

**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION FOR  
APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2022 AND  
THE FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE PROGRAM**

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**HEARING**

BEFORE THE

**COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES  
UNITED STATES SENATE**

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

ON

**S. 2792**

TO AUTHORIZE APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2022 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.

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**PART 6  
PERSONNEL**

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MAY 12, 2021



Printed for the use of the Committee on Armed Services

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION REQUEST FOR FISCAL YEAR 2022 AND THE FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE PROGRAM—Part 6  
PERSONNEL

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# **DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION REQUEST FOR FISCAL YEAR 2022 AND THE FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE PROGRAM**

**WEDNESDAY, MAY 12, 2021**

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

## **MILITARY AND CIVILIAN PERSONNEL PROGRAMS**

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:30 p.m. in room SD-106, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (Chairman of the Subcommittee) presiding.

Subcommittee Members present: Gillibrand, Tillis, Hawley, and Tuberville.

### **OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND**

Senator GILLIBRAND. Good afternoon, everyone. The subcommittee meets today to receive testimony on the military and civilian personnel programs in the Department of Defense (DOD) and the Military Service in review of the administration's Defense Authorization Request for fiscal year 2022. This is the subcommittee's annual personnel posture hearing, and serves to establish a foundational record for the committee of the Department's full range of activities concerns matters affecting servicemembers, their families, retirees, and the Department's civilian workforce, and to provide the Department the opportunity to discuss their personnel policy priorities.

To our witnesses, welcome, and thank you for appearing. We will have two panels today. The first panel consists officials from the Office of The Secretary of Defense, that cover the full range of military and civilian personnel programs. Mr. Lernes Herbert—oh A-bear. Is that how you say it? Got it. Okay. I was like, what is this phonetic? I do not understand it. Okay.

Mr. Lernes Herbert, performing the duties of Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs; Dr. Terry Adirim, Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs; and Dr. Elizabeth Van Winkle, Executive Director, Office of Force Resiliency.

The second panel will include the senior personnel chiefs of the Military Services, Lieutenant General Gary Brito, U.S. Army, Deputy Chief of Staff, G—Senator KELLY. Vice Admiral John B. Nowell, Jr., U.S. Navy, Deputy Chief of Naval Operations, N-1 and Chief

of Naval Personnel; Lieutenant General Brian T. Kelly, U.S. Air Force, Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower, Personnel, and Services; Lieutenant General David A. Ottignon, U.S. Marine Corps, Deputy Commandant for Manpower and Reserve Affairs; and Ms. Patricia Mulcahy, Chief Human Capital Officer, United States Space Force.

While I recognize that we have not yet received the administration's budget request, which is not unusual for the first year of an administration, I appreciate your willingness to appear here today to discuss personnel programs and policies.

For the past 20 years, our country been in a state of continuous war. President Biden has announced a withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan by no later than September of this year. While this represents the closing of one chapter, it also means the beginning of a new one. As Avril Haines, the Director of National Intelligence, summarized in testimony before this committee a couple of weeks ago, quote, "The United States and its allies will face a diverse array of threats that are playing out amidst the global disruption resulting from COVID-19 pandemic and against the backdrop of great power competition, the disruptive effects of ecological degradation and changing climate, and increasing number of empowered non-state actors, and rapidly evolving technology."

These challenges mean that the need for a highly trained and capable military and civilian workforce within the Department of Defense and throughout the Federal Government has never been greater. I believe the Department's upcoming budget request represents an important strategic reset and an opportunity to ensure that military and civilian personnel systems are oriented for the force we need in the future, not a force rooted in the past.

As I stated last month, a subcommittee hearing on the cyber workforce to prevent the types of attacks we now see with alarming frequency, including attacks over the weekend against a major gas pipeline that supplies gas to much of the East Coast, we must grow and maintain our cyber capability, and that starts with people. Our ability to field the world's strongest military has always come from the collective talent and dedication of our servicemembers and the civilian workforce that supports them. We must commit to meeting these new threats by developing, fielding, and maintaining the world's most capable workforce.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today about their ideas to develop a workforce ready to meet these challenges. We must ensure military and civilian pay and benefit enable the Department to compete for America's best and brightest, especially in emerging technology fields, including fully funding civilian pay raises that keep pace with inflation, something this Congress has consistently failed to do over the past 8 years. We must fully fund military family programs and child care programs. We must ensure adequate resources for DOD-operated schools and supplemental impact aid to help local school districts educate military children. We must continue to ensure that military health care is fully funded and oriented to support all servicemembers and their families, especially the most vulnerable, those with special needs.

