their area of responsibility and basically providing direction with regard to canceling meetings that are non-essential, restricting large group activities, everything that we can do to contain the spread of the virus.

In addition, the DOD—we have 16 laboratories around the world. 13 of the 16 laboratories have the CDC-approved test kit, and they are all up and running in terms of providing that testing ability. In the three that are not yet running, we anticipate having them up and running either at the end of this week or next week to ensure we have that testing capability for our force.

Senator TILLIS. Do we have any specific data on—I know that we have the reports. In South Korea, I think one or two cases of South Korean military personnel. Do we keep DOD data on the rate of tests or any other confirmed infections to date?

Secretary MCCAFFERY. Yes. So right now, as of last night, so last evening, our current across-the-board DOD cases are a total of 11, and these are confirmed cases. Of that, four are Active Duty. One is a civilian. We have five dependents and one contractor. We are regularly updating that. As the virus spreads, we anticipate getting more cases and tracking those and providing the guidance with regard to what these folks need to do in terms of self-isolation for a 14-day period.

Senator TILLIS. When a case is reported, do you—you know, if it happens back in North Carolina off a military base, the health department gets involved. They try to determine the contacts and track down and notify potentially candidates for testing. Do you engage the CDC for that, or is that a protocol that gets executed within the DOD?

Secretary MCCAFFERY. We can do that. In terms of the testing, we can do that now within the DOD among our labs. With regard

to, for example, any civilian case in Virginia, a civilian employee of the DOD, we would report not only internally but, of course, we would report to local public health authorities, and either they, if it is a civilian outside of DOD, would be doing that contact tracing. We do the same thing internally if it is on a base overseas.

Senator TILLIS. Okay. Thank you.

Senator Gillibrand, if you will indulge, I have just got one other question for Ms. Penrod.

Ms. Penrod, we know that we always have the challenge of onboarding and hiring personnel. We are trying to do our best to provide flexibility, as we did in the last NDAA, to provide direct hire authorities and special compensation tools, the toolkit that we embedded in the NDAA, and some exceptions to the OPM [Office of Personnel Management] laws and regulation. But it seems to me with respect to hiring personnel, we have not seen a lot of those authorities taken advantage of, at least from an outsider's perspective.

So one of two questions. Am I wrong? Are they taking advantage of them and we are not seeing the benefits yet? Or do we need to do training and get expertise out there so that the broader DOD hiring experts or subject-matter experts know what kind of flexibilities they have and are looking forward to implementing them?

Ms. PENROD. Well, yes, Senator. Well, first of all, you are never wrong.

But I will say that we want to thank the Congress because the flexibility with those authorities have been amazing. I know in one of the naval shipyards, the hiring time was cut in half, reduced to 43 days. Our civilian experts are using the authorities. However, they were not using the authorities as much as we would like. Secretary Esper recognized that. He required the Services to report on these direct hiring authorities and why they were not using them as much. We have increased the number of usage of those authorities and reduced the hiring time across the Department.

When we implemented the authorities, one thing that we found is it was a little bit confusing because some of the authorities overlap. The rules are different depending on the direct hire authority. So, again, we thank the Congress for the fiscal year 2020 NDAA that simplified those authorities.

We also found that if we could gain authority for the Secretary of Defense to provide a direct hire authority for those critical skill sets, that it would provide more flexibility.

I also believe the Services will be able to talk about how they have implemented those authorities. Thank you.

Senator TILLIS. Thank you very much.

Senator Gillibrand?

Senator GILLIBRAND. Just a follow-up on the coronavirus issues. You said you have 16 facilities up and running. Is that what you said? With three more to come online.

Secretary MCCAFFERY. We have 13 of our 16 labs up and running.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Three to come online. Okay. So 16 total.

How many tests can you do a day given your 13 labs?

Secretary MCCAFFERY. We have that data. I do not have it handy. I can get back to you on it. But we have projected, based

upon staffing and volume, what we can do in terms of the turn-around time of the test results. I can get back to you with that information.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Do you have an approximation in your head? Is it like 100 a day or 1,000 a day?

Secretary MCCAFFERY. I do not. So I do not want to—

Senator GILLIBRAND. So please give me updated data, and as it changes, just keep updating me so I know what our capacity actually is.

Secretary MCCAFFERY. Laboratories across the DOD are able to analyze a maximum of approximately 3,000 specimens on a working day. The limiting factor are supplies. The laboratories run through supplies in less than 2 days when they operate at maximum capacity.

The Department has been engaged in a process of downsizing health personnel, the closure of military medical treatment facilities, the shifting retiree military family member care to TRICARE. In many of these areas, treatment facilities may not be capable of handling the increased patient load. These cuts are happening at the same time as an outbreak of coronavirus and obviously a lot of pressure on our system.

Has the DHA [Defense Health Agency] taken the impact of servicemembers and their families into account while making these changes?

Secretary MCCAFFERY. Most definitely, and as I mentioned, the whole effort on what we call right-sizing our footprint in terms of hospitals and clinics and what level of services they are providing—it is all contingent upon—if we are proposing a change and some down-sizing any services of an MTF, it is contingent upon the ability of that local community to absorb that additional patient. From my prior life in the private sector in the health industry, we are doing the same thing that is done in the commercial industry. That is, before you make that kind of change and you start planning to move folks from one provider base to another, you do the on-site working with our providers to see—

Senator GILLIBRAND. But you obviously did all that work before the coronavirus hit. So have you done any subsequent work to see are we going to have enough beds, are we going to have enough ventilators, do we have enough capacity?

Secretary MCCAFFERY. So you are correct. The work that went into the right-sizing proposal was done in advance of the coronavirus. So it is a point in time. But what we have said is it is conditions-based, and so part of that will—

Senator GILLIBRAND. Okay. So you can ramp up if you need to.

Secretary MCCAFFERY. Part of that will be, if in the future our assumptions that went into our proposals have changed, then we will need to change what we proposed.

Senator GILLIBRAND. So keep looking, please.

Have you guys changed any of the travel restrictions for military civilian personnel to areas affected by the coronavirus?

Secretary MCCAFFERY. So there have been—by geographic combatant command, there have been specific restrictions, as I mentioned in the Indo-Pacific, restrictions in terms of travel to and from Korea, China, other places. It pretty much aligns with where the CDC has issued travel health notices in terms of countries

based upon their level of risk and level of spread of disease. We mirror that in terms of controlling and monitoring travel to and from.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Grateful for the information. Will you update this committee weekly on how we are doing on all measurables for coronavirus?

Secretary McCAFFERY. Be happy to.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Will that be all right, Mr. Chairman?

Senator TILLIS. Yes, I think so. Particularly we are very interested—the disease seems to have a reasonably short time frame. So we are particularly interested not only in reporting the incidents and the tests on the front side, but the disposition of the—

Senator GILLIBRAND. Capacity for testing because one of the problems is—you know, New York has the highest number of cases now, and our Governor is using our National Guard to deliver food and medical supplies. So the tax that will be placed on our servicemembers writ large will be more significant than now, and it will continue to grow. So I just want to make sure you have enough testing labs, you have enough access, you have enough supplies, you have enough personnel. I would like you to be aggressive in updating us if you are concerned that you will not have what you need.

Secretary McCAFFERY. Yes.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Then, Dr. Van Winkle, with my remaining time, can you talk a little bit about the most recent SAPRO [Sexual Assault Prevention and Responses Office] report and what you think the best way's to stem the tide? We saw an increase, obviously, in sexual assaults and unwanted sexual contacts. We saw a decrease in the percentage of cases that actually went to a trial. We saw a decrease in the conviction rate in raw numbers and by percentage. So under any measurable, we are not getting better at this. Do you have any suggestions about things that you think we can do to improve our performance?

DR. VAN WINKLE. Thank you for the question.

In many ways, you are absolutely right. While we saw progress for a certain time frame over 10 years where we saw our rates cut in half and reporting go up, in 2016 we saw an increase at the service academies. In 2018, we saw another increase in the service academies and an increase in the Active Duty. So we really tried to look at the data to see what are we doing wrong here, what efforts were we doing that may have worked a while back but are not working now. Again, what we saw as the driver for the increase is that 17 to 24-year-old group that I talked about.

One of the things we are trying to do, as well as continuing to focus on the response system, the launch of the CATCH [Catch a Serial Offender] program to look at repeat offenders, we really are now laser-focused on the prevention side. So one of the things I am doing at my level is the Prevention Collaboration Forum, which has recently been approved by the Under Secretary for charter, and starting to look at prevention across my entire portfolio, so the sexual assaults, harassment, discrimination, hazing, bullying, substance use, as well as suicide prevention. We are looking to create a—we are developing right now a violence prevention policy across all of those, starting to understand the interconnections between

them, so really starting to focus on preventing this from occurring in the beginning.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator TILLIS. Thank you.

Well, thank you all for testifying today and the work that goes into preparing for the hearing. We appreciate the information you have shared with us, look forward to the information we requested follow-up on. So thanks again for your service. We will transition to the second panel.

I want to thank the witnesses on the second panel for being here today. I understand some of you may have changed some travel plans to be present, and I appreciate that.

On the second panel, we will hear from the Honorable Casey Wardynski, Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs; the Honorable Gregory Slavonic, Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Manpower and Reserve Affairs; Mr. John Fedrigo, performing the duties of the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Manpower and Reserve Affairs; Lieutenant General Thomas Seamands, Deputy Army Chief of Staff for Personnel; Vice Admiral John Nowell, Chief of Naval Personnel, Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Manpower, Personnel, Training, and Education; Lieutenant General Brian Kelly, Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower, Personnel and Services; and Lieutenant General Michael Rocco, Deputy Marine Commander for Manpower and Reserve Affairs.

Thank you all for being here, and we will begin at the left and go down the line for opening statements.

STATEMENT OF HON. E. CASEY WARDYNSKI, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE ARMY FOR MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS; ACCOMPANIED BY LIEUTENANT GENERAL THOMAS C. SEAMANDS, DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF, G-1, UNITED STATES ARMY

Secretary WARDYNSKI. Chairman Tillis, Ranking Member Gillibrand, and other distinguished Members of the panel, thank you very much for this opportunity to come before you today and talk about Army programs for our people.

General Seamands and I have already submitted a written statement that covers that breadth of our portfolio, but today I would like to address some key areas that speak to things you have raised in your points at the beginning. They get to the business at heart of acquiring talent in the Army, retaining it, developing it, and employing it.

Last year, the Secretary of the Army and Chief of Staff and our Sergeant Major of the Army signed the Army's first-ever People Strategy that brings those key elements together in a very systematic way to drive forward innovation in the Army. With this strategy, we see that acquiring talent, which gets to your point, Senator, about recruiting, as being the foundation of efforts. We do not do lateral entry in any large manner. Therefore, the way we begin is very much going to shape the way we go. We need to bring in a very strong starting group of folks.

The foundation of this is our new marketing effort in Chicago. There we established the Army Marketing Enterprise Office, a

short distance away from our new team at DDB, which is our marketing firm. This group has already launched a very engaging new campaign, "What's Your Warrior," that is designed to show the breadth and depth of opportunities in the Army, as well as the benefits afforded to our members. Many of those, of course, flow from the efforts of this panel or this committee.

Taking note of your guidance in section 512 of the 2020 NDAA, which pertains to the Junior ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps], we are re-imagining our efforts there. This includes bringing online computer science and cybersecurity instruction that we believe from the level of AP [Advanced Placement] to honors to general education for delivery in 2022 at selected schools as a pilot program. Our effort here is designed to capture the imagination of young adults and redress the issue of what many believe is only 30 percent of young adults who are eligible and could enter the military. We need to begin educating them much earlier about the opportunities afforded in the military, the benefits of service, and the challenges of service so that as they form their set of life course alternatives, military service can be in there early enough to shape their behaviors throughout high school so by the time they graduate, they can avail themselves of those opportunities.

This past fall, we implemented a talent-based market for assignments. This is the foundation of our employee talent component of our strategy. This innovation is most likely the most significant modernization of our personnel system since the beginning of the All-Volunteer Force. It relies on the Integrated Personnel and Pay System-Army, IPPS-A, as its foundation technology. This system is now, by the end of this month, fully implemented across all 54 Guard and Reserve elements in the 54 States and territories. By 2022, it will be online throughout the Reserve and Active component. With that, we will finally be able to see the talent across our formations in the Active, Guard, and Reserve and bring them to bear both through assignment through temporary duty and virtual connection to those who have a need for their services.

Of course, Army recruiters play a unique role in this process. We are, therefore, innovating in that area as well. We are going to begin a process of talent management assessments for our new sergeants to identify those NCOs [non-commissioned officers] who have a gift for both inspiring young adults to serve and for identifying a good fit among those young adults to make sure when they enter the service, they have the grit and capacity to dominate the challenges of soldiering.

The quality of life for our soldiers and families, of course, is a key enabler of all of this. Thanks to authorities you provided in the 2018 NDAA, we continue to improve our quality of life programs across our installations. These include enhancements to spouse employment, particularly in the area of licensure, childcare so that our parents have the ability to work, dependent education, as well as improvements for family support and readiness.

All of these efforts are the work we now undertake in our people space. We share your passion for our people, and our people remain our greatest resource.

Chairman Tillis, Ranking Member Gillibrand, distinguished Members of the Committee, General Seamands and I thank you for

your generous and unwavering support for our talented Army soldiers, civilians, and families.

[The joint prepared statement of Dr. Wardynski and General Seamands follows:]

JOINT PREPARED STATEMENT BY DR. E. CASEY WARDYNSKI AND LIEUTENANT
GENERAL THOMAS C. SEAMANDS

Chairman Tillis, Ranking Member Gillibrand, distinguished Members of this committee, we thank you for the opportunity to appear before you on behalf of the men and women of the United States Army.

The greatest strength of the United States Army is our people. Soldiers, Army civilians, families, and soldiers for life—our retirees and veterans—are our greatest resource. We cannot fight and win our Nation's wars without a diverse group of talented, trained men and women of character. Readiness must be our number one priority. To sustain Army readiness, we must ensure that our people are ready by focusing on first-class programs that provide continued care and resources for soldiers and their families.

THE ARMY PEOPLE STRATEGY

Army senior leaders signed the first ever Army People Strategy in October of 2019, paving the way for transformational change within every aspect of our people enterprise—soldiers in the Active and Reserve components and Army civilians. The Army People Strategy is foundational to all Army readiness, modernization, and reform efforts described in the 2018 Army Strategy. With the right people, in the right place, at the right time, our Army will successfully deploy, fight, and win in multi-domain operations and excel in support of the Joint Force. Our people provide us with an enduring advantage to remain the world's most ready, lethal, and capable land combat force.

The Army People Strategy describes our shift from the traditional focus of simply distributing personnel to more deliberately developing, employing, retaining, and managing the talents of our soldiers and civilians. With your help and using the authorities you provided in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), we are building a 21st century talent management-based personnel system by creating the policies, programs, and processes that recognize and capitalize on the unique knowledge, skills, and behaviors of every member of the Army team, and then employs each member to achieve the maximum effect. This shift is transformational, increasing our organizational agility, focusing on productivity, and resulting in increased readiness and lethality. It also integrates all people practices, generating a positive effect on organizational outcomes and leverages each individual's knowledge, skills, behaviors, and preferences.

The Strategy is transformational in that it describes our shift from simply distributing personnel to more deliberately managing the talents that our soldiers and civilians possess. The Army People Strategy is now driving Army resourcing decisions by creating policies, programs, and processes of how we acquire, develop, employ, and retain Army talent for our future budget cycles.

The Army People Strategy mission and vision are clear—*The Total Army will acquire, develop, employ, and retain the diversity of soldier and civilian talent needed to achieve Total Army readiness.* Our vision is to build cohesive teams for the Joint Force by maximizing the talents of our people—the Army's greatest strength and most important weapon system.

We will implement the *Army People Strategy* by executing tasks along four Lines of Effort—Acquire, Develop, Employ, and Retain Talent. These Lines of Effort are supported by four critical enablers—a 21st century talent management system; meaningful Quality of Life programs; a proven Army culture and appropriate resources/authorities. Through these actions, we will achieve our vision of cohesive teams that are ready, professional, diverse, and integrated.

We will pursue all four Lines of Effort simultaneously; however, our implementation priority and main effort through 2028 is Line of Effort 1, Acquire Talent. We have already implemented many activities that place an emphasis on modernizing our entire accessions enterprise—marketing, recruiting, and onboarding—impacting the Army's officers and enlisted members in all three components.

The Army People Strategy lists six near-term priorities. Our Civilian and Military Implementation Plans, now being staffed, describe how we will accomplish these near-term priorities in a planned and coordinated approach.

1. The Army will reform Quality of Life programs for both soldiers and civilians based on the Army senior leaders' priorities: a) Housing and barracks; b) Healthcare; c) Childcare; d) Spouse Employment; and e) Permanent Change of Station Moves.
2. The Army Enterprise Marketing Office will transform all marketing communications, technologies, and operations, ensuring we inform and inspire the diversity of military and civilian talent needed to remain the world's premier combat force.
3. The Army will reform accession activities based on an end-to-end evaluation of Total Army accession and retention programs. We will develop and implement programs, policies, and systems to attract and align new soldiers and civilians with best-fit jobs across the Army, which will reduce attrition throughout the enterprise. Moreover, the Army will conduct Accessions Information Environment design, prototyping, and phased releases, which will support the Army Accessions Enterprise in its mission of meeting and maintaining the Army's end strength goals.
4. The Army will fully resource the Integrated Personnel and Pay System—Army (IPPS-A). IPPS-A is the Army's new web-based human resources system. It is the critical enabler for the Army People Strategy and the Army's transition to a talent management system. IPPS-A establishes a human resources data-rich environment and integrates personnel and pay functions for all 1.1 million soldiers. Once fully deployed, IPPS-A will give soldiers and their units unmatched and secure access to personnel data through a single, comprehensive human resources record. It will directly interface with the U.S. Treasury for soldier pay, a feature that will bring significant savings to the Army. As of this month, IPPS-A will be fielded to Army National Guard units in every U.S. State and Territory. To implement our Talent Alignment Process, the pending delivery of IPPS-A Release 4 will bring the marketplace to full operating capability. We will also prepare for Defense Civilian Human Resource Management System deployment in fiscal year 2020, so as to leverage its data capabilities to improve Army civilian talent alignment.
5. The Army will research, design, and pilot a suite of talent assessments for soldiers and civilians for future scaling.
6. For Army civilians, the Army will develop and implement programs, policies, and systems that leverage new authorities to reduce hiring time and improve talent acquisition and talent management.

ACQUIRING DIVERSE TALENT IN A COMPETITIVE ENVIRONMENT

Today, we must inform and inspire public awareness of the wide array of opportunities the Army offers to attract the talent we require. We must direct our efforts to those places where such talent is most likely to reside and vividly describe the many rich opportunities of serving in the Army. We will inform rising generations at key points in their decision-making process so that they can consider Army career opportunities and be able to take advantage of them upon reaching an age at which they are eligible for service. The goal is for prospects to understand the Army better, perceive the intangible value of serving their country in the United States Army, and have the same effect on their influencers, prompting them to support prospects' consideration of the Army. We must make service in the U.S. Army a consideration of every American youth. We must articulate the opportunities and experiences in the Army today in a way that allows our Army to compete even in the best of nationwide economic trends.

Marketing remains a key tool to address these issues. The Army Enterprise Marketing Office and our advertising agency, DDB, have energized our activities with a bold new campaign titled, "What's Your Warrior?" This campaign focuses on digital marketing social media versus traditional television ads. Initial indicators from the "What's Your Warrior" campaign are showing positive key performance indicators, such as increased engagement on our GoArmy.com (<http://goarmy.com/>) website, where, year-over-year, we are generating more than 150 percent more leads. In addition, the Army eSports team has opened doors to new markets. By, coupling this team to new state-of-the-art gaming trailers, we are exponentially increasing our ability to gather quality leads at large eGame venues. Another significant reform effort is the development of our principal IT accessions backbone, the Accessions Information Environment (AIE). AIE will dramatically affect the way we do business. It will free recruiters to interact with and contract future soldiers anywhere there is cellular capability. It will also allow us to conduct marketing that is more precise and better determine our return on investment.

END STRENGTH

The Army continues to focus on retention, recruiting, and accessions in order to grow end strength according to plans and resources. We enlisted 68,185 recruits in the Active component (AC), 39,063 recruits in the Army National Guard (ARNG), and 15,304 recruits in the Army Reserve (USAR) in fiscal year 2019. The Army is currently on a path to achieve the fiscal year 2020 recruiting missions in all three components while sustaining quality. The Army also improved entry screening in a number of areas, focusing on new methods of screening applicants with non-cognitive testing and through instituting a 3-year study of new soldier performance of a small group of applicants who exceed body fat standards, making clear its commitment to “Quality over Quantity.” We will use the most effective mix of marketing, bonuses, and recruiter manning level to accomplish our accession mission. Continued congressional funding in these areas will provide the Army the means to achieve the recruiting mission for all three Army components.

In addition to recruiting new soldiers, the Army must continue to retain the most talented soldiers and non-commissioned officers with the experience and skills necessary to meet current and future needs. The AC, USAR, and ARNG each achieved their fiscal year 2019 retention missions. The AC has continued to exceed historical retention rates. In fiscal year 2019, the AC retained more than 82 percent of our eligible population. The historical average is 81 percent of a specific year group. The highest retention rate on record is 90 percent, which was accomplished in fiscal year 2018. Each component is set to accomplish their respective retention missions while maintaining quality standards in fiscal year 2020. These retention achievements support meeting our NCO [non-commissioned officers] requirements in the near to mid-term. These achievements would not be possible without the funding support for incentives granted by Congress.

The Army saw an increase in officer retention in fiscal year 2019, retaining 90.0 percent of the Army Competitive Category captains and 94.6 percent of majors compared to 89.0 percent and 94.4 percent, respectively, in fiscal year 2018. Overall, the Army retained 91.9 percent of all officers in fiscal year 2019. Since 2016, there has been nearly a 2 percent officer retention increase. Approximately 73 percent of officers are staying at least 1 year past their Active Duty Service Obligation. These statistics demonstrate that officers feel they are part of an organization worthy of their service and sacrifices.

DIVERSITY

The fiscal year 2020 NDAA directed the Secretary of Defense to “design and implement a 5-year strategic plan for diversity and inclusion.” The Army is currently revising its Diversity Roadmap into a strategic plan, which satisfies NDAA requirements, is nested with the Army People Strategy, and enables the Army to acquire and retain the diversity of talent required to fight and win the Nation’s wars.

The Army continues to evolve efforts to align talent and promote diversity of race and gender in every Army officer branch. In fiscal year 2020, the United States Military Academy (USMA) and U.S. Army Cadet Command (USACC/ROTC) commissioning outcomes of 65.8 percent white and 34.2 percent minority very closely reflect the U.S. population of 18 to 34 year olds with bachelor or higher degrees, at 65.1 percent white and 34.9 percent minority. Officer diversity in combat arms remains a focus across both USMA and ROTC programs from fiscal year 2018 to fiscal year 2020, with percentages of white cadets reducing from 71.9 percent to 69.6 percent and non-white cadets increasing from 28.1 percent to 30.4 percent across the past 3 years. Female representation in combat arms also increased in fiscal year 2020, with 68 women scheduled to access into Infantry and Armor branches, 12 more than last year. In fiscal year 2020 branching, women were considered for Infantry or Armor only if they volunteered and met talent requirements. In fiscal year 2021, the Army will transition to gender neutral branching and use a talent-based branching approach at both USMA and USACC. The Army continues to integrate diverse attributes, experiences, and backgrounds into our Officer Corps. Officer branching is nested with the Army People Strategy and is committed to selecting and retaining a cohort of officers to ensure the force of today and leaders of the future reflects the diversity and strength of our Nation.

The Army strives to continuously improve efforts to select the right soldier for the right job. Since January 2017, the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command has used the Occupational Physical Assessment Test (OPAT) to validate that recruits are ready to conduct rigorous initial entry training (IET). This physical screening tool is used for all soldiers, regardless of gender. Achieving the requisite OPAT performance score ensures new soldiers are capable of safely and effectively conducting high demand physical training associated with their assigned specialty. Longitu-

dinal studies on OPAT are being conducted by various Army agencies to assess the OPAT's effect on on-time graduation and unprogrammed injury and attrition reduction. To date, OPAT performance has shown to be a good predictor of on-time graduation and attrition reduction across IET enterprise.

The Army maintains a standards-based approach to increase diversity and inclusion in all units. Any soldier who meets the standards of a military occupational specialty (MOS) is afforded the opportunity to serve in that MOS, regardless of gender. The number of women in the previously closed occupations of Infantry, Armor, and Field Artillery increases every year, and the Army is on track to have integrated units at every installation by the summer of 2020. To date, the Army has successfully accessed and transferred in more than 1,400 women into these occupations. Women are assigned to units at Forts Hood, Bragg, Carson, Bliss, Campbell, Stewart, Drum, Riley, and Polk, as well as in Germany and Italy. In 2020, assignments will expand to Hawaii and Alaska. Forty-two female soldiers have graduated Ranger school; five women have been assigned to the Ranger Regiment; and three women have graduated the Special Forces Assessment & Selection Course and are enrolled in the Special Forces Qualification Courses.

ARMY CIVILIANS

Army civilians comprise approximately 23 percent of the Total Army People enterprise. Army civilians are an integral part of the Army team, committed to selfless service, enhancing readiness, and in support of the protection and preservation of the Nation. They play a critical role in enabling our soldiers to deploy, fight, and win our Nation's wars in which they also deploy in support of the Army's operational mission. Army civilians are important in providing the Army with unmatched technical competence in many functional areas. They provide leadership, stability, and continuity across the generating force, allowing soldiers to focus on warfighting. Our civilian workforce is motivated, diverse, and highly skilled.

To achieve the Army's vision, the Army People Strategy with its nested Civilian Implementation Plan will set the path for inspiring Army civilian service, modernizing our approach to talent management and development, building readiness, and taking care of our people. Our commitment to executing this plan will enable us to attract and retain the best in defense of our Nation. We are concluding a number of trials and looking at modifying policies to improve time to hire. One initiative is aimed at increasing the use of direct hiring authority and expedited hiring authority. The Army Civilian Implementation Plan will establish direct efforts at recruiting and hiring our separating/transitioning soldiers into the civilian corps.

The fiscal year 2017 NDAA directed the Department of Defense (DOD) to consolidate all service medical treatment facilities under the Defense Health Agency (DHA). Because of this action, more than 30,000 civilians are being realigned under DHA. We are committed to continued partnership across DOD to transfer management of military treatment facilities to DHA, while continuing to maintain an excellent standard of care.

To retain the best Army civilian workforce possible, we have made improving the engagement of our civilian workforce a priority. In 2019, the Army improved its ranking to seventh of 17 as Best Places to Work in the Federal Government and was best among all DOD agencies.

BUILDING RESILIENCE AND PERSONNEL READINESS

The Army has made significant strides this past year in strengthening resilience while combatting suicide, sexual violence, and alcohol and substance abuse. We recently renamed the SHARP Ready & Resilient Directorate the Army Resilience Directorate to better align with DOD's Force Resiliency Office and our sister services' resilience directorates.

We have improved our SHARP Prevention Framework. We are focusing on the three domains of a prevention system—human resources, partnerships, and infrastructure—and the actions necessary to address gaps in the Army's prevention system through capacity building. The Army SHARP Prevention Framework will guide our collective prevention efforts, optimize our prevention system and ensure we are properly nested with DOD's new Prevention Plan of Action (PPoA) (fiscal year 2019 to 2023) that was published in May 2019. The framework articulates the concepts of the PPoA within the context of Army doctrine and operational processes to ensure shared understanding and unified action from strategic to tactical levels. It provides codified, authoritative direction and guidance to the Total Army, enabling subordinate echelon planning and execution by leaders and SHARP professionals. Additionally, the framework informs and guides the development of improved prevention content within the education and training activities delivered by the Army SHARP

Academy for all Army SHARP professionals, Army leaders, soldiers and Army civilians.

In October 2019, we launched the Suicide Prevention/Resilience Strengthening pilot at Fort Bliss, Texas. The pilot is also being implemented at Fort Hood, Texas and Fort Campbell, Kentucky and at select National Guard and Reserve units. We are bringing to bear all of our new capabilities such as improved resilience training, the modified Global Assessment Tool, a revamped Behavioral Health Pulse survey to gauge concerns within units and a new Ready and Resilient Resource Guide.

Additionally, we developed and began fielding Increment 2 of the Commander's Risk Reduction Dashboard (CRRD2) this past August. CRRD2 expands leader visibility on everything from sexual assault/harassment incidents to substance abuse to suicide attempts. CRRD2 provides command teams with a much clearer picture of their soldiers, enabling them to tailor prevention and intervention efforts more effectively to help their troops and to sustain unit readiness.

This past summer, the Army deployed 55 Master Resilience Trainers-Performance Experts (MRT-PEs) to Cadet Summer Training (CST) at Fort Knox, Kentucky. CST is the Army's largest cadet training exercise, where more than 8,000 ROTC cadets from across the country learn what it takes to become Army officers and future leaders of soldiers. MRT-PEs worked with cadets at Advanced Camp, teaching them the mental skills that not only improve their performance in basic soldiering tasks, but also enhance their leadership dexterity. By fostering a growth mindset, the MRT-PEs are equipping the cadets with the cognitive agility they can carry with them throughout their careers. We also deployed MRT-PEs to assist U.S. Army Alaska in training approximately 3,500 soldiers on how to support teammates who may be struggling. The Army executed the month-long training at Fort Wainwright and Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson as part of a multipronged strategy to address underlying risk factors that may have contributed to an increase in deaths by suicide of Alaska-based soldiers in 2018 and 2019.

The training focused on delivering Engage workshops twice-a-day. Engage sessions emphasize bystander intervention and prosocial behavior. The training is designed to teach people how to recognize behavioral deviations and the empathy and skills required to take action. In addition to Engage training, the Army also trained soldiers on the Soldier Leader Risk Reduction Tool, which aids leaders in identifying risk among their soldiers and connecting them to relevant resources.

The Army tested a new junior leader training curriculum with pilots at Fort Bliss, Texas; Fort Hood, Texas; USAR units in Texas, Schofield Barracks, Hawaii; Fort Irwin, California; and Fort Campbell, Kentucky. This training empowers first-line leaders with the tools to address and solve cultural problems in their squads, improve ethical decision-making and increase trust.

Finally, we are currently developing a Ready and Resilient Implementation Plan. Our Implementation Plan will guide our efforts to improve resilience, personal readiness, and unit cohesion.

The Army continues to make great strides in reducing the number of non-deployable soldiers. Total Army non-deployable personnel were reduced by -89,000 or 9 percent from June 2016 (high water mark) to December 2019 (-153,000 or 15 percent to -64,000 or 6 percent). The current 6 percent non-deployable rate is a result of both aligning Army reporting with the DOD policy and command emphasis at all levels. We continue to increase readiness through a culture of deployability and fitness. Of the 64,000 non-deployable soldiers in the Army as of December 2019, -44,000 (or 69 percent) are non-deployable due to medical conditions. The most common non-deployable medical condition is a temporary medical profile (between 31 and 90 days) for a minor injury or illness (-21,000 or 34 percent), primarily for musculoskeletal injuries and behavioral health conditions. We are currently reviewing our medical readiness categories and classification of light duty personnel (temporary profiles) to determine how best to align them with Office of the Secretary of Defense guidance provided in the latest DOD instructions to more accurately depict a soldier's deployability status at the operational, Service, and DOD levels.

The personnel readiness of Regular Army Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs) has more than doubled from June 2016 to December 2019 when 80 percent of AC BCTs achieved the highest state of personnel readiness. The continued increased of personnel readiness is attributable to the collaborative efforts of Army senior leader emphasis and an engaged medical community.

The Army remains committed to efficiently evaluating our Nation's wounded, ill and injured soldiers through the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES). This collaborative DOD and Veterans Affairs (VA) program continues to provide a comprehensive medical evaluation for determining whether soldiers are fit for continued military service. If found unfit, our priority is to deliver timely transition assistance and DOD and VA benefits upon separation. Improving trends in case proc-

essing times demonstrate the Army's resolve. Processing time (process referral to separation) continues to decrease from the 2018 average of 201 days to 193 days, as of December 2019. In accordance with the Secretary of Defense's IDIS Directive dated September 19, 2019, we continue to strive towards achieving DOD's revised 180-day IDIS timeliness goal by December 2020. As of February 2, 2020, the IDIS non-deployable population remains steady at approximately 11,500 enrollments.

MANAGING THE TALENT OF THE TOTAL FORCE

Talent management provides our Army a competitive advantage in an era of accelerating technological change, generational shifts and global competitors who are rapidly closing the gap in economic and technological advancement. Our vision is to keep the Army at the forefront as the premier organization for human capital development and performance while delivering a diverse, professional force that dominates in land combat. We are creating a data-rich 21st century talent management system that enables decision-making using relevant information about individuals' unique skills, knowledge, behavior and preferences. The goal is to place the right person, in the right job, at the right time, over time. The Army is currently prototyping, piloting, or implementing talent management initiatives from Talent Based Branching (TBB) to Battalion Commander Assessment Program (BCAP), with the goal of implementing most of these initiatives by December 2020.

The fiscal year 2019 NDAA provided the Army with key authorities we need to increase career flexibility for the officer corps. The Army now has the ability to promote officers based on merit, not just seniority, which was the approved way of doing business for the last 40 years. During the first iteration of "Opt-In," 18 of 24 officers meeting specific criteria in the Information Dominance category elected to participate in the fiscal year 2020 lieutenant colonel promotion board. During the same board, four officers applied, and two were approved, to "Opt-Out" of their primary zone consideration. Moreover, as of January, the Army has direct commissioned nine cyber officers. Three more await attendance at the Direct Commission Course.

The Army is creating an officer career assessment structure that begins with TBB. This initiative increased top quality talent matches between cadets and basic branches. Branches filled 66 percent of their allocations with "most preferred" cadets compared to 40 percent previously, and 88 percent of cadets received their top preference—up from 77 percent. Officers are next assessed at the Captain's Career Course where, as of fiscal year 2020, they are required to take the Graduate Record Exam and a battery of cognitive assessments. A series of cognitive and non-cognitive assessments are administered during Intermediate-Level Education to inform assignment and selection decisions. The culture of assessment continues with the BCAP. This 5-day program assessed a participant's fitness, written and verbal communication, and cognitive and non-cognitive abilities. Exit interviews and surveys from participants, board members, and distinguished visitors indicate BCAP is better than the legacy system for selecting battalion commanders and other key lieutenant colonel positions. Seven hundred and fifty candidates participated in the first iteration of the BCAP in January and February 2020.

The data gleaned from the officer career assessment structure and the Army Talent Alignment Process (ATAP), a regulated marketplace for assignments, will inform better decisions. The first assignment cycle for the ATAP (October–November 2019) saw more than 14,000 eligible officers and units participate. Increased two-way participation resulted in more than 55 percent of officers receiving their first-choice assignment and more than 80 percent of the officers receiving an assignment in their top 10 percent of preferences.

The Army is incorporating talent management into enlisted accessions through new programs, including the Assessment of Recruit Motivation and Strength Program (ARMS 2.0) and the Tailored Adaptive Personality Assessment System (TAPAS). Enlisted manning cycles are also now implementing talent management enhancements.

In support of talent management initiatives, the Army is building an enlisted marketplace as a temporary bridge to IPPS-A marketplace and talent management functionality. Active component soldiers will see all available requirements for which they are eligible, and will be able to preference them in an automated marketplace-type interface. The Army plans to roll out a marketplace pilot in June 2020 for Armor, Military Intelligence, and unit supply specialists, with Army-wide marketplace roll out projected for November 2020.

ENHANCING SOLDIER AND FAMILY QUALITY OF LIFE

The Army has established a Quality of Life Task Force to address some of the most pressing issues confronting Army families today, including spouse employment, housing, and childcare. The task force is looking at specific actions which could help address spouse under/unemployment, including spouse preference for Federal jobs and opportunities to engage with industry partners to leverage spouse employment opportunities. The task force is also looking at ways to educate spouses on employment resources and simplifying the application process for home-based businesses. Additionally, in accordance with the fiscal year 2020 NDAA, the Army recently released a policy update to reimburse spouses up to \$1,000 for re-licensure/re-certification due to a permanent change of station.

The Army recognizes that access to affordable and reliable childcare for our military families is an important quality of life and readiness issue. We are focusing first on those installations with the longest wait lists for childcare services and are requesting congressional approval and funding for three child development center (CDC) military construction projects (2 CDCs in Hawaii and one in Alaska) that will have 900 childcare spaces. We have aggressively focused on building our Family Child Care (FCC) program through marketing and incentives. In January 2019, there were 130 FCC providers and today there are 215. This is not only good news for building childcare capacity, but has also provided 85 military spouses with employment.

ARMY REVIEW BOARDS AGENCY / ARMY BOARD FOR CORRECTION OF MILITARY RECORDS

The Army's recent backlog of 14,000 cases has been reduced to 3,200. The majority of the remaining cases are awaiting medical or behavioral health advisories prior to adjudication. This backlog grew primarily due to changes in legislation, which directed liberal consideration for post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injuries, other behavior health issues, and military sexual trauma, which resulted in an influx of cases submitted. To address the backlog, with Army leadership's assistance, Army Review Boards Agency (ARBA) was permitted to hire 40 temporary (term) employees to eliminate the backlog of cases by June 2020. We are on track to complete all cases by the June 2020 deadline.

ARBA is also completing a business transformation where daily production practices are streamlined to prevent future backlogs. The agency is currently testing a new automated system which will assist in overall production and reporting and tracking of cases. Additionally, the agency is restructuring its work force to address the task to resource requirements. ARBA expects to return to congressional mandated timelines for fiscal year 2019 and beyond.

SOLDIERS FOR LIFE

Taking care of soldiers and their families while they are in the Army is just one part of our commitment to serving them. For those transitioning from Active Duty, we continue to support them in a way that reinforces a powerful and enduring identity as lifelong members of the Army team, whether as civilian alumni of Army service or as a "Soldier for Life."

The Army's Soldier for Life program coordinates and collaborates with Army, government, and non-government organizations in order to influence policies, programs, and services that support soldiers, veterans and families. Soldier for Life engages all levels of government, private industry, educational institutions, and military and veteran support organizations to enhance the transition process, reduce veteran unemployment and connect veterans with services. Soldier for Life creates an environment where soldiers, veterans and families embrace their positive Army experience and return to their communities as Army ambassadors, leaders of character, commitment and service, and inspire others to serve through personal example.

It is in the Army's and our Nation's best interest to ensure soldiers transition successfully back into our communities. In accordance with the fiscal year 2019 NDAA, we continue to enhance our policies and procedures to ensure a more individualized approach for transitioning soldiers. All soldiers are required to begin the transition process no later than 365 days before the date of their anticipated transition from Active Duty. For fiscal year 2019, the Army's Veterans Opportunity to Work (VOW) Act compliance is 89 percent. According to data from the Department of Labor, in fiscal year 2019 the Army TAP [Transition Assistance Program] efforts assisted in reducing the unemployment rate for veterans that joined the Army after September 11, 2001, to less than 4 percent (3.4 percent) for the first time, with the lowest amount of unemployment compensation for veterans in 19 years. Between fiscal year 2011 and fiscal year 2019, Army TAP efforts coupled with the Nation's low un-

employment rates have contributed to an 86.1 percent decrease in total Unemployment Compensation for Ex-servicemembers (UCX) payments (\$514.6 million to \$71.6 million). The fiscal year 2019 UCX invoice is the lowest since fiscal year 2000 (\$75.1 million).

Soldiers of all ranks, throughout every phase of the military lifecycle, are provided a full range of comprehensive education services by highly competent and caring guidance counselors. Such services include conducting detailed educational needs assessments, academic testing, degree planning and career exploration activities, as well as counseling on both tuition assistance and the new credentialing assistance program. These programs enable soldiers to receive generous Army funding (\$4,000/year) for courses from more than 2,000 accredited academic institutions and, hundreds of career enhancing credentials. Voluntary education and credentialing assistance programs have something of value to offer every soldier, and the degrees and credentials they earn not only help to make them better soldiers while still serving in the Army, they are also better prepared for life after their military service.

The Career Skills Program (CSP) provides soldiers the opportunity to participate in first-class apprenticeships, on-the-job training, employment skills training, and internships. It also affords soldiers the opportunity to obtain industry-recognized skills and move into high-demand and highly skilled careers at little to no cost. The Army has over 500 industry partners in the CSP program. In fiscal year 2019, 4,782 soldiers completed a CSP, and 4,572 of them received job placement following their training. This is a 95.61 percent placement rate.

We have invested a tremendous amount of resources and deliberate planning to preserve the All-Volunteer Force. People are the Army ... these men and women who serve our Nation, both in and out of uniform, along with their families, are our most important asset. Accordingly, taking care of our people is key to Army readiness, modernization, and reform. Army culture is grounded in our enduring values of loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage. Every one of our people has unique talents and abilities they are willing to use in service to our Nation, and we owe them the opportunity to do so. Chairman Tillis, Ranking Member Gillibrand, Members of this Committee, I thank you for generous and unwavering support of our outstanding soldiers, civilian professionals, and their families.

Senator TILLIS. Thank you.

Mr. Slavonic, welcome back.

STATEMENT OF HON. GREGORY J. SLAVONIC, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE NAVY FOR MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS; ACCOMPANIED BY: VICE ADMIRAL JOHN B. NOWELL, JR., USN, DEPUTY CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS FOR MANPOWER, PERSONNEL, TRAINING, AND EDUCATION, N-1; AND LIEUTENANT GENERAL MICHAEL A. ROCCO, USMC, DEPUTY COMMANDER FOR MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS

Secretary SLAVONIC. Thank you, sir.

Chairman Tillis, Ranking Member Gillibrand, distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, it is my privilege and honor to be here today and share the table with Vice Admiral Nowell, Lieutenant General Rocco, as well as senior leaders from our sister Services, all here representing our Nation's finest.

I always appreciate any opportunity to talk about what I believe to be our most significant and critical assets to the advancement of our mission: our sailors, marines, both Active, Reserve, their families, and civilian men and women who together are globally engaged in the full spectrum of operations while being prepared to win against the future threats they deploy.

We are an integrated team collectively demonstrating talent and dedication second to none. We are always vigilant, collectively shouldering responsibilities and achieving the National Defense Strategy. The Navy and Marine Corps team has risen to meet chal-

allenges of our competitors, a team that is bonded together by almost 250 years of tradition and deep-seated sense of duty to our Nation.

Today we face an unprecedented intense threat to our way of life, coupled with complex systems, advancing technologies. Our Nation needs a strong, well trained, well equipped Navy and Marine Corps to address the diverse array of challenges and threats they face every day. We must leverage our talent to retain our competitive edge and our technological dominance.

The changing strategic landscape demands we manage our talent, military and civilian, ensuring we are good stewards of the taxpayers' dollars. Our naval force is in the midst of a sweeping transformation replacing decades' worth of unchanged processes and outdated technology with a modern personnel talent management delivery system from recruitment to retirement, improving the quality of service to sailors, marines, and their families.

Sailor 2025 modernization complements the programs of our ships, submarines and aircraft. We must improve work-life balance, including health and wellness, while creating an environment built on trust, transparency, inclusion, connectedness among our sailors, marines, and their families.