Finally, it will come as no surprise to anyone here, I am sure, but I will continue throughout this legislative hear to fight tire-



lessly to improve the military culture by eliminating the scourge of sexual assault within the ranks and reforming the way the military responds to and prosecutes these cases.

Senator Tillis, welcome. I look forward, as always, to working with you on the fiscal year 2022 Defense Authorization Bill, which I am confident we will enact for the 61st consecutive year. We worked so well over time here to take care of our servicemembers, their families, and civilians that support them, and I expect that to continue.

Senator Tillis?

#### **STATEMENT OF SENATOR THOM TILLIS**

Senator TILLIS. Thank you, Chair Gillibrand. There are certain aspects I missed about having the chairman's role. Having to be the first one to pronounce some of the difficult names is not one of them, so thank you so much.

I want to thank you for holding this hearing, and I really want to thank you for the work that we have done together. I have enjoyed working with you over the last 6 years, especially to improve important programs to serve military personnel and their families. Together we have done a lot of hard work, but we have much more to do.

This is an important hearing, oversight hearing for us, as we are able to get a current perspective on the personnel and readiness programs for the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Military Services. I want to thank the witnesses for appearing here. I want to thank those that we have been in contact with, Dr. Van Winkle being one of them, before the hearing. I know you have been working hard in preparation for this hearing, and working through all the challenges of COVID over the last year, so thank you for your service.

I look forward to hearing from the witnesses on many important topics, including suicide prevention, sexual assault prevention and response, domestic violence prevention, the impact of COVID-19 on military readiness, recruitment, and retention, COVID's impact on military families, the challenges the Defense Health Agency (DHA) has encountered as the DOD reforms the military health system, reform of the Family Advocacy and Exceptional Family Member Programs, officer and enlisted personnel management, and civilian personnel management.

Again, Senator Gillibrand, thank you for your leadership on this subcommittee. I look forward to working closely with you, and I look forward to the witnesses' testimony.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you. Mr. Herbert?

#### **STATEMENT OF MR. LERNES HERBERT, PERFORMING THE DUTIES OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS**

Mr. HERBERT. Chairwoman Gillibrand, Ranking Member Tillis, distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

Manpower and Reserve Affairs has been a key part of the DOD response to COVID-19 for well over a year now. Manpower and Reserve Affairs (M&RA) contributions, including issuing stop-move-

ment orders and other essential personnel policies, both for military and civilian personnel, to protect our people and keep our Department running has been crucial throughout the pandemic.

Manpower and Reserve Affairs also oversaw the rapid mobilization of more than 65,000 Reserve component members, supporting the government's response to COVID, and modified operations to our child development centers and Department of Defense Education Activity (DODEA) schools to ensure we continue caring for and educating military children as we battled the pandemic.

While M&RA continues to support the Nation's fight against COVID-19, we also have not lost sight of the many initiatives across our portfolio that take care of our people and build the DOD workforce we need to protect America and defeat our adversaries, now and in the future.

The M&RA team has worked hard and continues to do so on policy priorities like combatting extremism, the service to transgender individuals, sustaining the all-volunteer force. We are also working on issues related to ensuring our servicemembers, civilians, and families have access to affordable child care, that our DOD school continue to provide high-quality learning opportunities for our dependents, and that spouse can pursue not just jobs but careers throughout their service.

Thank you again for the opportunity to be here, and I look forward to answering any of your questions you may have.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you. Dr. Adirim?