The rising threat environment, coupled with low unemployment, presents incredible challenges in our ability to recruit and retain high performing, highly skilled talent in both the Navy and the Marine Corps. The Services have achieved tremendous success meeting all enlisted and officer recruiting goals. We will continue leveraging special pays and bonuses to ensure adequate numbers of qualified personnel are available in hard-to-fill specialties. Most Services have areas of challenges in recruiting and retaining critical talent, and incentive pays are vital to our success and viability in retaining an innovative skilled force.

Achieving dominance in the great power competition demands an agile force focused on increasing lethality and building capacity. To that end, we must continue to invest in the mechanisms which ensure the Services are able to meet their recruitment and end strength goals for the foreseeable future. Right now, we enjoy a force of unprecedented quality, the finest and most advanced sailors and marines, and civilian employees, including world renowned scientists and patent holders.

If we are to maintain a credible and modern, forward-leaning global presence, we must leverage all the capabilities our Nation affords to secure excellence in our human capital talent. To ensure our future success, we need to plan and develop and manage better our human assets. Taking care of our people as they take care of our Nation is paramount to any and all mission success.

I enlisted in the Navy in 1971, followed by two deployments to sea. I earned a commission as a Reserve officer. Then after a 34-year naval career, including several recalls to Active Duty, I recognized the magnitude and responsibility of raising your right hand to take the oath to serve your country, preserving these freedoms, and safeguarding our Nation.

I understand the stresses and challenges placed on our servicemembers and their families every day. I understand the importance of a spouse who supports the servicemember who has a responsibility to care for the family when he or she is deployed. In

my humble opinion, being a spouse of a servicemember is one of the most undervalued and difficult jobs there is. The high tempo, high stress environment appears to be the new normal for the Department of the Navy. Our people consistently step up and perform superbly in times of greatest need.

With your sustained support, we will be able to continue to recruit, develop, and retain the best and brightest our Nation has to offer for years to come. These men and women who will preserve peace, and ensure our national security which our Nation deserves. I take this opportunity to be here today, and I stand ready to take any questions. Thank you.

[The prepared statements of Admiral Nowell and Lieutenant General Rocco follow:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY VICE ADMIRAL JOHN B. NOWELL

INTRODUCTION

Chairman Tillis, Ranking Member Gillibrand, and distinguished Members of the military, Personnel Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss our Navy's most important strategic asset, our people.

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT

As stated in the 2018 National Defense Strategy (NDS), the United States (U.S.) is in a new era of great power competition with the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Russian Federation (RF), both of whom are leveraging all elements of their national power to execute global ambitions. For the first time since the end of the Cold War, our Nation is in a "hegemonic struggle" for control of global markets, diplomatic power blocks, and critical global lines of communication, including sea, air, space, and cyberspace. Our competitive advantage is shrinking, and the world finds itself among the three competing ethe of PRC's Belt and Road strategy, Russian state-sponsored coercion, and American freedom of the global commons. For over 20 years, these competitors have been studying our methods and tactics to gain an advantage by exploiting our vulnerabilities. The PRC and RF endeavor to transform the entire international system to their advantage and will attempt to overwhelm us by advancing at a rapid pace in this long term competition. However, we will maintain and increase our edge by leveraging our greatest warfighting advantage and asymmetric asset, our people.

NAVY THE NATION NEEDS

To be victorious in great power competition, we must identify, recruit, train, develop, manage, and retain the most talented Navy workforce possible, and these men and women will be the first line of defense between the U.S. and our global strategic competitors. Additionally, we will continue to strengthen the One Navy Team by establishing a culture that champions toughness, trust, and connectedness. This will maximize readiness and warfighting excellence, enabling every person to be ready for decisive combat operations. To win, we must enable our teams to think more clearly, learn more rapidly, and make better decisions faster and more accurately than our adversaries.

Just as the aging fleet must be modernized to confront these new challenges, we must overhaul our antiquated 20th century, industrial-era personnel system. This will allow our Navy to benefit from a more agile, adaptive, and better trained force, ready to meet an increasingly complex mission. MyNavy HR's three strategic goals of Transformation, Sailor 2025, and Man the fleet are vital to combat current and emerging threats, deliver global lethality, and maintain maritime superiority.

WARFIGHTING TALENT MANAGEMENT IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Given the rapidly changing strategic landscape, we must manage talent differently. Navy is in the middle of a sweeping transformation by replacing decades' worth of unchanged processes and outdated technology with a modern, world-class personnel talent management delivery system. The MyNavy HR transformation provides continuous improvements for all "hire to retire" processes (recruitment, train-

ing, education, management, and personnel distribution) to develop and sustain the Navy.

MyNavy HR Operating Model

In recognition of the need to modernize, MyNavy HR formally established three operating pillars: force development, force management, and enterprise support. Force development focuses on recruiting, training, and providing sailors to the fleet, force management is in charge of all aspects of their subsequent talent management, and enterprise support maintains the infrastructure utilized by these pillars and facilitates alignment across all aspects of Navy's personnel system. This new operating model is re-engineering our business policies and processes by leveraging modern technologies to significantly improve personnel readiness and the quality of service to our sailors and their families.

Capabilities Delivered

New capabilities have been delivered benefitting our sailors. These include innovative programs, applications, and software that have had immediate and positive impact on recruitment, detailing, and the full range of tools we use for compensation, including monetary and non-monetary. Navy Recruiting Command transitioned to a new operating model and is using commercial off-the-shelf software to lower costs and improve efficiency. Recruiters now specialize in one area of the recruiting mission vice being responsible for the same recruit throughout the entire accessions process. This allows recruiters to maximize their attention on future sailors, leading to less attrition.

Two MyNavy Career Center locations in Millington, Tennessee and Little Creek, Virginia are now operating call centers 24/7, recognizing that the arduous schedules of our sailors requires a different model of constant support. Three transaction support centers are online, consolidating services and replacing legacy personnel support detachments with an end state of approximately 12 regional support centers located in fleet concentration areas, providing training and specialized services. We have created a rapid prototype pilot of the new Navy Personnel and Pay (NP2) system, an auditable, cloud-hosted system, enabling Treasury direct disbursement.

Several mobile applications including MyRecord Mobile, MyNavy PCS, and MyNavy Family are providing access to information for sailors and their families on the mobile devices they prefer with any multifactor authentication. Additionally, MyNavy Assignment offers sailors an improved way of managing their careers through an enhanced ability to apply for assignments, giving the individual sailor more control over his or her career while increasing fleet readiness through both lines of effort.

Future Capabilities

As modernization continues, over 55 legacy non-interoperable systems are being replaced with a single integrated "system of systems" built on commercial platforms with minimal customization. This will increase readiness, reduce costs, and improve security and auditability. NP2 improvements will continue, and an authoritative data environment, a "data lake," will allow improved analytic capabilities that will facilitate better talent management, greater flexibility, and increased transparency.

DELIVER SAILOR 2025

MyNavy HR transformation includes Sailor 2025, an initiative which will provide the Navy with a more agile and talented 21st century workforce that will be complementary to the modernization programs of ships, aircraft, and other combat systems. This initiative is built on a framework of three pillars, Personnel System Modernization (PSM), Ready Relevant Learning (RRL), and Career Readiness (CR).

Personnel System Modernization (PSM)

Personnel System Modernization will better identify and manage talent, reward performance, and expand flexibility to officers and enlisted sailors. Examples of those initiatives include promotion merit reorder, promotion board consideration opt-out, expanded continuation (up and stay), the Targeted Re-entry Program, and the detailing marketplace, including MyNavy Assignment (MNA) and Advancement-to-Position (A2P).

With the advent of Congress expanding the authorities of the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act (DOPMA) in the John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019, this increased flexibility has provided us with a better ability to attract and retain a talented officer corps. Promotion Merit Reorder has been extremely effective, allowing us to place up to 15 percent of those selected for promotion to the top of the list, demonstrating the primacy of merit over time-

in-service. Promotion board consideration opt-out enables us to retain top talent by allowing an officer to “opt-out” of promotion consideration to complete a broadening assignment, advanced education, or a career progression requirement delayed by one of these assignments. For example, officers can complete a tour as a White House Fellow or a Marshall or Rhodes scholarship without detriment to their careers, thereby retaining top talent. Expanded continuation allows officers to detour from traditional career tracks that lead to command and pursue paths such as professional flight instructors, acquisition corps leaders, or foreign area officers serving as defense or naval attaches.

We are working hard to meet the demands of our younger generation for greater job satisfaction and work life balance. Targeted Re-entry Program for officers and enlisted sailors offers personnel with critical skills and superior performance the guaranteed opportunity to return to Active Duty following a temporary separation (less than 2 years) from the Navy. Additionally, we have made many advances to our detailing marketplace to improve career flexibility and transparency, including MNA and A2P. MNA allows sailors to view all available fleet billets in any rating and save billets to revisit in later sessions. Sailors can also communicate their skills and talents directly with desired follow-on commands through a robust Sailor Resume module. Another piece of the detailing marketplace is A2P which rewards proven performers willing to take difficult assignments with a spot promotion. This program has been used successfully at the journeyman level for some recruiter and recruit division commander billets and at the supervisory level for key afloat billets. We are expanding the number of billets in this program leveraging fleet feedback.

Ready Relevant Learning (RRL)

Ready Relevant Learning is the establishment of a career long learning continuum which drives fundamental changes to our approach to sailor training by transforming our industrial-era, conveyer-belt training model into a modern, responsive system. Periodically, the skills acquired during accession pipeline training atrophy due to delays between receipt of training and arrival to the fleet, compromising operational readiness. We are using the science-of-learning to transform the current training model to identify modern training solutions delivered at the points of need, better preparing sailors to operate and maintain equipment at its technological limits and to meet rapidly evolving warfighting requirements. Efforts focus across three lines of effort: career-long learning continuum, modern delivery at the point of need, and integrated content development.

We have completed the first stage of the career-long learning continuum line of effort, known as Block Learning. This stage divided existing accession-level training content into smaller blocks, which are moved to real-world points of need in the sailor's career, sometimes shortening initial accession training time and getting sailors to the fleet sooner but also lengthening training when necessary while always focusing on improving readiness. Block Learning uses existing training content while we reengineer the training to meet objectives of the future RRL training continuum. We have completed analysis and approved changes for the 54 ratings previously identified for Block Learning, with 47 now executing training in this new block delivery construct. The remaining 7 bypassed Block Learning and will move directly into Modernized Delivery.

The second line of effort, Modern Delivery at the Point of Need, will take advantage of emerging learning technologies to allow sailors to more efficiently receive training at the point of need, at the waterfront or aboard an operational unit. These training solutions will apply science-of-learning principles to make training more effective, efficient, and available by leveraging technology, thereby, minimizing the necessity of repeatedly returning to legacy brick-and-mortar schoolhouses. To date, we have completed requirements development on 25 ratings. An additional 20 ratings are in requirements development between fiscal year 2020 and fiscal year 2023.

We are executing the first stage of the third line of effort, Integrated Content Development. This has resulted in solidifying the fleet's role in defining training requirements and validating analysis that aligns training content and delivery methods with fleet needs. We delivered the first modernized course, Operations Specialist (OS) A-school in September 2019, and we are on track to deliver two modernized courses in fiscal year 2020 for Intelligence Specialist and Retail Services Specialist A-schools. We project we will deliver four additional modernized courses in early fiscal year 2021 for Personnel Specialist, Yeoman, Yeoman (Subsurface), and Aviation Maintenance Administrationman A-schools, and 13 additional ratings are currently undergoing content modernization.

Career Readiness

Career readiness removes barriers to continued service and improves sailors' work-life balance, health, wellness, and resilience. Providing equal care for our Navy families, we ensure our sailors and their families are continuously supported, allowing our sailors to focus on their mission—warfighting. Our goal is to enhance sailors' career readiness by better developing leaders and removing obstacles that negatively influence sailors' decisions to stay Navy. Our Navy is more powerful and lethal when we leverage and capitalize on the talents and strengths of our military personnel, civilian workforce, and their families and instill an environment in which all personnel are valued and respected. Toward that end, in May 2019, Navy Leader Development Framework 3.0 was released outlining how we develop leaders who demonstrate operational excellence and hold high ideals of integrity and service, while expanding and enhancing trust and confidence. This and many other initiatives are encompassed in a new approach which encourages our sailors to excel in all endeavors, Culture of Excellence (COE).

Culture of Excellence

MyNavy HR launched COE, a Navy wide approach to achieve warfighting excellence by fostering psychological, physical, and emotional toughness; promoting organizational trust and transparency; and ensuring inclusion and connectedness among every sailor, family member and civilian throughout their Navy journey.

To attain cultural excellence, Navy must evolve beyond responding to incidents after they occur. We will always maintain the ability to properly respond to incidents, but our focus must be on proactively preventing incidents from occurring in the first place by focusing on three key areas:

- We are working to better define problems faced by our sailors using tools such as human factors analysis and predictive data analytics.
- By developing the Behavior Learning Continuum, we are identifying primary prevention touchpoints for behavioral learning across a sailor's career continuum, from recruitment to transition.
- Evidence-based policies, programs, practices, and processes address the full spectrum of behaviors.

Navy continues to actively address the interpersonal problems associated with suicide through updated policies, programs, campaigns, and training. We are also growing our embedded mental health program, which places trained mental health professionals within operational units to encourage help seeking, identify problems early, and provide guidance to leaders as they assist sailors returning to mission readiness. Our "Every Sailor, Every Day" campaign is an award-winning, evidence-based health communication campaign designed to educate and empower sailors to cope during times of increased stress. This includes practicing self-care, help-seeking behavior, and lethal means safety. We continue to emphasize to our leaders and sailors the importance of building trust and connectedness within their commands to create an environment where they feel comfortable asking for help and getting assistance without fear or career concerns.

The Expanded Operational Stress Control (E-OSC) program informs, empowers, and encourages sailors, civilians, and their families to identify signs of stress within themselves and others. The E-OSC program will leverage Command Resilience Teams (CRT) and deckplate leadership by providing more accessible, collaborative resources and real-time assessments of unit culture to promote healthy command climates and mitigate risks. Together, the E-OSC program and CRTs will target and address the broad range of stressors (e.g., relationship problems, career transitions, disciplinary/legal issues, performance issues and financial strain) that affect sailors experiences. CRTs will also embrace and adopt the principles of primary prevention and a Human Factors Process (HFP).

Navy's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program (SAPR) reflects our force-wide commitment that sexual assault is not tolerated, condoned, or ignored. Sexual assault is a threat that adversely affects readiness, morale, and retention. We remain focused on developing and implementing strengthened prevention efforts and increasing victim reporting, support, and resiliency. Accordingly, Navy leadership continues to pursue and implement a more dynamic, team-focused prevention strategy with assessment and evaluation as key components. We remain committed to cultivating an environment of mutual dignity and respect for all, in which sailors look out for their shipmates, victims are supported, and offenders are held appropriately accountable.

Since fiscal year 2019, Navy has partnered with the One Love Foundation to provide One Love Escalation Workshop training to 5,606 young sailors between the ages of 18–24 years old. The workshop focuses on making audiences aware of unhealthy relationship behaviors, providing the tools to identify and intervene in-

timate partner violence situations, and available resources. This primary prevention training program promotes a social change model that encourages a culture where relationships are built on respect and equality.

In August 2019, Navy released Navy Family Framework 2.0 to set new goals in light of the progress we have made since the release of Navy Family Framework 1.0. This initiative intends to recognize the ever-increasing diversity of sailors, families, and civilians serving our Nation today. This initiative includes:

- Fostering a command where sailors and families can thrive.
- Better connecting and informing our Navy team.
- Ensuring relevant and responsive family quality of life programs.
- Navy leaders being accountable for the execution of their individual plans to implement this Family Framework.
- Implementing policy and procedures using MyNavy Career Center to reimburse spouse licensure fees incurred due to a permanent change of station move.
- Releasing a mobile application designed for Navy spouses to identify, consolidate, and standardize information available to spouses and families into one authoritative source. We leveraged spouse input in the design and testing to ensure we delivered an effective product designed by Navy spouses for Navy spouses.
- Launching the Navy Family Portal, designed to provide ready relevant learning to Navy families 24/7. Portal materials address key issues identified by Navy spouses during the Navy Spouse Engagement Study and address the goals of the Navy Family Framework.

MAN THE FLEET

Over the past year, there has been significant progress in our MyNavy HR transformation and Sailor 2025 efforts which will posture us better to address MyNavy HR's third strategic goal, Man the Fleet. In support of the Navy's growth, MyNavy HR continues to recruit, train, and retain the best and brightest our Nation has to offer while improving quality of life and service.

Competing for Talent

Recruiting and retaining superb talent is not trivial given today's historically low unemployment rate. Given these trends, MyNavy HR must continue to develop and improve recruiting strategies for all demographic groups and find ways to best leverage existing incentives to attract and retain personnel.

Centennials, as the youngest military-eligible generation, having been born between 1997 and 2012, are our main source of new recruits. Understanding this generation is key to winning the war for talent, and we must tailor our recruiting tactics and marketing to build our workforce by understanding their motivations and desires. Our most diverse generation, centennial sailors:

- Have never known life without the internet or smartphones, spending an average of 3-½ hours on mobile devices daily.
- Are visual communicators as opposed to verbal communicators, hence the proliferation of Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and other visual media.
- Prefer to learn through YouTube, and they use it as a visual guide to understand how things work.
- Are focused on career progression and growth.
- Value job satisfaction just as much as financial stability including the ability to return to a previous company.
- Believe they need to make a difference, and they will seek out and work to make change, even in small ways.
- Are work-minded, entrepreneurial, and independent but also like working on teams towards a common goal.

In order to recruit a diverse and talented workforce, Navy has updated and refined Active, Reserve, and civilian recruiting strategies using data to understand and eliminate barriers and ensure outreach to all segments of society. We continue this effort by ensuring recruiters understand the effects of bias and other barriers to inclusion, as well as Navy's diversity recruiting needs. Additionally, we have collaborated with affinity groups and professional development organizations to assist in communicating Navy's strategy of recruiting a diverse and talented workforce, while updating and refining military recruiting and civilian hiring metrics to better reflect Navy's inclusion and diversity needs.

End Strength and Budget Growth

By tailoring our recruiting efforts towards Centennials, we are growing the Navy's ranks readipously (up by 7,118 from fiscal year 2018 to fiscal year 2019) to enhance readiness and growth in an era of great power competition. Retention num-

bers remained excellent in fiscal year 2019 despite a strong economy. Our recruiting and retention efforts resulted in Navy finishing the year over 1,585 sailors above fiscal year 2019 authorized end strength levels, positioning Navy for further growth this year. We will need to expand efforts to maintain high retention, as increasing accessions alone will not be sufficient to Man the Fleet. Even in this successful year for retention, we were short of supporting Navy's growing demand, and we also continue to face challenges in recruiting and retaining sailors in specific high-demand skill sets, e.g., nuclear field, cyber warfare, special warfare/operations, and certain aviation specialties. Successfully growing this inventory minimizes friction that can lead to gaps at sea, decreases pressure on higher operating tempo on these critical skill sets including increased time in arduous billets, and reduces requirements for retention and reenlistment bonuses.

For these reasons, a commitment to continued investment is necessary to man the Fleet. The President's Budget for fiscal year 2021 funds growth in Navy's Active end strength by an additional 7,300 sailors (above fiscal year 2020), and in addition to funding increases in manning and training, the budget request supports growth in special and incentive pays, critical to recruiting and retention. These requests also provide funding for MyNavy transformation and Sailor 2025 efforts.

Enlisted Recruiting

Navy concluded fiscal year 2019 having achieved 100 percent (39,027/39,000) of our Active component (AC) accession goal. Unfortunately, Navy's record high AC retention made the Reserve accession goal more challenging due to fewer eligible personnel separating from the Navy to affiliate as reservists, and we were short in Reserve component (RC) accessions, achieving only 91 percent of goal (7,412 of 8,162). Although these shortfalls are a concern, the Navy-wide impact is manageable as RC achieved overall congressionally mandated end strength levels, and year-over-year, the fiscal year 2020 AC enlisted accession mission is increasing.

To support this challenging recruiting mission, we executed several new initiatives. In May 2019, the Street-to-Fleet initiative, from recruiting a civilian to delivering a trained sailor to their first command, created synergy and unity of effort throughout the accession and training process. It also improved continuous communication and collaboration across recruiting and training commands.

As a result of transformation, there are now 10 Navy Talent Acquisition Groups (NTAG) and 16 Navy Recruiting Districts (NRD). We will transform three more districts in fiscal year 2020, and all 26 will transform by fiscal year 2023. The new transformative business model embraces and exploits the speed, accuracy, flexibility, and agility of today's digital environment. It optimizes individual recruiter talents, streamlines processes and ultimately attracts high quality recruits. There will be 65 Talent Acquisition and Onboarding Centers (TAOC) nationwide in geographical regions with relatively high population density, and each TAOC will have an appropriate number of Talent Acquisition Sites to meet the unique supply and demand opportunities and challenges of the local market.

Cloud-based Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software facilitates personalized customer service, management decision support, and opportunity and territory management capabilities. CRM is being employed in 11 NRDs/NTAGs and is on track to complete the rollout in all NRDs/NTAGs across the Nation in April 2020.

MyNavy HR employs a two-pronged incentive approach, one focused on augmenting and rewarding our workforce and the other on finding and incentivizing our future workforce. We leveraged Navy Reserve Sailors to provide over 400 additional recruiters, and we extended over 427 high performing recruiters for a period of 6 to 12 months. To attract and leverage the best Navy talent for recruiting duty, we continue to offer 12 months of Sea-Duty credit, A2P in our hard to fill areas, and promote highly qualified E-4s under the Selective Training and Reenlistment (STAR) program.

To increase general awareness and propensity to serve in the Navy, we continue to utilize the Forged by the Sea digitally focused marketing and advertising campaign. Digital prospecting allows recruiters to leverage messaging tools on the Navy.com website as well as other social media to start initial conversations with prospective recruits. We are targeting diverse audiences using digital media on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, and Reddit, increased Forged by the Sea content, and the launch of a Navy Esports team to access a rapidly expanding youth market. These changes have increased the total number of new recruiting prospects and are allowing us to reach markets with diverse candidates we previously have not accessed.