**STATEMENT OF TERRY ADIRIM, M.D., ACTING ASSISTANT  
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR HEALTH AFFAIRS**

Dr. ADIRIM. Good afternoon. So I guess you can hear me. Great. Chairwoman Gillibrand, Ranking Member Tillis, distinguished members of the subcommittee, I am honored to represent the military and civilian medical professionals in the Military Health System who are serving around the world and here at home, delivering health care in support of our 9.6 million beneficiaries, as well as providing COVID-19 support to millions of Americans throughout the United States.

My testimony will provide the subcommittee with information on major military medical operations for the coming year. The most significant issue for the Military Health System is the national response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Department's role in the response. Secretary Austin has made clear that the greatest proximate challenge to our Nation's security is the threat of COVID-19. The Military Health System (MHS) is providing critical health support worldwide to our military forces supporting other Federal and state entities as part of a whole-of-government response to this crisis, and continuing to meet other strategic global mission requirements while sustaining high-quality health services to our military servicemembers and their families.

Regarding COVID-19 vaccinations, as of this morning over 55 percent of our Active Duty force is already vaccinated, and this number is climbing daily. We have directly administered almost 3.2 million doses to our eligible beneficiaries and coordinated another 600,000 doses of vaccine through our TRICARE providers and retail pharmacy networks.

To meet urgent health care needs throughout the pandemic, the Department has significantly expanded the use of virtual health to meet beneficiary demand while minimizing unnecessary risk for patients and staff. With our vaccination rollout now reaching our entire population of eligible beneficiaries, we are communicating with our beneficiaries who may have delayed or deferred needed preventive and routine medical care during the worst days of the pandemic, to ensure that they get timely quality care.

The Department is also resuming a number of major reforms within the Military Health System. The fiscal year 2017 NDAA enacted sweeping reforms to the organization and management of military medicine. The overarching direction from Congress was to centralize and standardize many military health care functions in a way that better integrates readiness and health delivery. Included among these reforms was the expanded authority and responsibility of the Defense Health Agency to manage military medical treatment facilities, or MTFs, worldwide, and the authority to adjust medical infrastructure in the MHS to maintain readiness and core competencies of health care providers.

Following a strategic pause in these reforms due to the initial COVID-19 pandemic response, the MHS has resumed executing the transition of MTFs to Defense Health Agency (DHA) administration and management, in accordance with the law. Similarly, the Department submitted its required report to Congress in February 2020, on our plan to restructure military treatment facilities. The report articulated DOD's decisions to achieve a proper balance between meeting readiness requirements and managing the total cost of health care in the direct and purchased care systems.

The Department is currently revalidating the assumptions made regarding its readiness requirements prior to the pandemic, as well as the assessment of network capacity to absorb additional patients where we intend to proceed with right-sizing plans. Local transitions will only occur when we are certain that TRICARE networks can provide timely and quality access to health care for our beneficiaries. If they cannot, we will revise our plans.

Finally, the Department is also grateful for this committee's long-term advocacy and support for our military medical research program. Military medical research advances the state of medical science in those areas of most pressing need and relevance to today's emerging threats, which includes the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thank you for inviting me here today to speak with you about military medicine, our response to the global pandemic, and our plans to further improve our health system on behalf of the uniformed servicemembers and families who we serve. I look forward to the discussion.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Dr. Van Winkle?

**STATEMENT OF ELIZABETH P. VAN WINKLE, Ph.D., EXECUTIVE  
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF FORCE RESILIENCY**

Dr. VAN WINKLE. Member of the committee, good afternoon and thank you for having me today. I have appeared before you in past year expressing a commitment to addressing the issues that fall under me, to include sexual assault, harassment, diversity and inclusion, and suicide prevention, and countless military and civilian

leaders have shared this same commitment. While I can assure you of our sincerity and have provided, in my written statement, some of the initiatives that we have been doing, I want to take this time to discuss some critical issues that we must keep in mind as we move forward.

Points of failure in the system, as reflected in painstaking detail within the pages of the Fort Hood report, will consistently undermine all of our actions if not addressed. At Fort Hood, and likely other installations, there is a culture of disrespect and purposeful degradation of others that was unimpeded and left unchecked by the very individuals who hold the responsibility to prevent this type of culture. It left lingering questions as to whether some of our military leaders were blind to these infractions, whether they were complicit, and if there is even a meaningful distinction between the two.