Enlisted Retention

Retention of every capable sailor has remained a vital element of Navy's growth strategy. We succeeded in preserving increased retention across all pay grades in fiscal year 2019 by continuing to apply a range of force management tools. This has maximized retention efforts for proven performers across the Navy to meet growing current and future mission requirements. While overall enlisted retention in fiscal year 2019 continued to set high marks not seen in years, critical community skill sets are experiencing some challenges in Navy's current steep growth environment, including nuclear field, special warfare, advanced electronics, aviation maintenance, information warfare, and the submarine force. These skills are challenging to attract and retain in the current job and education markets. They require continued efforts including both monetary and non-monetary incentives, focused on meeting the specific and targeted needs of our sailors and their families.

Monetary and non-monetary incentives will remain an integral part of our proactive retention strategy to address force structure challenges and meet operational requirements. Special and incentive pays continue to play a vital role in the retention of sailors with high-risk, high-demand, and high-investment skills within operationally intensive ratings, including our new pilot program that adds a merit-based component to enlisted retention bonuses. Non-monetary incentives include advancement opportunities and geographic stability, and the combination of initiatives provides our sailors and their families more choice and flexibility to manage their Navy careers.

Officer Force Management

Competition remains significant as we continue use of every tool to recruit America's top talent into our officer corps, train them with cutting-edge technology and techniques, and retain their expertise to preserve our competitive advantage in the maritime security environment. Following enactment of the John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019, we immediately implemented a number of critical officer personnel management modernization authorities to help shape the future officer corps including:

- Applying expanded constructive service credit to recruit civilian candidates with the requisite education, leadership and experience credentials for leadership roles in cyber, acquisition, and engineering fields.
- Expanding spot promotion authority beginning in fiscal year 2019 to designated O-5 and O-6 billets.
- Applying merit promotion authority with fiscal year 2020 Active promotion selection boards to incentivize and reward top performance.
- Permitting certain control grade officers serving in targeted skills to remain on Active Duty beyond traditional statutory limits, e.g., professional flight instructor retention program, along with chaplains and JAG Corps officers. This has been expanded to Major Acquisition Program Management and Naval and Defense Attaché billets.
- Beginning with the fiscal year 2021 promotion board cycle, we are leveraging promotion deferment authority to afford greater flexibility to top performing officers whose competitiveness for promotion might otherwise suffer due to participation in career broadening opportunities encouraged by the Navy, e.g., Rhodes and Olmsted Scholars.

We are undergoing a cultural shift in education strategy and management to ensure our highest caliber officers are sought out early, encouraged, and placed in selective graduate level programs, enhancing our warfighting capabilities and sustaining strategic superiority. Supporting this effort, we implemented a range of process and policy changes that most prominently include the requirement for In-Residence Graduate Education by all unrestricted line (URL) officers in year group 2015 and beyond before assuming major command. Officers who are proceeding to URL major command are already the best operational leaders in the Navy, and this will ensure our most talented officers are given the opportunity to take this educational pause to mature their strategic thinking skills.

Officer Recruiting

In fiscal year 2020, candidates continued to show strong interest in commissioning opportunities through Officer Candidate School (OCS), United States Naval Academy (USNA), and Navy Reserve Officer Training Corps (NROTC) programs, as the number of highly qualified applicants vastly exceeds the number of available appointments. Officer accession sources continue to attract the finest applicants and graduate well-rounded, technically competent leaders for commissioned naval service. The market remains challenging for certain designators, such as Judge Advocate General's Corps and Medical Corps officers. The Navy veterans program also faces

difficulties as a direct result of our high AC retention efforts, which reduced the number of officers separating from the Navy. We attained 101 percent (2,421/2,385) of the AC officer mission and 72 percent (1,313/1,812) of the RC mission which includes both Navy veterans and direct commissioned officers. In fiscal year 2019, we shipped 1,577 officer candidates to OCS, which is the highest number in 20 years, and we achieved 102 percent of OCS shipping goal, which is the highest percentage in 10 years. Additionally, we achieved Chaplain Corps mission, with no shortfalls of AC or RC for the third straight year.

To support inclusion and diversity, Navy has established the NROTC Preparatory Program (NPP) to enhance midshipmen candidates' mental and physical foundations preparing them for success in the NROTC. The NROTC Preparatory Scholarship Reservations (NPSR) program is foundational to these efforts. Under NPSR, interested high school students may apply for one-year university or privately funded scholarships to support room, board and tuition while enrolled in a university NPP, designed to improve academic and life skills to prepare midshipmen for the rigorous NROTC academic program. This expanded relationship between the Navy and schools that host preparatory programs offers a performance-based pathway for midshipmen candidates to earn NROTC scholarships. Through the NPSR program, host universities have a yearlong commitment, which provides an opportunity to students who show potential via grades, character, and extra-curricular activities but attended high schools with limited resources. The program's objective is to expand NROTC scholarship opportunities by accessing this untapped talent and potential. Academic year 2018–2019 was NPP's initial test year with four midshipman candidates completing the program and receiving NROTC scholarships. For academic year 2019–2020, 67 midshipmen candidates are enrolled in the NPP, and to date, there are over 100 applicants for academic year 2020–2021, demonstrating significant interest in this program.

Officer Retention

While officer retention remains sufficient to meet milestone requirements in most communities, it remains challenging to meet our requirements for aviation warfare officers in specific type/model/series platforms, nuclear-trained surface warfare officers, submarine officers, and naval special warfare (NSW), specifically Navy SEALs. We continue to apply and refine a combination of monetary and non-monetary incentives to address retention among these groups.

Naval aviation's inventory and accessions (tactical, maritime, and rotary wing combined) remain sufficient to meet operational requirements. However, declining retention in some AC and RC communities, especially strike fighter (VFA) and electronic attack (VAQ) pilots, continue to present serious challenges to aviation's long-term health. The Chief of Naval Air Forces has embraced the range of MyNavy HR led-initiatives, and has been equally engaged with Navy leadership in reversing adverse trends along multiple fronts including:

- Maintainer retention/training issues, spare parts availability, and depot level maintenance concerns impacting Strike Fighter inventory and, consequently, flight hours and tactical training/qualification progression of fighter pilots.
- Addressing Quality of Life and Quality of Service challenges for our aviation families in remote locations, specifically NAS Lemoore and NAS Fallon.
- Enhanced Monetary Incentives. Substantial, across-the-board improvements to Aviation Bonus (AvB) and Aviation Incentive Pay (AvIP) were made last year that increased flight pay and bonus levels in a mutually supportive fashion tied to achievement of leadership milestones. It is still too soon to fully evaluate the effectiveness of these changes, but early indications are positive.
- Improved access to career-enhancing opportunities to improve flexibility in the Navy aviation career path, e.g., graduate school and fellowships, Tours with Industry, and the Career Intermission Program.
- Professional Flight Instructor (PFI) career path initiative allows selected officers to serve continuously as flight instructors beyond Department Head. This career path offers greater assignment stability for selected officers and their families, and provides rewarding experiences shaping the development of our newest aviators. The PFI program is intended to improve retention by responding to calls for greater career choice/flexibility, while also improving instructor manning.

The combination of aviation-specific incentives already underway, coupled with a wide range of officer personnel reforms under the Sailor 2025 initiatives, are slowing the trend of aviators choosing to leave the service after their initial commitment. Sustained support for readiness enabler accounts, including the flight hour and aircraft spares accounts, is critical to improving the quality of aviation service in the near term. This support, along with the personnel modernization initiatives already

implemented, should contribute to meaningful changes to the critical issues causing our aviators to leave the service.

The NSW, Submarine, and Surface Warfare (Nuclear) communities are also working hard to retain their best talent through tailored monetary incentives to include retention bonuses for officers willing to commit early to future service and special duty pays for challenging nuclear billets. We are renewing the NSW Officer Bonus Programs to increase retention across milestone tours. Additionally, we have consolidated Jump, Dive, and Demolition pays into a single Skill Incentive Pay (SkIP) to minimize costly training interruptions in the Inter-Deployment Training Cycle and financial disincentives associated with operators seeking medical care.

Finally, in this era of great power competition, Navy is staying alert to opportunities for shaping the composition of the officer corps in order to create a more effective apparatus necessary to defeat our adversaries. Examples of these initiatives include:

- Investments in Enlisted and Officer Cyber skill communities. We trained and commissioned our first Cyber Warrant Officers in fiscal year 2020. This initiative is intended to retain enlisted cyber warriors through an on-ramp into the warrant officer community. This will enhance experience in this critical warfare area by increasing the average number of years of service due to retaining members at the journeyman and supervisor level. Navy is producing more Cyber Engineer trained personnel at USNA and has stood up a 12 month Master of Science in Applied Cyber Operations program at the Naval Postgraduate School.
- Closer management of Space-experienced personnel to ensure we are sensibly tracking and growing this cadre of skills for assignments in Maritime Operations Centers and the rapidly developing Space Command and Space Force to ensure U.S. domination in this domain.
- Expansion of the role the Information Warfare Community plays relative to the URL given the ever increasing role being played in the cyber and space domains.
- An acceleration of Artificial Intelligence programs in MyNavy HR.
- Continued use of selective retirement boards for enlisted and officer communities to ensure in this time of outstanding retention we are holding senior leaders accountable for performance that is both routinely satisfactory and professional.
- Achievement of Best-Ever Performance initiative to demand from our sailors and teams an enduring commitment to achieving strong character and professional expertise. This is consistent with efforts to review the perceived breakdown in SPECWAR/SPECOPS cohesion and professionalism, the comprehensive review of the Navy's Judge Advocate General Corps, as well as to strengthen our Culture of Excellence and reaffirm high standards to ensure Navy remains a lethal force.

CONCLUSION

To deliver the Navy the Nation Needs, we must identify, recruit, train, and retain the leaders and talent to build a team that will achieve success in great power competition now and in the future. Through our transformation efforts, MyNavy HR will change an antiquated human resources system into a modern, state of the art system and Sailor 2025 remains our guide to Man the Fleet with the right people, in the right place, at the right time, with the right training. To be competitive in the modern economy, we must recruit faster and smarter while focusing on innovation vice sustainment. We must make data driven decisions, using more accurate, timely, and reliable data while increasing transparency and auditability. We must field cutting edge technologies to support training that keeps pace with the modernizing Navy. We must retain and better utilize the best and brightest our Nation has to offer. I look forward to working with you as we continue to meet the challenges in this new era of great power competition. On behalf of the men and women of the United States Navy, thank you for your unwavering support.

PREPARED STATEMENT BY LIEUTENANT GENERAL MICHAEL A. ROCCO

INTRODUCTION

Chairman Tillis, Ranking Member Gillibrand, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, it is my privilege to appear before you today to provide an overview on Marine Corps personnel.

Since our founding in 1775, marines have answered our Nation's call, faithfully serving the American people and maintaining a high standard of military excellence.

Your Marine Corps is, and will continue to be, our Nation's expeditionary force in readiness. We are warfighters who are ready to rapidly respond to crises around the globe to ensure the continued security of the American people and to protect the interests that underpin our Nation. Marines will be *always faithful* to the trust which the American people have vested in them.

OUR PEOPLE

Mission first, people always. Marines are the centerpiece of the Marine Corps. They are the Corps' most critical resource, and always have been. As highlighted in our 38th Commandant's Planning Guidance (CPG), our principle emphasis must be on recruiting, educating, training, and retaining our marines. As part of that mission, we will continue to instill our core values and a sense of accountability, and treat all marines with dignity, care, respect, and humility.

Recruiting

All Marine Corps recruiting efforts—officer, enlisted, regular, reserve, and prior-service—fall under the Marine Corps Recruiting Command. This is unique amongst the Services. Operationally, this provides us with tremendous flexibility and unity of command, facilitating efforts to meet accession and end strength requirements.

Last fiscal year, we successfully achieved all enlisted and officer recruiting goals for both the Active and Reserve components, and we expect to do the same again this year. We also will exceed all quality goals. The Department of Defense (DOD) requires 90 percent of enlistees to have a high school diploma or equivalent (Education Tier 1), and 60 percent of enlistees to score in the Mental Groups I–IIIA (mental aptitude). Last year, the Marine Corps achieved 99.5 percent for Education Tier 1, and 70.3 percent for Mental Group I–IIIA. We expect to be at or near these levels in fiscal year 2020.

To meet the challenges ahead, we remain committed to assigning our best marines to recruiting duty; we currently assign 3,763 marines to recruiting duty. We must also continue to adequately fund both recruiting operations and advertising; we thank Congress for its support in this goal. Our advertising program is vital to building awareness of the Marine Corps among highquality, diverse populations that are increasingly disconnected from military service. A strong advertising program enables our recruiting command to attract and recruit the highest quality accession cohorts. This, in turn, results in lower first-term attrition, higher quality marines, and increased readiness. Our prioritization of, and investment in, recruiting ensure a high state of readiness for our Corps. Additionally, the Marine Corps is now utilizing the Tailored Adaptive Personality Assessment System test to begin to inform our organization of the applicant's resilience and adaptability to life in the military service.

Retention

The essence of Marine Corps talent management is to retain the very best available marines capable of fulfilling our leadership and operational needs. However, there is a continuous challenge to keep high-quality marines in the service, especially in the current competitive civilian job market.

Marine Corps retention models, systems, policies, and processes emphasize consistency of leadership, personnel stability, and sustained readiness across the force. Officer career designation incorporates a board system that enables leaders to examine officer records and accomplishments. After designation, the promotion process continues the evaluation of marine officers. It is a primary tool by which we retain only the best and most qualified marines.

For enlisted marines, a tiered rating system takes into account a number of quantifiable performance factors and includes inputs from both immediate and more senior leaders. It helps to set achievable goals for marines as they compete for retention. After initial reenlistment, the evaluation and continued retention of high quality enlisted marines is supported by a detailed and continual performance evaluation system which is fully integrated with the promotion process. Those marines with the best proven performance are retained and promoted.

Always striving for improvement, we are modernizing our performance evaluation system to include an enhanced evaluation process that focuses on our E1 through E4 marines. The addition of a Junior Enlisted Performance Evaluation System (JEPES) process to our existing Performance Evaluation System will improve and simplify the evaluations for our junior enlisted marines. Once complete, JEPES will integrate into our current automated performance evaluation system used to evaluate sergeants and above and all officers. This modernized system will ensure a detailed and objective evaluation system for all marines that leverages our information technology to compare scored performance entries. It will provide leaders a broader

and more detailed baseline from which to evaluate future potential, reinforcing our efforts to retain the best and most qualified marines and will ensure all the necessary information continues to be provided to selection, retention, and promotion boards.

Incentive pays remain critical to our retention effort, allowing the Marine Corps to fill hard to retain positions, such as cyber operators and security technicians, special operators, and counter intelligence specialists. Selective Reenlistment Bonuses allow us to shape our career force by targeting critical military occupational specialties (MOSs) and supporting lateral movement of marines to these MOSs.

The Marine Corps is experiencing shortfalls in the number of certain grades of fixed wing and tiltrotor aviators required to fill our aviation billets. As a result, we have implemented a narrowly-tailored aviation bonus to stabilize the pilot shortfall and facilitate the proper execution of all aviation staffing demands. We will continue to build on the fiscal year 2020 bonus plan in fiscal year 2021.

We are also now offering Assignment Incentive Pay to offensive cyberspace operators to increase retention. This monthly pay is targeted towards hard-to-fill critical billets that have significant training requirements. Overall, these incentive pays help us recruit and retain the best marines, especially for critical skills. At only one percent of our Marine Corps personnel budget, these pays provide return on investment many times over.

Based on continuous analysis of inventory health and input from the force, we have instituted two new initiatives for the fiscal year 2021 Enlisted Retention Campaign to increase retention. First, delegation of retention authority allows for commanding generals of major subordinate commands to reenlist their best and brightest marines at their level rather than having to provide recommendations for reenlistment to Headquarters Marine Corps. This authority capitalizes on the concept of talent management by providing commanders and their senior enlisted advisors, who are the most knowledgeable about their marines, the ability to advocate to their commanding generals for reenlistment approval. Second, the early reenlistment authority allows a portion of Tier 1 first term marines to reenlist up to 27 months early. This authority allows our top rated marines who know they want to reenlist the flexibility of managing their careers.

Reserves

Your Marine Corps Selected Reserve is fully manned at its authorized end strength of 38,500 and unit personnel readiness stands at its highest level in a generation. Unit reserve personnel readiness continues to increase from 71 percent in 2013 to over 84 percent today, with significant improvement in both enlisted and officer force management.

Our comprehensive manpower management plan provides full-service support to our Reserve officers and staff NCOs throughout the Selected Reserve for their career management. This is a talent management initiative that will help our NCOs, staff NCOs, and officers move between commands to enhance their development and military career goals.

Our officer manning success has also been driven by bonuses and incentives to attract more marines from the Active component. In addition, our Reserve Officer Commissioning Program has produced 1,386 lieutenants for the Marine Corps reserves since its creation in 2006. As a result, our ground company grade officer manning has increased from 21 percent in 2007, to 78 percent today.

Your Marine Corps Reserves continue to mobilize Selected Reserve marines under the 12304b mobilization authority for pre-planned training missions in support of combatant commander requirements; approximately 2,460 Reserve marines deployed in fiscal year 2019 under this authority. We thank Congress for its support for Reservists mobilized under 12304b by extending pre- and post-deployment health care, counting service towards post 9/11 G.I. Bill and reduced age retirement benefits, and extending high deployment allowance and non-reduction of pay benefits.

The BRS [Blended Retirement System] is a significant change from the legacy retirement system and, while it confers a portable monetary benefit on the large majority of marines who do not reach retirement eligibility, we remain concerned on the potential changes to the retention behavior of the force, and will continue to closely monitor retention for impacts.

Outreach and Inclusion

Diversity remains critical to the Marine Corps and must be included in meaningful ways in order to take advantage of the wide array of aptitudes and perspectives necessary to maintain our current and future warfighting excellence. It is our responsibility to ensure the Marine Corps is comprised of the best and brightest from

every segment of our diverse society. We are committed to capitalizing on the knowledge, skills, abilities, performance, and potential of every marine.

- In 2010, 30 percent of marines identified as minority. Today, that number is over 40 percent. We expect these numbers to continue to rise as 45 percent of all enlisted and 31 percent of all officer accessions in fiscal year 2019 identified as minorities.
- In 2010, women comprised 6.7 percent of the Marine Corps; they are now almost 9 percent. These numbers should also continue to rise as women are now over 10 percent of all accessions.
- Last year 12.7 percent of officer accessions were women, representing the highest percentage of female officer accessions in the Marine Corps since the establishment of the all-volunteer force.
- Women represented in previously-restricted MOSs are also on the rise. Last year, I testified that 507 women were in previously restricted Active component units—that number is now 737. At that time, there were 203 women serving in previously restricted MOSs, today that number is 283, and we now have our first female F-35 pilot and first female reconnaissance marine.

We have achieved our accession successes by employing a total-market approach that includes female inclusive messaging. This is supplemented with specific targeted campaigns focusing direct mail and advertising to generate awareness and highlight opportunities in the Marine Corps. We are also partnered with a host of diverse organizations across the Nation. We have recruiters assigned to every square mile, every zip code, and every public school in our Nation; our goal is to reach the youth and influencers—from the most rural of small towns to the largest of cities.

On the retention side, we are leveraging technology to help understand—and someday predict—why individuals decide to join the Marine Corps as well as remain a marine. These efforts include improving current data collection and management; longitudinal accession, retention, and exit surveys; along with cognitive and non-cognitive testing with the objective of identifying and fitting the right person, with the right skill, into the right billet.

Even with our successes, there is still a lot of work to be done. While female and minority marines who promote at nearly the same rate—and often higher—than majority marines, they remain underrepresented at the higher officer ranks—especially at general officer level. However, we believe that our efforts today will pay dividends as our junior officer populations are now more diverse, and today's junior officers will be tomorrow's senior leaders.

Culture

One of my top priorities is to make sure that the Marine Corps' culture is one of respect, dignity, and inclusion for all. We can do better—this is evident from the research, surveys, town halls, and just talking to marines. A recent study on Marine Corps culture we commissioned illustrated where we have fallen short and we are working tirelessly to self-assess and improve.

Examples:

- Have established a Talent Management Oversight Executive Council, led by the Assistant Commandant.
- We have published a comprehensive Prohibited Activities and Conduct Order to consolidate all such activities under one order, increase accountability, and provide for punishment under the UCMJ [Uniform Code of Military Justice]. This order provides for a clear, common understanding of what is prohibited and how such activities have a corrosive effect on the Corps.
- We continue to cultivate a lethal fighting force through the implementation of gender neutral MOS specific physical standards ensuring both men and women have the requisite physical fitness to perform their assigned mission.
- During recruit training, instructors of both genders regularly train recruits – providing a balance of strong, confident, and knowledgeable Marine leaders as positive models to emulate.
- We have started an Exit and Milestone Longitudinal Survey program to assess why marines join and why do they choose to leave.
- The Marine Corps Outreach program pays the registration and travel costs for marines to participate at various affinity group events for professional development, mentoring, and networking experiences. The Marine Corps plans to participate in 19 such events this year.
- In conscious recognition of power of communication, the Marine Corps has updated websites and directives to remove gender-qualifying language so that we recruit, promote, and retain marines based upon their personal intellect, capabilities, and performance.

- The Parenthood and Pregnancy order demonstrates the Marine Corps recognition of the importance of family and investment in ensuring marines have options to enable them to thrive both professionally and in their personal family lives.

This topic is on the minds of all marines—especially senior leadership—as it should be. It is, more than anything, a leadership issue. Marine leaders must not just talk about changing culture—they must be the example of how to treat your fellow marine and all individuals with dignity, respect, empathy, and compassion. Be servant leaders. I personally consider this my ultimate responsibility.

Civilian Marines

Our civilian marines support the mission and daily functions of the Marine Corps and are an integral part of our total force. They exemplify our core values; they embrace esprit de corps, teamwork, and pride in belonging to our Nation's Corps of Marines. Serving alongside our marines throughout the world, in every occupation and at every level, our civilian appropriated-funded workforce remains by far the leanest of all Services, with a ratio of one civilian to every ten Active Duty marines.

Approximately 95 percent of our appropriated funded civilians work outside the Washington, DC, beltway at 57 bases, stations, depots, and installations around the world. Sixty-nine percent are veterans who have chosen to continue to serve our Nation; of those, eighteen percent are disabled veterans. Our civilian non-appropriated funded workforce steadfastly continues to provide vital support to our marines, Reserve marines, their families, and our wounded, ill, and injured.

We thank Congress for providing a full-year funding for our civilians. It has provided a measure of predictability for them this year, which improves morale, while also aiding in recruiting and retention efforts to bring top civilian talent to the Marine Corps. Overall, our civilians continue to truly shown themselves as Semper Fidelis by keeping our marines and their families in the forefront. For that, they have my personal admiration.

TAKING CARE OF MARINES AND THEIR FAMILIES

Our comprehensive portfolio of services is a coordinated and synchronized effort that addresses the mind, body, spirit, and social needs of our marines and their families. Taking care of marines and families improves our overall readiness and resilience. It also directly increases retention, quality of life and, most importantly, combat effectiveness.

Behavioral Programs

The Marine Corps Behavioral Programs are an integrated community-based service model that promote the social, behavioral, and psychological fitness of marines and families in order to enhance mission effectiveness.

Suicide Prevention

Suicide prevention continues to be one of the Marine Corp's top priorities. Suicide prevention is a challenging task, but one on which we are determined to remain focused. The current and future suicide prevention initiatives include:

- Releasing Marine Awareness and Prevention Integrated Training for Families as a prevention-focused training designed to provide families with information on suicide prevention.
- Improving combat and operational stress control capability initiatives.
- Revising the Inspector General Marine Corps checklist to ensure commanders have the necessary protocols in place, at the unit level, to prevent deaths by suicide.
- Embedding Operational Stress Control and Readiness (OSCAR) team members within Marine Corps units to help marines recognize and respond to stress. If a marine believes their stress-level is negatively impacting their unit, an OSCAR member is there to talk and to connect the marine with other resources.
- The Marine Corps DSTRESS Line is a 24/7/365, marine-specific call center providing phone, chat, and video-telephone capability for anonymous counseling. DSTRESS Line callers can discuss stress, anger management, grief and loss, deployment cycles, parent-child relationships, couples communication, marital issues, relationships, relocations, and suicidal crisis as well as other areas of concern.

Sexual Assault Prevention & Response

Protecting marines and preventing sexual assaults are top priorities for the Corps. We are committed to preventing incidents of sexual assault by promoting positive behaviors, fostering healthy command climates, and building skills to identify and

prevent negative behaviors. We remain committed to responding to sexual assaults, including those occurring before service, by providing victim-centered support.

Collaboration is key in addressing sexual assault prevention and response. The Marine Corps Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) program works together with the other Services, Department of the Navy Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO), DOD SAPRO, and outside entities to enhance our ability to prevent and respond to sexual assault, identify best practices, and to leverage resources. SAPR supports enterprise-wide efforts to prevent sexual assaults within the military and care for marines which will foster a culture of respect to all.

Updated SAPR annual training for Staff Non-Commissioned Officers (SNCO) is in development to provide more focus at the small unit level. The training's goal is to help increase SNCO knowledge about sexual assault, reporting, resources, rank-specific roles and responsibilities, and to build skills consistent with primary prevention.

SAPR updated its training for the commander's course to better prepare senior leadership to prevent sexual assault once they assume command. This includes information focused on actionable recommendations for pre-command leaders and small group discussions facilitated by Marine Corps mentors and SAPR experts.

A revised SAPR Victim Advocate training was released in October 2019 and has been fully implemented. The revised 40-hour curriculum focuses on building and refining advocacy skills and includes cultural competency and prevention training. We are implementing an online evaluation tool for SAPR training to assess the effectiveness of current training, beginning with the current rank-specific training for E1 to E5 marines. This effort will begin with pilot programs in fiscal year 2020. The tool will provide real-time feedback to SAPR personnel to improve the quality of instruction and will measure training participants' changes in knowledge and satisfaction.

Command Individual Risk and Resiliency Assessment System

The Marine Corps force preservation process is the formalized method used by commanders to identify individual marine risk factors and to apply holistic risk management measures to improve individual and unit readiness. Every day, this process assists leaders across the Corps to identify those in need. However, gaps in knowledge about our marines have historically limited the effectiveness of the effort. To improve the process, we have developed the Command Individual Risk and Resiliency Assessment System, which compiles individual force preservation data from authoritative databases with information inputted by small unit leaders, medical officers, and other authorized support staff. By presenting timely, prioritized, actionable information to those who can help Marines, and by protecting unauthorized disclosure through strict access limits and cybersecurity, leaders will be better equipped to reduce destructive behaviors in their units.

Spouse Employment

Spouse employment is a major source of stress for many Marine Corps families, and can be an obstacle for financial security. The Marine Corps Family Member Employment Assistance Program (FMEAP) emphasizes a proactive approach for military spouses, and other dependent family members. This enables them to formulate informed career and educational choices by utilizing employment-related referral services, career and skill assessments, career coaching, job search guidance, portable career opportunities, and education center referrals/guidance. The FMEAP provides coaching and training such as: interview techniques; resume and cover letter writing; the federal application process; salary negotiations; appropriate dress; staff-assisted computerized job searches; skills and personality assessments; one-on-one career coaching; education, training, and volunteer opportunities; and entrepreneur business opportunities.

Installations provide training/workshops to assist spouses and transitioning servicemembers with the federal hiring process. Installations also conduct job fairs to assist veterans and family members in finding employment. FMEAP connects Marine Corps spouses with volunteer opportunities through installation volunteer coordinators to assist with establishing career experience throughout permanent change of station transitions. FMEAP also helps translate volunteer experiences into marketable skills on resumes. The program's holistic approach helps support spouses throughout a marine's service. The Marine Corps participates in the DOD Military Spouse Preference Program, which was instituted to reduce the adverse impact on the career paths of spouses of Active Duty servicemembers.

The Marine Corps is now authorized to reimburse Marine spouses up to \$1,000 for State licensure and certification costs arising from relocation to another State.

To date, the Marine Corps has reimbursed 128 individual claims totaling \$45,660. The Marine Corps also participates in the Military Spouse Career Advancement Account (MyCAA) Scholarship which provides up to \$2,000 per year (maximum of \$4,000) for military spouses (private to sergeant, warrant officers 1 & 2, and 2nd lieutenants to 1st lieutenants) to pursue licenses, certificates, certifications, or associate degrees necessary for gainful employment.

Child and Youth Programs

High-quality child care is a family readiness priority for the Marine Corps. The Marine Corps provides high quality, accessible, and affordable programs and services for eligible families with children 6-weeks to 18-years of age. Currently, USMC has a total unmet need of 1,181 children with notable waitlists at MCB Camp Pendleton, Hawaii, Quantico, and Camp Lejeune/New River. These are primarily due to a shortage of qualified workers, high turnover/low pay, and lengthy hiring/background check process. We are addressing these issues as part of a DOD Compensation, Recruitment, and Retention Working Group and implemented a non-competitive child care employee transfer program in November 2019. The Marine Corps appreciates the additional \$20 million Congress provided this fiscal year to update and repair our child care facilities. The Marine Corps is developing a prioritization plan on how we intend to execute those funds this fiscal year to improve the quality of our centers.

Marine Corps Business and Support Services

The Marine Corps delivers many of its quality of life programs via an integrated Marine Corps Community Services (MCCS) construct that combines Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR); Marine Corps Exchange (MCX); Warfighter and Family Services; and Child Development Programs. This integrated model is unique within DOD and provides many operating efficiencies, including consolidated non-appropriated fund (NAF) back-office support, e.g., human resources, finance and accounting, procurement, construction, and information technology. Our focus on efficiency continues today with transformation and innovation pursuits, such as a shared services center for all MCCS NAF transactional accounting functions; we are expecting a significant cumulative NAF benefit over a 10-year period.

The MCX is an integral self-sustaining business component of MCCS, delivering products and services in garrison and expeditionary environments, while producing an invaluable NAF dividend to our MWR and family programs. The recent expansion of Commissary, Exchange, and MWR program privileges to disabled veterans and their caregivers has allowed more than 4 million customers to return and use the benefits that they enjoyed when they were on Active Duty. The 2019 market basket survey showed an average savings of approximately 25 percent. The MCX is proud to employ military family members who represent approximately 33 percent of our workforce.

The MCX is always looking for better ways to support marines' needs outside of traditional store formats and during off peak hours. As an example, many installations are expanding unmanned convenience offerings like Micro Marts and expanding traditional vending services, there are currently 14 Micro Marts deployed across the Marine Corps. The MCX is also piloting a partnership with Amazon to provide secure, self-service delivery kiosks at two bases to allow marines living in the barracks to pick up packages at a place and time that is convenient for them. In late 2020, MCX will also pilot two additional new concepts for unmanned offerings and "buy on-line pick-up anywhere" concepts.

The Marine Corps is also an Active participant in DOD Business Reforms that encompass many of the programs and services within the MCCS portfolio. We are committed to seeking efficiencies across the Department through cooperate efforts and other partnerships while preserving our highly effective MCCS organization that is best attuned to meeting Marine Corps operational requirements.

Wounded Warrior Care

The Marine Corps' Wounded Warrior Regiment (WWR) continues to execute our Recovery Coordination Program in support of wounded, ill, or injured (WII) marines and their families. WWR greatly facilitates their recovery and upholds our enduring commitment to "keep faith" with those who have incurred life changing impairments in service to our Nation.

Regardless of the origin of affliction, our marines require and genuinely deserve access to the comprehensive recovery care available through the WWR.

WWR recovery care coordinators, in coordination with medical providers and unit leaders, help WII marines develop and execute their individual comprehensive recovery plans, which provide the road map for a successful transition. WII marines with complex care coordination needs are assessed for post-separation support re-

quirements. When appropriate, those marines are transferred to a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) designated lead coordinator prior to their medical discharge to ensure seamless support.

WWR maintains faith with our marines through our district injured support coordinators, who are geographically dispersed around the country and provide one-on-one support as needed, and the Sergeant Merlin German Call Center, which conducts outreach calls to marines and receives and responds to calls for assistance 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Since our WWR was established in 2007, thousands of WII marines and family members transitioning from Active service have benefitted from a full spectrum of support services that begins with physical recovery needs and increasingly focuses on post-service employment and education opportunities as they heal. Marines and their families, Members of Congress, and the public at large can be assured that the Marine Corps, through the WWR, will continue to expertly provide recovery care coordination support at all times.

CONCLUSION

The marines of our Corps represent a diverse group of individuals from our Nation who are bonded together by a sense of duty. These young Americans have stepped forward and sworn to defend and protect our Nation. Through recruiting, training, education, and retention of men and women of character who take up our challenge to become one of "the Few and the Proud," we will enhance the quality of our Corps and our overall combat effectiveness. To echo the sentiments in CPG—the Marine Corps is entering a period of transformation to produce a force that will meet the challenges of the NDS and uncertainty of the future. By ensuring we take care of all marines and their families, we will keep faith with the honor, courage, and commitment they have so freely given during this next chapter in our illustrious history.

Our individual marines are our most precious asset. They are proud of the "Eagle, Globe, and Anchor" and what it represents to our Nation. With your support, a vibrant Marine Corps will continue to meet our Nation's call.

Thank you again for the opportunity to be here today.

Senator TILLIS. Thank you.

Mr. Fedrigo, did I pronounce your name properly?

Mr. FEDRIGO. Yes, Chairman, you did.

Senator TILLIS. Fedrigo.

Mr. FEDRIGO. Yes, sir.

Senator TILLIS. Thank you.

STATEMENT OF JOHN A. FEDRIGO, PERFORMING THE DUTIES OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE FOR MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS; ACCOMPANIED BY LIEUTENANT GENERAL BRIAN T. KELLY, USAF, DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF FOR MANPOWER, PERSONNEL AND SERVICES

Mr. FEDRIGO. Chairman Tillis, Ranking Member Gillibrand, it is an honor to speak with you today. We appreciate the continued interest, support, and advocacy this Committee provides to our Air and Space Force.

While multiple topics are covered in our prepared statement, I will use this short introduction to highlight three key areas of effort: building a lethal and ready Department of the Air Force; developing our Nation's air and space professionals; and finally, improving and sustaining family readiness.

The Department of the Air Force must compete, deter, and win in an increasingly complex global security environment. We must continue to sharpen our competitive edge by developing and building a lethal and ready Air and Space Force. At its core, building the force we need is about people. Our air and space professionals,

both military and civilian, and their families remain our most important asset.

To this end, I cannot overemphasize how important stable and predictable budgets are to morale and readiness. They give us the ability to build combat-capable forces ready to compete, deter and, if deterrence fails, defeat adversaries set on disrupting our way of life. Investments in end strength and properly resourcing the Space Force will pay dividends to our Nation's security well into the future.

In this era of near-peer competition, rapidly evolving technology and an increasingly complex operational environment, we realize our talent management systems must evolve to be more agile, responsive, and effective at empowering and driving performance. These attributes are the bedrock for increasing lethality and developing exceptional leaders. They are also the filters we use to evaluate the effectiveness of new reforms or initiatives.

The Department of the Air Force has taken significant steps to transform our talent management systems to ensure we can attract, recruit, develop, evaluate, and retain the air and space professionals needed to support our future force requirements. We recognize the talent marketplace is more competitive than ever. New congressional authorities have augmented existing tools providing increased flexibility and efficiency in managing both our military and civilian workforce. We ask for your continued advocacy by providing the statutory framework and resources necessary to field a ready and resilient military and civilian workforce.

In addition to our military and civilian force, our families are critical to ensuring we remain the world's greatest air and space force. We are focused on family readiness and resilience to ensure our personnel can focus on the mission knowing their family members are supported with a robust network of people and capabilities dedicated to their wellbeing.

In fiscal year 2019, our 76 airmen and family readiness centers responded to almost 3 million service requests, hosted more than 26,000 workshops with 360,000-plus participants, and sponsored over 40,000 outreach events connecting with almost 1.5 million attendees. While we are proud of the support we provide, we remain committed to improving our capabilities especially in the exceptional family member, childcare, and spouse employment arenas.

Chairman Tillis, Ranking Member Gillibrand, and distinguished Committee Members, a ready and resilient military and civilian force is the bedrock of our service. The Department of the Air Force is evolving to compete, deter, and win in the air, space, and cyber domains. We look forward to continuing to partner with Congress on initiatives to remain competitive as an employer of choice. We rely on and are grateful for your efforts to protect and support our servicemembers and their families. The Department of the Air Force welcomes your continued commitment to these causes.

Thank you again for this opportunity to represent our incredible professionals and their families. We look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Fedrigo and Lieutenant General Kelly follows:]

JOINT PREPARED STATEMENT BY MR. JOHN A. FEDRIGO AND LIEUTENANT GENERAL
BRIAN T. KELLY

INTRODUCTION

Chairman Tillis, Ranking Member Gillibrand, distinguished Members of this Committee, thank you for your continued support and for the opportunity to appear before this committee to talk about our Air and Space professionals; Active, Guard, Reserve and civilian. America's air and space professionals remain "Always There" providing global vigilance, reach, and power to protect and defend our Nation.

BUILDING A LETHAL AND READY DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

Great power competition continues to provide the central challenge to U.S. prosperity and security. To face this challenge, the Department of the Air Force (DAF) must compete, deter, and win in an increasingly complex global security environment. To accomplish this, we must continue to sharpen our competitive edge by developing and building a lethal and ready force. At its core, building the force we need is about people. Our air and space professionals (military and civilian) and their families are our most important asset.

End Strength

The Department of the Air Force appreciates the support for end strength growth in fiscal year 2020 to 700,000 (military and civilian) as well as for the development of the new Space Force in the fiscal year 2020 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). The DAF's fiscal year 2021 budget request is for 699,000, which includes a commitment to reducing 2,500 civilian positions by converting Guard and Reserve civilian members to full time military members and adjusting the Working Capital Fund workforce. Our fiscal year 2021 budget also focuses on growing 900 Active Duty positions for two new F-35 squadrons, resiliency programs for our air and space professionals, the B-21, and Joint All Domain Command and Control initiatives. Additionally, it supports growing 400 Air National Guard positions for five cyber defense mission teams, fuels, security forces, and traffic management office to improve unit readiness and augment the 9th Air Force Joint Task Force. We would also grow 200 Air Force Reserve positions to support C-5, C-17, C-130 global mobility operations and transition from the KC-135 to the KC-46. Our specific resiliency program is the expansion of our True North Program adding 64 officer, 71 enlisted, and 272 civilian personnel to address mental and spiritual health in fiscal year 2021.

Space Force

DEVELOPING OUR NATION'S AIR AND SPACE PROFESSIONALS

In this era of near-peer competition, rapidly evolving technology, and the joint all-domain environment in which the Department of the Air Force operates, we realize our talent management system must also evolve to be more agile, responsive, transparent, and effective at empowering and driving performance. These attributes are the bedrock for increasing lethality and developing exceptional leaders. They are also the filters we use to evaluate the effectiveness of new reforms or initiatives. The DAF has taken significant steps to transform our talent management system to ensure we can attract, recruit, develop, and evaluate air and space professionals to support our future force requirements. DAF transformation activities recognize we are competing for talent in a more competitive market. New congressional authorities have augmented existing tools providing increased flexibility and efficiency in managing both our military and civilian workforce.

Performance Management

Recruiting, retaining, developing, and best employing our military and civilian total force team is crucial to our National Defense Strategy. Ensuring we maintain our fierce focus on using policies, programs, and procedures to sustain responsive, agile, empowering, and transparent personnel management systems is a warfighting necessity.

Enlisted

Over the last few years, we have evolved our enlisted performance system, incorporating feedback from the field and garnering trends from industry. Our evolution has focused on making the system more agile, transparent, and simple to focus on and drive performance as we strengthen the readiness and professionalism of our vital enlisted force. One example is our initiative to go to a "board only" process, removing the Weighted Airmen Promotion System (WAPS) test for promotion to the

grades of master sergeant, senior master sergeant, and chief master sergeant. This past year was the first year we implemented these boards, ensuring duty performance is the most important factor in evaluating promotion to the next higher grade.

Officer

The Department of the Air Force is committed to transforming the way we develop, promote, and retain our officer corps in order to successfully carry out the National Defense Strategy. To meet that task, we must have an officer corps which can adapt, innovate, and demonstrate agility in dealing with today's complex security environment. We appreciate the additional Defense Officer Personnel Management Act (DOPMA) authorities given to us in the fiscal year 2019 National Defense Authorization Act and have instituted several programs.

The first program is an assignment matching system which puts all Active component officers on a new web-based system that balances member input, job owner input, and development needs to create assignment matches. Our air and space professionals now have new digital input for assignment opportunities and engagement through a more transparent assignment system. The DAF has also changed its promotion development/competitive categories, which had remained unchanged since 1947. Active component line officers are now managed in six developmental categories for promotion instead of a single category, which acknowledges different specialties need different developmental experiences and progression. Officers are now screened and selected for formal instructor and recruiting positions as a valued part of career progression, ensuring our best officers serve as role models to shape the future force. This restructure give us the ability to create more agile development paths and better match the officer inventory to actual requirements which is vital to increasing readiness and lethality. Finally, using the increased flexibilities provided by Congress we are transitioning out of our current below-the-promotion zone offering to a merit-based approach with first implementation during the upcoming May Lieutenant Colonel board. Under this new system, those whose record of performance score highest on the board, pin-on first, reinforcing the importance of performance. This change also increases feedback and transparency, as selects will know where they stand in relation to their peers.

Civilian

Another key component of our force is the more than 185,000 Department of the Air Force civilian employees stationed around the globe. Our civilian workforce teams with the military as part of the Air and Space Force Total Force in the defense of our Nation. Working in over 600 occupations and professions, the civilian workforce underpins the Department. Civilian engineers work in research labs and social workers help children acclimate to new environments. Civilians are physicians treating air and space professionals and their families. They are police officers, aircraft mechanics, nuclear physicists, mathematicians, human resources professionals, electricians, rocket scientists, cyber security experts on the front line guarding against hackers, among many other occupations. At home and abroad, to include deploying to combat zones, our civilian members work shoulder to shoulder with their military counterparts. Having a high quality force and being able to recruit and compete for top civilian talent is an essential aspect of our total force and critical to our readiness. As such, we are thankful for all the previously granted congressional authorities for civilian hiring. Direct and expedited hiring authorities provided by Congress have allowed us to hire civilians faster. As of January 2020, the DAF used Direct Hiring Authority and Expedited Hiring Authority for 3,965 of our actions that were eligible, or 69 percent of the time. Correspondingly, the overall time-to-hire timeline is down to 76 days from 118 days. To make further advances in this arena, expansion of hiring authorities is desired. We are partnering with our sister services and the Department of Defense (DOD) to identify legislative proposals which will enhance the civilian personnel system.

Recruiting

The Department of the Air Force achieved its fiscal year 2019 recruiting goals of 32,421 regular DAF enlisted (100 percent of goal) and regular DAF Officers of 5,598 (100 percent of goal). We also met our ANG combined officer and enlisted goal by recruiting 9,422 Guard members (118 percent of goal), and our Reserve combined Officer and Enlisted goal of 8,641 (100 percent of goal). Additionally, the DAF is on target to reach our fiscal year 2020 recruiting goals of 29,193 regular DAF enlisted, 4,553 regular DAF officers, ANG combined officer and enlisted of 11,664, and Reserve combined officer and enlisted of 8,650.