Since 2019, we have introduced strategies and policies developed in conjunction with experts in the field, to address sexual assault as part of an integrated violence prevention framework, focusing on the prevention of all forms of harm and ensuring an inclusive environment for all who serve. While I truly believe that an integrated violence prevention approach with a focus on command climate is how we can best prevent these behaviors, it must be emphasized that anything we have put into place, or will put into place, will be ineffective if members of our military fail to proactively embody the values that we expect.

Changing climate and culture requires the commitment of every single member of the community. No one gets a pass. No one gets to decide they do not have a role to play. When you join the military you are taking on a responsibility to uphold our values and to be a part of the team that rejects these behaviors. When you become a leader, at any level, within this team, you take on a critical responsibility, both when it is easy and when it is not. This means calling out behaviors that are not in line with our expectations, even if they are perpetrated by a friend. If you overlook these behaviors, you open a door that you cannot easily shut later. Your looking the other way allows harm when it otherwise did not exist, and every time you fail to address misconduct, even the smallest offensive jokes and comments, someone is watching you, and trust is either gained or it is lost, and once it is lost, you will not easily recover it. If you assume witnesses will remain quiet as you move up in your career, you are not paying attention. We use words like “protect,” “defend,” “dignity,” “respect,” and “discipline.” These have never been negotiable, nor should they be confusing for anyone who wears a uniform. It is not up for discussion and it carries no exceptions.

As a Department, we are looking at all aspects of these issues, to shed light in those places we previously did not have visibility, to applaud those that are doing the right thing, to appropriately hold accountable those who are not, and to ensure all members can serve safely and honorably.

I want to thank you for your dedication to these issues, and I look forward to your questions.

[The joint prepared statement of Dr. Terry Adirim, Mr. Lernes Hebert and Dr. Elizabeth Van Winkle follows:]

JOINT PREPARED STATEMENT BY DR. TERRY ADIRIM, MR. LERNES HEBERT AND DR.  
ELIZABETH VAN WINKLE

Chairwoman Gillibrand, Ranking Member Tillis, distinguished members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the Department of Defense's personnel and health policies and programs as we look forward to the Fiscal Year 2022 President's Budget and the upcoming National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

It has truly been a difficult year for the Nation and the Department, but the events of the past year, especially the COVID-19 pandemic, have reaffirmed why the people of this Department—our soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines and now our guardians, as well as civilian personnel—are our greatest resource and critical asset.

In addition, President Biden, Secretary of Defense Austin and Deputy Secretary of Defense Hicks have all made it clear from the onset that the well-being and protection of our servicemembers, their families, and our civilian force are at the forefront of their agenda. In fact, in his March 4 Message to the Force Secretary Austin laid out as one of his top three priorities Taking Care of People, with three specific pillars: Grow our Talent, Build Resilience and Readiness, and Ensure Accountable Leadership. All the issues we will discuss today fall into each of these three pillars, whether it is extremism, sexual assault, servicemembers who identify as Transgender, diversity and inclusion, COVID-19, or military and civilian talent management.

The Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel & Readiness and its subordinate offices are at the forefront of these issues. We are working closely with our Service partners to advise the Secretary of Defense and the Deputy Secretary of Defense on decisions that will strengthen the readiness and resilience of our military. The issues we will address here are complex and diverse; however, we are all driven by a common motivation that drives all of our efforts—to build and sustain the greatest Total Force in defense of this Nation.

HEALTH AFFAIRS

*COVID-19 Response*

The past fourteen months have represented a unique and challenging period for our Nation as we've confronted and responded to the COVID-19 pandemic. In line with the President's priorities, Secretary Austin has made clear that the greatest proximate challenge to our Nation's security is the threat of COVID-19. The Department has, and will continue to, act boldly and quickly to support Federal government efforts to defeat this disease. The Military Health System (MHS) is providing critical health support worldwide to our military forces, supporting other Federal and state entities as part of a whole-of-government response to this crisis, and continuing to meet other strategic, global mission requirements, while sustaining high quality health services to our military servicemembers and their families.