Readiness is foremost about having the right number of capable air and space professionals within our force. Today only 29 percent of 17 to 24 year old men and women in the United States are eligible to serve in the military and only one in

eight have a propensity to serve. While we have been able to meet our recruiting goals, we are keenly aware of a growing competition for talent and expect the recruiting environment to become even more challenging. The DAF is committed to improving how we recruit tomorrow's air and space professionals. Steps we have taken to improve our recruiting efforts over the past year include moving to a Total Force recruiting approach where our commander of the Air Force Recruiting Service is now responsible for recruiting for our Active, Guard, and Reserve. To move in this direction we have added a 1-star reserve deputy commander, adjusted recruiter training to be Total Force, and have begun the consolidation of marketing and operations budgets. We have also added 159 recruiters; established a recruiting squadron specifically focused on areas where we continue to experience shortfalls such as special warfare airmen, explosive ordnance disposal, and survival, evasion, resistance, and escape; and we are working with OSD on potentially implementing the DAF Compatibility Assessment, an integrity test to screen out accessions at high risk for unethical behaviors, including sexual assault.

We also recognize that recruiting is not just about meeting numbers, but about attracting eligible talent from across the country. The current population of Americans eligible to serve includes 57.5 percent women, 7 percent African Americans, and 9.5 percent of Hispanic ethnicity. The DAF has made strides toward improving our diversity with a current force comprised of 22 percent females, 15 percent African American, and 13 percent with Hispanic ethnicity, representing an increase of female airmen by 4 percent over the last 10 years and a 5 percent increase for racially and ethnically diverse airmen (African American, Hispanic, and others) over the same time. While heading in the right direction, these modest gains are not keeping pace with the changing demographics of the military eligible population and are at a slower pace than we desire.

To enhance our diversity we have focused on increasing our female applicant pool within the officer accession sources, setting an initial target to achieve growth in applicants to 30 percent female. We attained that goal at the Air Force Academy for the class of 2023, and we admitted 28.1 percent of those female applicants. Last year's graduating class was more than 25 percent female, a 4 percent increase from 2012. Within our ROTC program, we raised our applicant pool to 28 percent female with an actual cadet class of 25.5 percent, marching toward the initial 30 percent applicant pool goal. The 2019 ROTC class consisted of 25 percent female, a 1.5 percent increase since 2012. Finally, our 2019 OTS classes were 18.7 percent female, which is a 2.5 percent increase since 2012.

Recruiting talent is also dependent on our Department being an inclusive organization. Since June 2018, we have accessed and made accommodations for more than 29 practicing Sikh, Muslim, Heathen, Jewish, Norse, Easter, and Russian Orthodox individuals to allow these talented members to serve while still respecting their religious dress and appearance requirements. These professionals serve as role models for other talented Americans who can potentially see themselves serving in our force as well.

Retention

As important as recruiting is, retention within our high-tech force is even more important. While the DAF is experiencing generally high retention rates in both the enlisted and officer corps, the aggregate success sometimes masks pockets of retention challenges. To help ameliorate these retention challenges, the DAF continues to offer targeted monetary incentives.

For enlisted skills, the fiscal year 2021 Selective Retention Bonus program's \$157 million targets critical capabilities in enlisted Air Force Specialty Codes with low manning percentages, low retention, and/or high training costs, such as special warfare, aircraft maintenance, cyber, and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance. For the officer corps, the fiscal year 2021 budget is \$31.8 million for Officer Retention Bonuses in areas such as contracting, special tactics, operations research, combat rescue, and air liaisons. Focusing on pilots specifically, the DAF has a fiscal year 2020 budget of \$175.9 million for the Aviation Bonus (AvB). The take-rate for pilots has steadily declined from 68 percent in 2013 mainly due to an unprecedented major airline hiring boom that is anticipated to continue for at least the next decade. However, while the overall rate is still below our 65 percent annual target, the take-rate has stabilized around 45 percent (44 percent in 2019) since the AvB cap was raised from \$25,000 to \$35,000 in fiscal year 2017.

Monetary incentives are only one small piece of our overall retention portfolio. The majority of the retention efforts are non-monetary and focused on improving quality of life, quality of service, and mitigating operational tempo. Those efforts include adjusting enlisted high year of tenure limits (senior airmen from 8 to 10 years, staff sergeants from 15 to 20 years, and technical sergeants from 20 to 22 years);

implementation of an information technology solution known as “Talent Marketplace” to improve the officer and enlisted assignment processes; increasing our child and youth focus to expand childcare during non-duty hours; and expanding the Re-charge for Resiliency program to provide unit leaders deliberately designed activities to improve unit cohesion.

Just as diversity plays an important role in our accessions, so too does it underscore our retention efforts. While our overall population diversity and recruiting numbers have improved, we have not been as successful in retaining women and diverse airmen for longer careers. To improve diversity, the DAF created several barrier analysis working groups to identify barriers to retention of women and diverse air and space professionals, and we made several policy adjustments based on their findings. One policy, ‘Child Career Balancing Time,’ allows new mothers to defer their decision to separate up to 12 months after delivery. This provides an opportunity to experience the programs and resources available to assist with balancing career and family priorities. The DAF also implemented the fiscal year 2017 Military Parental [Non-Chargeable] Leave Program, which allows a mother to take 6 weeks, the family primary caregiver to receive 6 weeks, and the secondary caregiver to receive 21 days within the first year of birth or adoption. Further, female airmen are exempt from deployment, PCS, or TDY for 12 months after giving birth unless they volunteer.

The DAF also continues to utilize the Career Intermision Program (CIP). The program provides flexibility for airmen looking to pursue goals such as advanced education, raising or starting a family, or aligning career timing for dual military couples. The program appears to be working. In calendar year 2018 and calendar year 2019, 54 percent of CIP participants were female and 100 percent of the airmen (6 in calendar year 2018 and 11 in calendar year 2019) who completed the program and their follow-on commitment elected to stay in the service. We are assessing ways to improve this program and look forward to working with the Congress to do so in a way that further incentivizes use.

Knowing opportunity and advancement have a lot to do with retention, we have increased focus on ensuring exposure for younger officers to key developmental positions such as selection for Aide-de-Camp and Executive Officers for senior leaders. By way of policy, we ensure all selection slates for these key positions have a minimum of one qualified female or qualified diverse candidate for consideration. In a short period under this policy, we have seen a 17 percent increase in female selections and a 21 percent increase in African American female selections.

FAMILY READINESS

Our families are critical to ensuring we remain the world’s greatest Air and Space Force. We are focused on family readiness and resilience to ensure the professionals of the Department of the Air Force can focus on the mission, knowing their family members are supported with a robust network of people and capabilities dedicated to their well-being. In fiscal year 2019, our 76 Airman and Family Readiness Centers responded to almost three million service requests, hosted more than 26,000 workshops with 360,000-plus participants, and sponsored over 40,000 outreach events connecting with almost one and a half million attendees.

This support provided great value to the families of the department, and resulted in valuable feedback on areas that need attention. While we are proud of the support we provide, we remain committed to improving our capabilities, especially in the exceptional family member, childcare, and spouse employment arenas.

Exceptional Family Member Programs (EFMP)

Today, there are 51,665 family members enrolled in EFMP and 35,773 Active Duty air and space professionals coded as EFMP sponsors. When a family is identified as EFMP, the supporting installation Airman and Family Readiness Center EFMP–Family Support (EFMP–FS) Coordinator connects them with appropriate information, assistance, and resources. Our 99 EFMP–FS Coordinators are spread across 78 installations and provide the community support function to enhance quality of life of special needs family members. EFMP–FS coordinators provide non-medical case management that includes assessing family needs, developing family services plans, and providing related workshops and support events in addition to assisting families in navigating community resources. Examples of these resources include Federal, State and local programs; Military OneSource; respite services; and other non-profit organizational support such as Easter Seals support services. In concert with our increase of 59 EFMP–FS coordinators since 2017, the Department of the Air Force implemented a 1-week in-person training course for newly assigned EFMP–FS staff to standardize the level of services provided to families. We also continue to offer quarterly parent focused training on topics such as Applied Behav-

ior Therapy, Medicaid, financial planning, individualized education program, and future life planning. These training opportunities help enhance the connection and knowledge of parents as they navigate resources for their special needs children. Additionally, the Department of the Air Force funded or hosted over 450 outreach events across our installations in fiscal year 2019, with 100 of those specifically addressing the increased number of special need adults as well as resilience support to caregivers. As we move forward, we are strengthening our EFMP focus across the board and detailing ways to increase awareness and use of legal services for all EFMP families.

Even with these efforts, we continue to have families who are frustrated with the EFMP program and in particular the permanent change of station process. In February of 2020, we initiated a review and rapid improvement event to get after the medical clearance process associated with moving EFMP families. This ongoing work includes creation of a new 20-person section at the Air Force Personnel Center dedicated to EFMP. The section will have representatives from the medical community, child and youth education, and family support all under a single organization to help focus and streamline EFMP support. We hope to have this new section and the findings from our rapid improvement event implemented and operating by summer of 2020.

Child and Youth Programs

Available, affordable, quality childcare programs support families and enable air and space professionals to focus on the mission. The Department of the Air Force Child Development Program (CDP) provides services to children from birth to 12 years of age within installation child development centers, school age care programs, and family childcare homes DAF-wide. Two key CDP elements are the Air Force Expanded Child Care Program and the community-based child care fee assistance. The DAF Expanded Child Care Program provides non-traditional childcare for irregular duty hours through an array of approaches to meet unique needs of our air and space professionals and their families. This program is offered in Family Child Care homes to fit virtually any schedule, deployment, or need. Community-based childcare fee assistance supports our air and space professionals not living near a military installation or where the on-base program has an unmet demand waiting list, by subsidizing a portion of childcare fees.

The availability of quality, affordable childcare varies across locations and age groups and, as a result, families may be placed on a wait list. The priority usage category of customers influences both access to childcare and waiting period. As of January 31, 2020, there were 3,578 children across the DAF with unmet childcare needs. To reduce wait lists, the DAF convened a cross-functional working group of child and youth professionals, engineers, and data analysts focused on improving access to childcare for military families across lines of effort including staffing challenges and facility shortfalls that can impact availability of on-base childcare. Some accomplishments this past year include: implementing Direct Hiring Authority (DHA), decreasing the time required to on-board new appropriated fund staff from an average of 190 days to 73 days; hiring 60 additional Family Child Care (FCC) in-home providers bringing the total number of FCC providers to 348, augmenting CDC capability; deploying a Child and Youth Program Non-appropriated Fund Employee Transfer Assistance Program; implementing DAF Centrally Funded Non-appropriated Fund Recruitment Bonuses and Non-appropriated Fund Retention Allowances; and implementing Family Child Care provider recruitment and retention incentives—pay increase, retention bonus, and 100 percent offset for credentialing. Additionally, the DAF reversed a downward trend, going from an all-time low of 283 certified providers in September 2018 to 333 providers in December 2019 with an additional 144 in the process of certification.

To ensure smart investment in facilities we developed a childcare access scorecard dashboard to better inform decisions on funding facility repairs and expansions, and prioritizing military construction (MILCON) projects, priorities, and decisions. We analyzed each base and wait list, identifying if the shortfall is a staffing, configuration, or MILCON limitation, allowing us to prioritize and attack the issue. We are ensuring investment dollars go to the greatest impact on our waitlists. As a result, we are applying the \$20 million provisioned to AF in the fiscal year 2020 NDAA against eight facility projects that will provide spaces for 552 children on our waitlists. We also identified 21 projects and are preparing them for execution should additional funding become available. These efforts reflect our commitment to addressing the childcare demand, and we will remain engaged at all levels in providing the best support possible for our families.

Spouse Employment

Spouse employment is a critical element impacting family resilience, financial readiness, quality of life, retention, and mission success. Permanent change of station moves may negatively impact military spouse wages and employment opportunities. The DAF spouse employment program provides a robust system of support to help military spouses find meaningful employment and connect with available resources. The DOD continues to advance spouse employment initiatives with States to improve professional license portability and is currently pursuing interstate compacts. The DAF continuously addresses spouse employment challenges to help meet the needs of our Air and Space professionals and their families. The DAF enacted policy in May 2019 per fiscal year 2018 NDAA for reimbursement of re-licensing/re-certification costs up to \$500 resulting from a PCS for spouses of military members. As of February 29, 2020, DAF has processed 219 claims for spouses, with average payment of \$311, and overall total of \$68.1K. The fiscal year 2020 NDAA increased this reimbursement from \$500 to \$1,000 and policy changes are underway to provide this increased support to our spouses. The DAF partners with the DOD State Liaison Office which works directly with State legislators to improve licensure portability across all states. Military service secretaries established a working group in 2019 to identify barriers and make recommendations to improve spouse overseas employment opportunities, and this work is still in progress.

FOUNDATIONAL READINESS IMPERATIVES

The Department of the Air Force's core values—Integrity First, Service before Self, and Excellence in All We Do—are the foundation of all air and space professionals' performance. They define our culture, who we are as a force, and are the basis of the care solutions we consider foundational readiness imperatives.

Personal Violence Prevention and Response

Interpersonal violence and suicide are counter to our culture and our core values. These actions negatively impact victims, the bereaved, and their units. As a result, unit cohesion, mission effectiveness, and ultimately the Department of the Air Force's readiness are threatened. We are deeply committed to the prevention of interpersonal violence on all fronts including sexual assault, child maltreatment, domestic violence, and workplace violence. We are dedicated to a strategy that leverages the latest science, implementing best practices and feedback from our members, with our ultimate goal of never losing another air or space professional to suicide. Should these acts of violence occur despite our prevention efforts, we are committed to providing victims of violence the care they need as well as caring for individuals, families, and units left to grieve.

Suicide Prevention

Suicide prevention remains a difficult challenge with 2019 Department of the Air Force suicide counts elevated compared to previous years.

The DAF remains 100 percent engaged on preventing suicides and is focused on four strategic areas that align with suicide prevention strategies established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: building connections, detecting risk, promoting protective environments, and equipping our air and space professionals and their families to mitigate risk and build resilience. The DAF is taking a leadership-driven public-health approach informed by data and analysis in partnership with academia, industry, and sister Services to include diverse ideas and perspectives.

This past year the DAF launched the Resilience Tactical Pause (RTP) to enhance and build connections, encourage help seeking, reinforce squadrons as the heartbeat of our force, and derive feedback from our air and space professionals. Since inception of the RTP, we have received more than 12,000 responses from our force informing subsequent and ongoing resilience efforts. This feedback has highlighted the need to continue RTP efforts allowing our force time to personally connect, clarify existing resources, and reduce the stigma to help seeking. Follow-on RTP efforts will use this feedback as a guide. This feedback validates our decision to expand True North, a comprehensive approach to engaging members and families early, normalizing help-seeking behavior as a strength, and providing helping resources to our Force. Based on the updated DAF suicide prevention strategy, five suicide prevention priorities have been established by the DAF Community Action Team for 2020. These priorities include improving the Total Force suicide prevention training, strengthening implementations of the suicide prevention program, encouraging lethal means safety, empowering and equipping family members in suicide prevention, and enhancing suicide postvention procedures. The prevention priorities we es-

tablished for 2020 are expected to further initial efforts to produce measurable change in risk and protective factors within our force.

Specific examples enacted this past year include developing and distributing time-based prevention products such as 150,000 gun locks at no cost to our members, educational materials, and training on safe storage options. These new time-based prevention efforts put time and space between our members in distress and access to lethal means, particularly firearms which are involved in more than 70 percent of DAF suicide deaths. Additionally, the first MAJCOM [major command] Suicide Analysis Boards (SABs) were completed on January 1, 2020. The process, modeled after Safety Investigation Boards, identifies gaps and better equips leaders, air and space professionals, and families for suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention.

Our revised strategy and initiatives to build partnerships with academia, industry, and sister Services will also help ensure our suicide prevention efforts continue to leverage the best ideas and research to end the tragedy of suicide. The DAF is therefore planning a National Suicide Prevention Summit for late 2020 following a model similar to the National Discussion on Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment at America's Colleges, Universities and Service Academies. The audience of the National Suicide Prevention Summit will be experts and stakeholders from across industry, healthcare, and academia in order to facilitate the sharing of ideas on preventing suicide.

Leaders at all levels are needed to help reinforce the notion that seeking help is a sign of strength and our air and space professionals do not need to go it alone. While suicide is a difficult and complex issue requiring complex solutions, it is preventable and the DAF remains committed to leveraging the best ideas and research to end the tragedy of suicide.

Task Force True North

True North has moved from a beta test to an execution program for embedding mental health providers and religious support teams in units to increase access and build trust and confidence in the care givers. Initial results are promising and we are investing further in True North. While the budget for True North in fiscal year 2019 and fiscal year 2020 had been \$9.9 million each year, we are increasing funding for True North to \$53.3 million in fiscal year 2021. This growth will expand the program to fully serve all four beta test locations plus 12 additional installations (for a total of 16 installations), while also covering Air Support Operations Squadrons and Rescue Squadrons DAF-wide. Priority for installation expansion is based on a 5-year history of suicides, sexual assaults, domestic violence, child maltreatment, and other violence (including workplace violence).

Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR)

Sexual assault remains a serious national problem. It is a crime that negatively affects our air and space professionals and their families, erodes unit trust and cohesion, and ultimately undermines force lethality, readiness, and mission success. It is counter to our core values and goes against our culture of dignity and respect. The DAF remains committed to eradicating sexual assaults using effective, research-based prevention. Commanders set the standards and require our air and space professionals to meet them, establishing the foundation of military discipline, while ensuring victims receive care, and holding perpetrators accountable. Commanders, advised by judge advocates, are best positioned to handle the disposition of all crimes under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). Taking away a commander's ability to discipline and care for their air and space professionals removes their authority and diminishes their responsibility and accountability.

The Secretary of the Air Force (SecAF) attended the first National Discussion on sexual assault and sexual harassment at America's Colleges, Universities, and Service Academies, at the Naval Academy in April 2019, to combat and eradicate sexual assault and harassment from our campuses. This event brought together 126 universities, 21 congressman/professional staffers and 17 educational/Federal agencies to create a forum for leaders and experts in the public and private sectors to advance evidence based prevention efforts and share lessons learned and best practices. In April 2020, the National Discussion will be held at West Point and will be attended by the SecAF, Vice Chief of Staff, congressional staffers, and over 100 universities and educational organizations. In April 2021, the DAF will host the National Discussion at the Air Force Academy.

General officers from the DAF participated in the Sexual Assault Accountability and Investigation Task Force (SAAITF) which examined investigative and accountability processes across the Services. The task force found a command-centered military justice system is integral to military discipline and lethality, and is best posi-

tioned to protect both the rights of victims and defendants. The DAF's SAAITF implementation plan, which was signed by Acting SecAF Donovan on July 8, 2019, will ensure the commander has all available tools to hold offenders appropriately accountable and support the victim, while protecting the rights of the victim and the accused throughout the process. The SAAITF implementation plan improves the ability of the commander to set appropriate command climate by making sexual harassment a "stand alone" military crime which highlights the severity of this behavior. The SAAITF implementation plan improves support to the victim by providing additional information and assistance throughout the process, including more consistent and regular updates from command. DAF prevention efforts address key sexual assault risk factors with long-term goals including assessment tools for identifying and screening out those at high risk for unethical behaviors. In addition, DAF is implementing the Department of Defense Sexual Assault Prevention Plan of Action.

The Military Justice Act of 2016 took effect on January 1, 2019, and is the largest military justice overhaul since 1983, enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the military justice system. These changes, in conjunction with the changes implemented by the Air Force's SAAITF plan, are continuing to shift the landscape of sexual assault prevention and response towards more support for victims while balancing the rights of the accused. It has only been a year since the effective date of the Military Justice Act of 2016, and continued implementation of the numerous provisions of the DAF SAAITF plan is ongoing. We appreciate the changes Congress has made in the laws allowing us support victims and hold offenders accountable. Taking the time to objectively evaluate these changes will allow the DAF to institute effective and research-based sexual assault prevention, victim support, and offender accountability.

Sexual assault reporting across the DAF steadily increased over the last 3 years (fiscal year 2018 1,544 reports v. fiscal year 2017 1,480 reports v. fiscal year 2016 1,355 reports), viewed as both a positive trend (trust) and negative (volume). USAF Academy reporting was consistent from academic year 16/17 to 17/18 with 23 reports each year. In academic year 18/19 there was a rise with 40 reports. Based on the latest sexual assault prevalence study in 2018, approximately 33 percent of sexual assaults were reported across the DAF versus 30 percent for the DOD. The DAF is focused on reducing prevalence while increasing victim reporting to seek care and hold alleged offenders appropriately accountable. The DOD Inspector General concluded that USAFA personnel properly provided services to cadet victims and USAFA leadership did not retaliate against them.

Since 2013, legislation has been proposed that would strip commanders of court-martial convening authority—DAF opposes this legislation as it undermines readiness and lethality. Our military justice system operates within a careful balance between the interests of the government, the rights of the accused, and the respect for the dignity of victims. Commanders serve a critical role in maintaining this balance by bringing all resources and support programs to every case, to include access to counsel, sexual assault response coordinators, medical services, mental health providers, and investigators. Installation commanders also conduct monthly Case Management Group meetings to ensure that victims are receiving the services they need to recover and are being screened for retaliation. Over the past several years, external and congressional panels have examined and continue to review the military justice response to sexual assault offenses including reviewing the commander's role—not one has recommended removing the commander. "Unlike a lawyer-focused civilian system, the military needs a commander-driven, lawyer-supported, victim-supportive system to drive cultural change and enforce discipline required on the battlefield" (Department of Defense, Sexual Assault Accountability and Investigation Task Force Report, April 30, 2019). Sufficient protections exist within our current military justice system to ensure that disposition authority for sexual assault cases is reserved to levels of command far removed from the subject and victim, and provides at least one superior review of dispositions in every penetrative sexual assault case while reinforcing the partnership between commanders and judge advocates in making disposition decisions. Additionally, Special Victims Counsel and Defense Counsel, who are each independent of the chain of command, provide zealous representation in sexual assault cases to ensure that the rights of both victims and accused are defended.

CONCLUSION

Resilient and ready air and space professionals, both military and civilian, are the bedrock of the Department of the Air Force's readiness and lethality. Your Air and Space Forces are evolving to compete, deter, and win with unmatched power in the

air, space, and cyber domains. Our ability to remain competitive as an employer of choice is reliant upon prioritizing and resourcing what is most important, and we look forward to continuing to partner with Congress in our endeavors to protect and defend our great Nation. We thank you for your continued support of your Department of the Air Force—those in uniform, our civilian professionals, and the families who support them.

Senator TILLIS. Thank you.

Mr. Slavonic, I understand that childcare availability is lacking in areas, particularly in Virginia Beach and San Diego. I know that a lot of the families are utilizing the fee assistance program while they are on a wait list for a CDC [child development center] to go out into a private provider network. I believe I am right, and I want to be corrected if I am wrong, but I think the Navy is the only service that right now does not seem like it is budgeting adequately for the fee assistance program. Do you have an update on that, and what we can look forward to going forward to correct it?

Secretary SLAVONIC. Senator, thank you for that question.

As you know, right now we have approximately I believe 9,000 unfilled seats at childcare centers. There is a shortage in that area from what I understand, and we are trying to go out into the public area and try to solicit and find areas where we can plug those individuals in, take care of them.

As far as the funding, I am not sure on the funding. I think we do need more funding. We need to look at it. Admiral Nowell may have a better number for me on that to know, but I think we are getting closer to where we need to be.

Senator TILLIS. Admiral Nowell?

Vice Admiral NOWELL. Mr. Secretary, thank you, and Chairman, thank you.

We share your concern there and we know that we recruit the sailor but we retain the family, and we know that childcare is an important part of that. We are going to add a thousand new spaces this year. We have budgeted for 4,000 new spaces next year, and as the Secretary mentioned, we are also using these public-private venture partnerships, things like schools with excess capacity where we come in and manage and get them. So we are going after this aggressively. But we acknowledge that we are not where we need to be right now.

Senator TILLIS. Thank you.

This will be for Mr. Slavonic and Mr. Wardynski and the chiefs where appropriate. You've got to give the Air Force credit for recently publicizing your methodology on your intention of moving forward with the inclusion of education and military spouse licensure reciprocity and the future base scoring process. As somebody who led the State house in North Carolina, I was constantly looking for ways to be as military-friendly as possible. I think this is a great way to send the message that you welcome us, we may come visit you. But I do not think that the Navy, Marines, or Army has moved forward with this.

Is it your intention to do that? When would put forward that kind of implementation plan?

Secretary WARDYNSKI. Senator, actually we are moving forward with that, and the schools are obviously a very important part of that, spouse licensure reciprocity as well. We have added a few other items to our consideration set, and our Army Analysis Agen-

cy has already begun the work of gathering that data, and to some degree, I think we may be transferring that work to West Point given the nature of it.

Senator TILLIS. Well, good. I tell you for my part—and I will be constantly looking at whether or not North Carolina is tied down and got a good story to tell there. So the sooner we get that out there, the sooner I will be calling the Senate Leader and the Speaker of the House for any deficiencies that I see there to make sure that we are doing the right thing down in North Carolina, whether it is Seymour Johnson, Lejeune, Cherry Point, New River, Fort Bragg, or any part in between.

And so the Navy, Mr. Slavonic?

Secretary SLAVONIC. Yes, sir. I echo the Secretary. Thank you for increasing the fee from \$500 to \$1,000. That has been significant. That has helped us a lot. But we are still needing to do more with our spouses on our licensing, and we are looking at it and trying to move as quickly as we can to make sure that we are doing what we need to do for the spouses.

Senator TILLIS. Well, I would like to, again, make sure that we are keeping pace. It looks like, in this particular case, the Air Force is a little bit ahead of the curve, but I cannot imagine there would be any different policy. This is something that should be common and shared among the service lines. So I look forward to prompt action on that.

Actually this is a question again for Mr. Slavonic. I think the Navy's Active Duty end strength has grown from 323,600 in fiscal year 2015 to 340,500 in fiscal year 2020. The budget request has the Navy growing faster than any other service and requests an additional 7,300 sailors. But at the same time, we have lowered enlistment standards for new recruits and relaxed retention timelines for experienced sailors.

I just want to get a read on this. I know the personnel business is a pretty complicated business, but how can you reassure this committee that as the Navy continues to grow, it will not let recruiting and retention standards slip? Or tell me why that is perception and not reality.

Secretary SLAVONIC. So, Senator, as you know, we have a commitment to build a 355-plus ship Navy, and to get there, we must keep our attrition—our recruitment up to the level it needs to be to reach those goals. Admiral Nowell's team is doing a great job in heading that direction. Some of the individuals—if they decide to leave Active Duty, we are rolling them into the Reserves so we maintain that talent.

But we hope that we would be able to keep that growth. I think this year we are going to grow 4,600, if I am not mistaken. I think our recruiting goal is 4,800.

Senator TILLIS. Admiral Nowell, are we lowering the bar?

Vice Admiral NOWELL. Mr. Chairman, thank you for that, and I assure you we are not lowering the bar, nor are we lowering the bar for retention.

I will tell you—and the Secretary touched on it—Sailor 2025, as we look at managing talent differently, as we look at modernizing, as we look at delivering that customer service going to mobile apps, going to more options, flexibility, you hear us talk about a detailing

marketplace. That is giving us the highest retention that we have ever seen. We are at about 77 percent across all zones. That is how we are doing that growth. We are not—not—sacrificing our standards while we do that, sir.

Senator TILLIS. I think that is very important. I am glad to hear that.

General Rocco, Senator Gillibrand, if you would not mind, I just have one other question on personnel. The Commandant's Plan and Guidance says the current manpower system throws talent away at the point it is most productive and highly trained. How is the Marine Corps planning to revise its personnel policies to achieve the Commandant's manpower objectives?

Lieutenant General ROCCO. Chairman, thank you for that question.

So in conjunction with the Commandant's Planning Guidance, we have implemented a few different manpower approaches. This is all under the umbrella of force design, which is underway right now, and some of the things we have looked at and we just instituted on the last promotion board was merit reorder. That is something that the other Services have done in the past. We have not done that, and it is basically, to put it into the normal vernacular, below zone promotions. It is something similar to that. So what we do is we look at the promotion grades for majors, lieutenant colonels, and colonels, and we break out those high performers and put them at the top of the list, something that has not been done in the past for the Marine Corps, something that is new. We just did it. We are now looking at the analysis of these promotion boards to see if we want to expand it or just how effective it has been.

The other thing we have done is we have given reenlistment incentives to the commanding generals out in the operation of the fleet Marine force. So in the past, all of the reenlistments would have to come to manpower. Now what we have given them is a percentage that they can take their high performing marines and they can actually reenlist them. Not only can they reenlist them, but they can reenlist them early, which again for us is—we have never done that in the past. So that is just a few things that we have done.

We have also recognized the fact, specific in the Commandant's Planning Guidance, it is industrial-age. We want to move to information age. We have to modernize our manpower systems. The other Services have a talent management marketplace. We do not have that. We do not have that ability. We do not have that ability. We do not have the computer power and network to do that. We are developing that to try to come to something that is more a LinkedIn type approach to how we do manpower.

So those are just some of the initiatives to line up with the Commandant's Planning Guidance.

Senator TILLIS. Thank you.

Senator Gillibrand?

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

For Mr. Wardynski and General Seamands, the Army combat fitness test (ACFT) is set to replace the current Army physical fitness test beginning in October. Although I applaud the Army's focus on a more lethal force, I am concerned at the impact this test may

have on recruiting and retention in the force, especially among specialty occupations such as doctors and mental health professionals. ACFT also seems to disproportionately affect women, especially those who have recently given birth. My office has heard concerns from officers and soldiers from all over the force about this.

Are you worried about the impact that the ACFT will have on the Army's ability to recruit and retain professionals in STEM [science, technology, engineering, and mathematics] careers? Are you worried about losing servicemembers to the Air Force and Marines who have made significant adjustments to the physical standards to address similar concerns? What impact will ACFT have on integrating women into combat arms?

Lieutenant General SEAMANDS. Senator, thank you very much for the question.

The six-event ACFT Army combat fitness test is in a diagnostic stage right now where we are gathering information. It's pre-decisional. No decisions have been made in terms of what the standards are across the board. This year in fiscal year 2020, the entire Army will take two PT [physical training] tests to establish a baseline across the board. It is much more challenging physical fitness test. It lines up better with lethality, as you stated, things like the dead lift is more akin to picking up a stretcher and carrying it across the battlefield, et cetera.

We are concerned or are aware that you could have a disproportionate impact on a gender or an age because it is age-neutral as well. That is why I want to gather the data. There are no decisions that have to do with a current three-event PT test, how to phase in the six-event PT test, what are the rewards and consequences because promotions and separations are based off it. It is a challenging test.

But if you do not mind, Senator, my sergeant major is sitting behind me. Last year he had major back surgery. About 4 months ago, we took the new PT test together and he did about a dozen leg tucks, which is the most challenging piece of it.

So what we want to do is bring the test on board, allow people the opportunity to take the test, reduce the angst across the force, establish a baseline that measures fitness, as well as rewards those who go above and beyond.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Right. But you are setting yourself up for failure because—I will give you a couple fact patterns. Imagine that you have an Army physician who has been serving for 15 years, has two children, fully operating in a clinical schedule and is otherwise stellar, in excellent physical condition, but cannot perform the leg tuck. You are going to lose all that training and all that seniority. She has not been asked to do it for 15 years. She is being asked to do it now.

Second example. A woman who has to give a C-section. You slice every stomach muscle you have when you have a C-section. So the leg tucks can be really hard within 6 months of a C-section because those muscles take at least 3 months to heal, and then it is going to take you months to recover the ability to do those physical exercises.

So I think there is going to be a disproportionate harm on certain talented servicemembers that you need in STEM fields that have

been serving for a long time and have not been forced to do this and you need for their missions and for what they actually have been trained to do, and you may have a disproportionate impact on women.

We have heard anecdotally that in your tests among the women who have taken it in the last few, something like 84 percent failure rate among women. So I would like to see the results of the fiscal year 2019 field testing if you have them available. But you do not want to lose people that you have been training and serving for years who are combat-ready and who do a great job. So I just would be mindful about what you are creating and some unintended consequences, which means you will lose servicemembers.

[The information referred to follows:]

Lieutenant General SEAMANDS. The purpose of the fiscal year 2019 Field Test was to validate ACFT administrative procedures and determine baseline levels of physical readiness in 63 Battalions (Active, National Guard and Reserve) across the Army. The sample size was approximately 14,000 soldiers representing a wide demographic mix of soldiers. The female pass rate was 17 percent and the male pass rate was 81 percent for an overall pass rate of 72 percent. Female soldiers had the most difficulty with the standing power throw and the leg tuck and male soldiers had the most difficulty with the leg tuck.

Soldiers, who took a practice ACFT during fiscal year 2019, were unfamiliar with and untrained on the ACFT test events. The primary objectives of the field test were to refine testing protocols, design grader training procedures, track testing times and throughput and trial different test event orders to set conditions for fiscal year 2020 and beyond. As units re-focus their physical training programs, better understand the importance of the ACFT and become more familiar with the test events, soldiers will achieve success and pass the ACFT. In the first 5 months of fiscal year 2020 (pre-COVID), the female pass rate improved from 17 percent to 40 percent. These continued improvements reflect the start of a change in the Army's culture of fitness, better training programs and greater familiarity with the Army Combat Fitness Test events. As the physical fitness levels of our soldiers continue to improve, we expect associated reductions in musculoskeletal injuries and unprogrammed attrition.

The other thing I am a little worried about is Fort Drum. You know the weather in Fort Drum is very harsh in the winter. You get about 110 inches of snow. Dan Sullivan has the same problem in Alaska. Are you concerned or preparing to update and improve their fitness facilities? Because they cannot train outside during the winter, and their current fitness facilities do not have the things you are going to need to train properly, particularly the drag. They do not necessarily have those facilities. So I would look and review that people who have tough conditions and cannot train outside can have access to inside training. You might need to update their facilities.

Lieutenant General SEAMANDS. Yes, ma'am. I think our approach is nested exactly in what you are saying. We are being slow. We are being deliberate. We are gathering the data before we make any decisions and acknowledge the weather conditions in a place like Fort Drum or Alaska that we need to account for.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Yes, because we have heard, again anecdotally, that some of our servicemembers are spending upward of \$2,000 to create their own gyms so they can be ready for the test. I mean, that is absurd. Providing a really state-of-the-art gym for our servicemembers should not be that hard. So that is just a red flag for you.

As you review, I would like you to give a letter to the committee giving us an assurance that you are not going to leave the female force behind and you are not going to leave members who have been serving for over a decade, particularly in STEM fields.

Lieutenant General SEAMANDS. Yes, ma'am. Will do.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you.

Lieutenant General SEAMANDS. I am the father of a daughter, a captain, who calls me on a regular basis and asks what is going on with the ACFT. So it is personal for me as well.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you. I appreciate it.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator TILLIS. Thank you.

Our senior committee staff here, Al, was telling me he was working out recently. Maybe if we have time at the end of the hearing, we will see how many leg tucks he can do.

[Laughter.]

Senator GILLIBRAND. Yes. I want to see how many I can do. I want to see if I can pass your test.

Senator TILLIS. We have got another question. I know that a lot of times we ask you all to focus on priorities that are very important, but oftentimes we fail to provide the resources for those priorities. So I get that you are trying to move things around and work with whatever authorities you have to do that. So take this next question in that context.

Mr. Slavonic and General Rocco, in fiscal year 2020, the NDAA authorized Marine Corps' end strength of 186,200. It looks like you are going to miss the authorized end strength by about 1,600 marines. The cynic would say you are missing that because it frees up about \$150 million to be used for other items that may not have been directly authorized. But I am not necessarily cynical when it comes to the folks wearing stars on their shoulders.

So I would like to, number one, understand was it just a miss? Was it, some would say, an intentional miss? What the money is going to be used for, and then, number two, like I said, how they were applied. Then more importantly, as we go into the next cycle, what should we expect in terms of end strength and hitting closer to the mark? General Rocco?

Lieutenant General ROCCO. Senator Tillis, sir, yes, we will. We are within the margins. We are not being fast and loose, and we do appreciate the support that we receive certainly from the Congress and your committee specifically.

What we are doing is General Berger has started the force design, and what he is looking at is force that is a 2030 force. So recognizing the fact that we can say now, put into place takes years to develop. So that is what we are looking at. So we are looking at basically redesigning the force to be that force in 2030, and this miss in end strength is really the first tranche of looking at divesting ourselves of legacy systems that we do not need and investing in systems that will be that 2030 force.

Senator TILLIS. Well, I think we had—I think it was the Army. I had a similar discussion with then-Secretary of the Army where we hit some end strength targets. It is just so important to get right so that your next estimates are taken seriously and fulfilled. So that is why I raised the question. But thank you for the answer.

Mr. Fedrigo and General Kelly, you all have asked for new end strength authorization for the Space Force of 6,434 personnel for fiscal year 2021. I do not believe the committee has received any specific substantiation for the request. The reason that is important, we are getting in the hearing cycle now for the markup. The sooner we get that information the better we can work to justify it and understand the justification for it. Can you give us a heads-up, number one, on the justification for the need just in response to the question? Number two, when we would see a formal communication of the need?

Mr. FEDRIGO. Yes, Senator. Thank you very much for that question.

So the actual transfer of the manpower positions is what it is. This is transferring positions from the Department of the Air Force that were previously in the Air Force to the Space Force. So that 6,400 that you are talking about represents about 3,500 on the civilian side, about 6,400 on the military side. So it actually ends up to about almost 10,000 in total, and it includes—

Senator TILLIS. Just to clarify, would that be more or less a net? So what is the base that involves an organizational transfer, people doing similar jobs within the Space Force? Then what is in that incremental need?

Mr. FEDRIGO. It is basically everything that used to be the Air Force Space Command before. The 2020 NDAA redesignated the Air Force Space Command to be the United States Space Force. It is transferring all of those authorizations into the Space Force with a couple of additions.

The additions that we asked for in end strength increase in fiscal year 2021. You will see an increase of 900 on the Active Duty side. 140 of that 900 Active Duty would go to the Space Force to start increasing capabilities for space operators, range operators, folks who will start to flush out the Space Force operating in a contested domain. There are also 84 positions in there that are the beginnings of transfers from the Army and Navy on personnel who were working on space to come over into the U.S. Space Force as well.

Senator TILLIS. Good. I think that material—the sooner we get it to the committee to just show that you are doing the organizational transition, that is where the majority of the baseline is, and then the description of the net incremental resources I think will be helpful as we move forward.

Mr. FEDRIGO. It has been submitted. I think it is working its way through approval to get to you.

Senator TILLIS. Okay.

Well, thank you all for being here. Any closing comments from anybody? Is there anything that we did not ask you that you want to talk about? I got all night.

[Laughter.]

Secretary SLAVONIC. Senator, I have one comment. Trying to help Admiral Nowell and the good work his team has done on implementing our MPT [manpower, personnel, and training], our manpower, our transition, we would appreciate any support you could provide. We had a mark on MP-2 which is our program which helps with the permeability from going from Reserves to Ac-

tive Duty and back, and so any support we might receive from you on that would be most appreciated.

Senator TILLIS. Well, let us make sure we get with the staff and get in the office to discuss it.

Senator Gillibrand, did you have any other questions?

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing. Thank you all for your service. This is a time of great need for our country, and I think, as you respond to the needs of the coronavirus and protecting our servicemen and women, I would be grateful for your attention and dedication to keeping our force strong. Thank you.

Senator TILLIS. I want to thank you all. I hope that you know in these committee hearings, you can only cover so much material. But our office—and I am sure I speak for Senator Gillibrand—is wide open to any ideas or feedback particularly within the lanes of the Personnel and Readiness Subcommittee. We want to do everything we can to make your job easier so you can keep our men and women safer. Thank you very much.

We will keep the record open, and we will also, without objection, include any outside statements received for the official record.

Thank you all.

The hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:55 p.m., the Subcommittee adjourned.]

APPENDIX

PREPARED STATEMENT BY THE MILITARY COALITION (TMC)

UNIFORMED SERVICES PERSONNEL, HEALTHCARE, AND COMPENSATION MATTERS

Mr. Chairman, Madame Ranking Member, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, The Military Coalition (TMC), a consortium of nationally prominent uniformed services and veterans' organizations, is grateful to the committee for this opportunity to express our views concerning personnel and compensation issues affecting the uniformed services community. This statement provides the collective views of the following military and veterans' organizations, which represent approximately 5.5 million current and former members of the seven uniformed services, plus their families and survivors.

Air Force Association
 Air Force Sergeants Association
 Association of Military Surgeons of the United States
 Association of the United States Navy
 Blinded Veterans Association
 Chief Warrant and Warrant Officer Association, U.S. Coast Guard
 Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service, Inc.
 Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the U.S.
 Fleet Reserve Association
 Gold Star Wives of America, Inc.
 Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America
 Jewish War Veterans of the United States of America
 Marine Corps League
 Marine Corps Reserve Association
 Military Chaplains Association of the United States of America
 Military Officers Association of America
 Military Order of the Purple Heart
 National Guard Association of the United States
 National Military Family Association
 Naval Enlisted Reserve Association
 Non Commissioned Officers Association
 Reserve Officers Association
 Service Women's Action Network
 The Retired Enlisted Association
 Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, Inc.
 United States Army Warrant Officers Association
 United States Coast Guard Chief Petty Officers Association
 Veterans of Foreign Wars
 Vets First, United Spinal Association
 Wounded Warrior Project

The Military Coalition, Inc. does not receive any grants or contracts from the Federal Government.

CONTINUING RESOLUTIONS

TMC thanks the Subcommittee for its efforts in recent years to abandon arbitrary caps—culminating in the end of sequestration last year—in favor of a more responsible approach to funding national defense requirements for personnel and other critical programs. DOD is at a pivotal point in implementing its National Defense Strategy (NDS), as in 2021 it seeks to robustly fund readiness across the uniformed services and U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM); modernize and divest legacy platforms to improve force readiness; and implement operational reforms to enhance readiness (directed readiness, dynamic force employment, and immediate and contingency response forces). It is of paramount importance that DOD begin fiscal year 2021 with a fully funded budget, as it did in fiscal year 2019, versus a return to the use of crippling, ongoing continuing resolutions.

CURRENTLY SERVING ISSUES

Force Levels

TMC urges the Subcommittee to sustain needed personnel strengths in both Active and Reserve components and to ensure associated funding for approved force levels to meet national security strategy requirements and dwell time needs. The Coalition thanks the Subcommittee for their attention in this area, as demonstrated in recent years.

Uniformed Services Pay Raise

TMC appreciates the Subcommittee's commitment in recent years to keep uniformed services pay commensurate with service and aligned with private sector wage increases as determined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics through their Employment Cost Index (ECI)—currently 3 percent for fiscal year 2020. We request the Subcommittee's support for this military pay raise as submitted in the President's fiscal year 2021 budget request. We also seek full restoration of previously capped pay raises resulting in a cumulative gap of 2.6 percent.

Basic Allowance for Housing

Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) is an essential component of regular military compensation—TMC applauds Congress' action to protect BAH in recent years. The Coalition urges the Subcommittee to continue sustaining current applicable BAH calculations for all servicemembers and restore BAH rates to match 100 percent of median housing costs.

Sexual Harassment and Assault Prevention

We want to thank Congress for continuing the focus on eliminating sexual assault and harassment. Of note in fiscal year 2020 NDAA was the establishment of a new Defense Advisory Committee focused on preventing sexual assault. TMC requests continuing congressional vigilance on prevention and on commensurate accountability for perpetrators. Finally, we would like more emphasis placed on stopping retaliation against those who report sexual assault or harassment.

RETIREMENT ISSUES

Concurrent Receipt

TMC supports legislation authorizing the immediate payment of full military retired pay and veterans' disability compensation for all disabled former servicemembers. Concurrent receipt refers to the simultaneous receipt of two types of monetary benefits: military retired pay and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) disability compensation. There are two types of disability payments: 1) Combat-Related Special Compensation (CRSC) is paid to military retirees who have a combat-related disability and do not have their military retired pay reduced in order to receive VA disability compensation. 2) Concurrent Retirement and Disability Pay (CRDP) military retirees with 20 or more years of service and a 50 percent or higher service-connected disability rating have concurrent receipt. All CRDP, medically retired with less than 20 years of service (Chapter 61) are not eligible for concurrent receipt.

The Coalition strongly supports legislation in both the House and Senate that expand concurrent receipt to include:

- H.R. 333, Disabled Veterans Tax Termination Act;
- H.R. 303, Retired Pay Restoration Act; and
- S. 208, Retired Pay Restoration Act.
- H.R. 5995, Major Richard Star Act; and
- S. 3393 (similar bill).

TMC urges this Subcommittee to expand concurrent receipt to CRDP retirees with less than 50 percent disability rating and all those medically retired CRDP beneficiaries with less than 20 years of service (Chapter 61s) who are not currently eligible for concurrent receipt. The Coalition is specifically concerned about the CRDP Chapter 61 members with ratings of 50 percent or greater that do not qualify for concurrent receipt. Other disabled servicemembers with a 50 percent or greater disability rating already have concurrent receipt.

DFAS Backlog on Reserve Component Retirement Pay

TMC is deeply concerned over the delays in processing Guardsmen and Reserve retired pay. These backlogs in the Services' retirement administration offices are leading Guard and Reserve retirees to wait as long as a year after reaching their qualifying year to receive retirement pay.

Additional oversight by the Armed Services Committees is needed to ensure the Services and the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) do whatever is necessary to review and improve the process for a timelier completion of retirement pay for Reserve component retirees.

Allow Survivors of Retirees to Draw Full Month's Retired Pay for Month in Which Retirees Die

TMC supports legislation to allow survivors a full month's pay for the month the retiree dies. Currently DFAS recovers the paid retirement annuity in the month the retiree died and later pays a final settlement for the number of days in the same month the retiree was alive. This often creates hardships for survivors who must

wait several months for the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) benefits to be started by DFAS. This is why TMC supports the “Military Retiree Survivor Comfort Act” (H.R. 463) which would authorize the retention of the full final month’s retired pay by the surviving spouse (or other designated survivor) for the month in which the member was alive for at least 24 hours.

Reform the Military Retirement System

TMC believes that the Blended Retirement System (BRS) needs to be improved with the following provisions:

- Increase the government matching contribution from 4 percent to 5 percent (as originally recommended by the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission);
- Extend the period of government matching contribution from 26 years to include all years of service for all eligible servicemembers; and
- Oppose any delay in the start of matching contributions (currently, matching will begin after two years of service).

TMC urges the Subcommittee to engage in oversight of the administration of the BRS.

- Ensure the Defense Department (DOD) provides a high-quality education program that assists members under the new system in developing prudent investment strategies: Military spouses should be included as fully as possible in the BRS education program. Statistics show over 90 percent of household finances in a military family are managed by the spouse.
- Ensure the financial impact on servicemembers and their families under BRS is understood: Understanding of the BRS remains low. Per a recent survey taken by Blue Star Families, the majority (51 percent) of those servicemembers and spouses who indicated they were eligible for the new BRS say they do not understand it and 42 percent indicated they did not know how the new system works compared to the old.
- Ensure the calculations used to determine lump-sum payment options for newly eligible retirees under the blended system reflect reasonable discount rates that do not disproportionately erode their retired pay value: In this regard, the Coalition notes a significant number of actuaries have expressed concern the planned discount rate will result in substantially devalued lump sum payments to future retiring servicemembers.

Retired Pay Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA)

TMC urges the Subcommittee to oppose the adoption of a chained Consumer Price Index (C-CPI) computation or any other COLA reductions which would devalue retired pay, survivor benefits, disability compensation, and other programs over time.

Reduced Retirement Age for Guard and Reserve Personnel

TMC supports legislation that recognizes the service and sacrifice of Reserve component members, by authorizing early retirement credit for all Active Duty service by all Guard and Reserve members since September 11, 2001.

GUARD AND RESERVE

The National Guard and Reserve are regularly being used for operational missions making them more than just a strategic asset. As of February 2020, more than 1,000,000 men and women of the Reserve and National Guard have been activated in support of the Nation’s war on terror since the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Since 2015, a RAND report showed the Reserve component (RC) provided 25 percent of military support to Iraq and Afghanistan. As impressive as this milestone is for a part-time force, it does not include all the operational support they have provided beyond deployments. For example, in 2019, “In addition to around 20,000 Guardsmen and women mobilized around the world, on average, about 8,000 Guard Soldiers and Airmen conduct domestic and homeland security/defense operations in the United States on any given day.”

Not only does the Reserve component provide the Nation with a ready, surge force, but they do so at a reduced cost. The Reserve Forces Policy Board is keenly aware of the value of the National Guard and Reserve and work to preserve their value. They recently observed the RC has been able to maintain that, “... when not activated, [cost] remains less than one third that of their AC counterpart. According to RFPB analysis of the fiscal year 2018 budget request [...] the RC per capita cost ranges from 28 percent to 32 percent of their AC counterparts’ per capita costs, depending on which cost elements are included.” If the cost of activations were included, overall the RC would still be less than the Active component because they are only put on orders when needed. For legislative decisions and audit purposes,

Congress should require the use of fully burdened and life cycle personnel costs for all components.

Besides costing 28 percent to 32 percent of their Active counterparts' per capita costs they provide 100 percent of mission responsibility in many areas, such as the Air Force Reserve hurricane and weather reconnaissance, aerial firefighting, and aerial spray missions and the Navy Reserve organic intra-theater air logistics support. The Air National Guard provides 100 percent of air defense interceptor force for the continental United States and the Army Reserve provides 100 percent of chemical and internment brigade missions along with many others.

TMC believes the following legislative goals would support recruiting and retention:

Special Incentive Pay Parity

Provide parity for the Reserve component to align with the Active component in special incentive pay, including career enlisted/officer special aviation incentive pays, diving special duty pay, and pro-pay for medical professionals regardless of Reserve component duty status.

National Guard Reserve Equipment Accounts (NGREA) Funding

Continue funding National Guard Reserve Equipment Accounts (NGREA) in the base budget to ensure that the Reserve component can maintain strategic and operational roles. TMC appreciates the continued support of Congress when they fund the NGREA, but this year we are asking to include language that prevents reprogramming of the fund for any requirement outside of Reserve component equipment.

USPHS Commissioned Corps

Fund and implement a Ready Reserve component within the USPHS [United States Public Health Service] Commissioned Corps. The recent flu season and worldwide spread of the coronavirus show more than ever how important it is to support a USPHS Ready Reserve. TMC also believes there will be a title 10 role for this force as DOD continues to make changes under the Defense Health Agency (DHA).

SURVIVOR ISSUES

Survivor Benefit Plan Open Enrollment

After almost two decades of advocacy, we are gratified Congress finally eliminated the Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) offset to the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP).

When the Social Security offset to the SBP was eliminated in the fiscal year 2005 NDAA, Congress provided for a one-year open enrollment for those who opted out of the SBP. Since 1980, there have been six open enrollment opportunities. Now that the SBP/DIC offset has been eliminated, we ask Congress to authorize an open enrollment period once again.

Access to Electronic Medical Appointing, Referrals and Prescription Refills

In addition to losing financial benefits, ID cards, and TRICARE for themselves, remarried surviving military spouses lose access to the TRICARE Beneficiary Self-Service Account that allows them to access referrals and check the status of referrals for their TRICARE-eligible children. Instead, referrals must be physically mailed delaying in many cases, treatment. In addition, they no longer have access to Relay Health which facilitates communication, prescription refills, and appointments online. Minor children do not have their own accounts: they are under their parents' account. If the parent is no longer in the system under TRICARE the remaining parent cannot access the electronic means for referrals, prescription refills, and online appointments.

"I truly just want electronic access to her referrals so I can set up appointments for specialty doctors and equipment like her insulin pump and continuous glucose monitor (both of which took over a month to get a paper copy to send and get these lifesaving things ordered even though the referral was approved in days). That should not be too much to ask as I am their ONLY living parent. It shouldn't matter if I'm remarried or not, I am still the ONLY living parent that these children have left."

Kaanan, remarried surviving spouse

Increase Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)

We recognize that the DIC is not in the purview of the Armed Services Committee, but we would be remiss if we didn't go on the record for an increase in DIC.

Since 1993, surviving spouses are falling further and further behind in meeting their financial obligations from month-to-month. Many surviving spouses of World War II (WWII), Korea, and Vietnam are receiving only DIC. These DIC recipients struggle monthly with their budget of \$1,340.14 juggling bills to meet the rising costs in health and dental insurance, housing, utilities, food, clothing, and other living expenses. Some receive DIC and minimum Social Security benefits. The struggle to meet financial obligations leads too often to homelessness. Congress must take action to rectify this inequity by increasing the current amount of DIC to a level comparable to other Federal employees. Widows from WWII, Korea, and Vietnam are now in their 60's through 90's. These surviving spouses are in dire need for an increase in DIC. We support S. 1047 and H.R. 3221 to increase DIC from 43 percent (\$1,340.14), to 55 percent.

MILITARY FAMILIES

Child Care

DOD has long recognized the importance of high-quality and affordable child care for servicemembers and their families. While we understand child care challenges are a national issue, ensuring access to affordable and quality child care for military families is a key element in ensuring readiness of the force.

Despite previous action taken by Congress and DOD to address child care challenges that military families face, we continue to hear reports of long waitlists in some locations as well as trouble finding eligible providers within DOD's fee assistance program due to strict standards for these providers to participate in the program. We encourage DOD to explore ways to increase participation in the program, expanding options for military families to secure child care within their communities. We also encourage Congress and the DOD to pursue flexible spending accounts (FSA) for servicemembers to use pre-tax dollars to pay for dependent care and health care expenses. In addition, Family Child Care (FCC) program participation on installations has declined over the years. FCC home providers receive the same level of training and screening as CDC employees, but many times offer flexibility that CDCs may not be able to offer military families. We encourage DOD to reevaluate the FCC program and determine ways to improve and incentivize participation.

Military Privatized Housing

Last year we heard numerous stories from military families who have endured deplorable conditions within military privatized housing, including rampant mold and vegetation growth in walls, bathrooms fixtures, carpets, and heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems, infestations of vermin, among other inexcusable situations.

We are thankful Congress has taken the first steps to address the situation within the fiscal year 2020 NDAA, including the formation of a Tenant Bill of Rights, prohibition of non-disclosure agreements, and the establishment of a uniform code of basic housing standards for safety, comfort, and habitability. We urge Congress to ensure the Services move forward with improved oversight and management of the contractors and housing officials responsible for conditions which continue to affect the health, safety and wellbeing of servicemembers and their families. We also call on Congress to address the short- and long-term health effects of military families who have lived in privatized housing by creating a registry to track illnesses sustained.

We also urge similar attention and focus be placed on remaining installation buildings and barracks, to ensure the safety of personnel living and working in them.

Food Insecurity

It's no secret that many junior military families tend to struggle to make ends meet and put healthy food on the table. While some military families may qualify for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), many more families don't qualify for assistance due to the inclusion of BAH as part of income calculations.¹ Military families, especially those living in high cost of living areas, often struggle to cover housing costs as BAH is now set to cover only 95 percent of those costs. Additionally, Congress has restructured the retirement system, which necessitates servicemembers contribute a percentage of their basic pay to receive a matching contribution from DOD. Other contributing factors that cause

¹ "Military Personnel: DOD Needs More Complete Data on Active Duty servicemembers' Use of Food Assistance Programs". GAO. July 15, 2016. <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-16-561>

servicemembers to struggle include costs related to frequent moves and a stagnant 24 percent unemployment rate among military spouses.

For these reasons, we ask Congress to institute the military family basic needs allowance (BNA) which would provide targeted assistance for those in need. To qualify for BNA, a servicemember's basic pay, in addition to his/her household size, would have to meet a minimum level of 130 percent of the Federal poverty threshold. Providing the servicemember reports no additional income, the amount of BNA would be the difference between income and the established poverty threshold. Instituting a BNA for military families who meet this threshold would ensure mission readiness and encourage retention of first-term servicemembers who often struggle to put food on the table.

MILITARY HEALTH CARE

TMC understands the goal of the military health system (MHS) is to ensure a medically ready force to execute the NDS, and a ready medical force to support our Armed Forces throughout the world. Additionally, we appreciate the goals of MHS reform include improved readiness, increased efficiencies, and enhanced access, quality of care and an improved patient experience for beneficiaries. However, we remain concerned that some MHS reform initiatives have the potential to undermine these goals.

MHS Reform—Direct Care System Realignment/Rightsizing

The recently released section 703 of the NDAA for fiscal year 2017 report to Congress outlines DOD's plans to restructure or realign military treatment facilities (MTFs). While we appreciate assurances that DOD is committed to a deliberate process with no immediate changes, we fear some beneficiaries may encounter access challenges when seeking civilian care despite DOD's best efforts to ensure adequate medical capacity in communities surrounding downsized MTFs. There are many variables impacting access to care and the report acknowledges numerous limitations to their assessments including the point-in-time nature of their analysis, the inability to determine actual capacity for new patients, provider willingness to access TRICARE patients, and shifting micro- and macroeconomic factors.

The section 703 report left many questions unanswered and deferred numerous legislative report requirements to a follow-on implementation plan. We urge Congress to ensure the following questions are answered by DOD's detailed implementation plans:

- What is the process for ensuring a by name provider with appointment availability for every disempowered beneficiary?
- How will medically complex beneficiaries, or those with on-going treatment plans, be transitioned to civilian providers? What are the staffing requirements for these additional case management needs?
- What are the plans for maintenance and update of health records during transition from MTFs to the civilian network and possible subsequent return to the direct care system upon geographic move or PCS?
- How will impacted graduate medical education (GME) programs and residency programs be relocated?
- How will health care for female servicemembers be impacted by MTF service reductions?
- What are the costs of restructuring/realignment?
- What are the planned changes to military and civilian personnel assigned to each facility?
- What are the timelines for restructuring/realignment?
- What are plans to assist servicemembers and covered beneficiaries with travel and lodging, if necessary, in connect with the receipt of specialty care services at regional centers of excellence?

MTF pharmacies play a critical role for many beneficiaries, including those not enrolled at MTFs. From the section 703 report, it is unclear how pharmacies will be impacted. TMC has the following concerns about pharmacy services at impacted MTFs:

- Will pharmacies at downsized facilities be staffed to handle all eligible beneficiaries, not just those enrolled at the MTF?
- Will formularies be reduced to meet the needs of only the smaller enrolled population?
- The section 703 report says pharmacies will be accessible to "MTF eligibles." How is that term defined?
- For beneficiaries disempowered from MTFs, will their civilian providers have the option of prescribing to the MTF pharmacy?

Before any MTFs are converted to Active Duty only, we urge Congress to require a study on the impact to female servicemember health care. Almost 85 percent of patients at Active Duty-only MTFs will be male and the volume of female-specific healthcare provided will tumble as dependents leave the system. Will MTFs retain enough volume of female-specific services to maintain a cadre of credentialed providers to meet the needs of Active Duty women for OB/GYN care, mammogram services, treatment of female specific cancers, newborn care, etc.? If not, the study should determine: 1) Projected lost time for Active Duty women if they must obtain these services from the civilian community; 2) Newborn care for infants of Active Duty women; 3) Impact on medical readiness of Active Duty women.

TMC also remains concerned regarding DOD plans to decrease the military medical force by nearly 18,000 positions, a reduction of almost 18 percent. If not carefully and methodically implemented, this reduction could place combat readiness, medical readiness, and beneficiary care at risk.

While we have been told the smaller uniformed medical force can meet operational requirements, TMC fears second and third order effects of billet reductions have not been addressed. A diminished medical force would mean more frequent and unpredictable deployments for medical personnel resulting in reduced overseas dwell ratios, which would negatively impact retention in critical medical skills areas. Surge capacity, the ability to surge medical care in the event of a major crisis or conflict, could be compromised with a reduced medical force. Additionally, the priority to resource combat care is understandable, but most of the medical cases, even in combat zones, are from disease and non-battle injuries.

MHS Reform—Transition of MTFs to DHA Administration & Management

With DHA now handling administration and management of U.S. MTFs, there has been a move to greater policy standardization and compliance across the system. While TMC supports the goal of standardization, we are already hearing from beneficiaries regarding poor communication and insufficient lead time for providers and patients to adapt to policy changes. We urge Congress to conduct oversight on this transition and take steps to proactively identify systemic transition-related problems, specifically:

- Require DHA reporting on access to care metrics at the MTF level together with referral data for time periods when MTF access standards were not met (to ensure beneficiaries are being referred out vs. denied care) and plans for addressing persistent failure to meet TRICARE Prime access standards.
- Establish and widely promote an online problem reporting system. Evaluate DOD's Interactive Customer Evaluation (ICE) system as a possible platform for collecting patient feedback. Require problems to be reported to DHA for analysis and identification of systemic issues.

MHS Reform—TRICARE

Out-of-Pocket Costs

TMC remains committed to protecting the value of the TRICARE health benefit. We are disappointed TRICARE reforms to date have focused on shifting costs to beneficiaries via increased copays and enrollment fees and seek to have disproportionate fee increases rolled back.

We are particularly concerned with copays for mental health outpatient visits, as well as physical, speech, and occupational therapy that are categorized as specialty care. This results in copays that are excessively high for relatively low-cost visits. Additionally, a course of treatment involving multiple visits can result in substantial out-of-pocket costs over a relatively short timeframe. We urge Congress to reduce copays for mental health visits and physical, speech, and occupational therapy. We also ask Congress and DOD to limit any future TRICARE out-of-pocket costs increases to modest and predictable indexing that does not outpace the growth of retiree COLA and does not include new enrollment fees or other new out-of-pocket costs.

TRICARE T-5 Contract

TMC appreciates MHS reform goals of greater beneficiary choice and an enhanced focus on high quality care within the TRICARE networks. However, we fear simultaneously increasing demand for care in the TRICARE network (by transitioning patients out of realigned MTFs) while also changing the supply of TRICARE providers via major changes to the TRICARE regions and contracts could lead to provider and appointment shortages.

We also believe it is important to analyze value-based care pilots, such as the Atlanta Kaiser Permanente test, in order to incorporate lessons learned into the next generation of TRICARE contracts.

We urge Congress to ensure the T-5 timeline allows for an adequate assessment of potential changes to TRICARE network care demand due to MTF restructuring as well as incorporating lessons learned from value-based care pilots before expanding that concept across the purchased care system.

TRICARE Annual Open Enrollment Policy

We remain concerned about the potential of TRICARE's new annual open enrollment policy to prevent TRICARE Prime families from leaving MTFs that don't meet their needs. We realize the annual open enrollment period is a feature of civilian plans, and generally have no issues with this new requirement. However, TRICARE Prime's reliance on military hospitals and clinics creates a situation unique to the military and demands a policy tailored to the MHS. While an annual enrollment period is not unreasonable, preventing military families from leaving their MTF if they experience problems with appointment access or quality of care is unreasonable. We request that "dissatisfaction with MTF access or quality of care" be added to the list of Qualifying Life Events (QLEs) to allow TRICARE Prime beneficiaries to leave MTFs that do not meet their needs.

TRICARE Coverage Updates

As MHS reform results in more beneficiaries transitioning to civilian care, it is critical that TRICARE's coverage gaps are addressed. We appreciate updated TRICARE policy for continuous glucose monitoring that is now consistent with VA and Medicare coverage. We urge DHA and Congress to update TRICARE reimbursement policies to cover additional technology innovations and evolving treatment protocols including non-pharmaceutical pain management (chiropractic care and acupuncture), FeNO [fractional exhaled nitric oxide] testing for airway issues and asthma, and lab developed tests including diagnostic genetic testing.

Reserve Component/TRICARE Reserve Select

TRICARE Reserve Select (TRS) has been around for over a decade. However, Federal employees have been specifically restricted from participating. There are over 113,000 eligible reservists who are Federal employees. Included in this number are Army and Air Guard and Reserve military technicians. In the fiscal year 2020 NDAA this cohort will see the restriction lifted but not until 2030. We ask that the necessary cost offset be identified to move the implementation date from 2030 to 2021 or 2022.

DEFENSE RESALE

We want to thank Congress for its continued vigilance over commissary and broader defense resale reforms, and specifically for language in fiscal year 2020 NDAA mandating further review of DOD's resale consolidation business case analysis prior to implementation of planned changes.

TMC supports reforms that protect the commissary benefit, the longevity of the defense resale system, its dividends for MWR, savings for patrons, customer satisfaction, and product quality. However, these represent an intricate "ecosystem" of important earned benefits, and reforms must be carefully implemented.

We ask Congress for continued vigilance and appropriated funding to support reforms in defense resale while increasing performance and patronage, and to ensure any efficiencies gained are used to improve vital military resale benefits, and all other important programs, dependent on their success, ensuring any modernization efforts of the commissary and exchange systems in no way degrades the earned benefit.

SUMMARY

The Military Coalition again thanks the Subcommittee for your unfailing support of the entire uniformed service community and for taking our concerns and priorities into consideration as you deliberate on the future of the one weapon system that has never let our Nation down—the men and women who wear and have worn the uniform and their families.