Beginning with the declaration of a global pandemic in March 2020, the MHS provided essential crisis response services in support of military leaders and civilian demands. Though this summary is not all-inclusive, I will briefly mention several critical initiatives that contributed to the national response and also generated additional expenditures for the Department.

*Surveillance and Laboratory Testing.* Soon after the pandemic began, the Secretary of Defense established the DOD Coronavirus Task Force that included a Diagnostics and Testing Line of Effort. The Department grew its laboratory testing capacity from 16 operational laboratories in late March 2020 to 189 operational laboratories by March 2021, and increased on-hand SARS-COV-2 tests from approximately 200,000 to over 1.8 million. To date, the Department has conducted well over 3 million tests and has tests on-hand to conduct more than 100K tests per week. Testing is a key public health intervention that has helped to limit the spread of SARS-COV-2 within the military. Coupled with other public health measures like social distancing and masking, military installations have consistently lower positivity rates than their surrounding communities.

Even as vaccination efforts continue to increase, testing will remain a key pillar of our public health strategy to battle this disease and maintain a ready force. Screening through antigen and PCR testing using a variety of testing strategies in a post-vaccination environment will continue as part of the Department's COVID-19 risk mitigation strategy to drive cases down toward zero. The Department is also committed to whole genome sequencing and identification of variants of concern and interest and to understanding their prevalence among our servicemembers and other beneficiaries. The Department has already committed the resources and fund-

ing to more than double the number of specimens the Department can sequence and analyze each week.

*Clinical Support for Treatment and Therapeutics.* Early in the COVID response, the Defense Health Agency (DHA) developed and released the first DOD COVID-19 Practice Management Guide (PMG) to provide clinicians and Military Medical Treatment Facilities (MTFs)—our military clinics and hospitals—with a single document on best practices informed by the latest evidence, and guidance across all clinical care specialties. The PMG has been continually updated and rereleased, with the most recent version (Version 7) published in March 2021. The DHA also established a Joint Registry for COVID-19. Using the Joint Trauma Registry as a foundation for this effort, the COVID Registry collects and assesses clinical information on COVID patients, in order to inform our military medical community on the rapidly evolving science behind this disease. In April 2020, DHA also put forth the Health Protection Condition Guidance in a COVID-19 Environment, which contained Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) informed guidance to support MTFs in healthcare delivery in response to COVID-19, based on the locally-determined risk level.

In June 2020, DHA began an effort to collect donated units of plasma from patients who had fully recovered from COVID-19 to support development of an effective treatment against the disease. Again, the DHA relied on the COVID-19 registry to identify potential donors, as well as capture the use of, and outcomes from, convalescent plasma on hospitalized COVID patients. In August 2020, after receiving Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), COVID-19 convalescent plasma was made available to MTFs for investigational treatment of COVID-positive patients who met established criteria in accordance with approved protocols.

The MHS worked closely to implement other, FDA-approved treatments for COVID. In September 2020, shortly after Veklury® (remdesivir; first FDA-approved treatment for COVID-19) received an expanded EUA, the medication was rapidly pre-positioned throughout DOD to ensure availability to hospitalized patients with suspected or laboratory-confirmed COVID-19, irrespective of their severity of disease. Similarly, in November 2020, after receiving an EUA from FDA for COVID-19 monoclonal antibody treatment, DHA developed and disseminated specialized guidance to assist MTFs and healthcare providers regarding patient care considerations when administering this treatment for mild and moderate cases.

*Individual Medical Readiness.* COVID-19 did affect medical readiness within the military. The Department uses a concept called Individual Medical Readiness (IMR) to measure medical readiness, which consists of six elements. These are Dental Readiness, Immunizations, Medical Readiness Labs, Deployment-Limiting Medical Condition Status, Periodic Health Assessment, and Individual Medical Equipment. In 2015, the DOD Total Force Medically Ready (TFMR) goal was set at 85 percent. Since 2015, the Total Force has consistently met or exceeded the 85 percent goal. With COVID-19 pandemic beginning in the 2nd quarter of 2020, TFMR decreased below the Department's 85 percent goal. As of the 4th quarter of calendar year 2020, TFMR compliance was 82.2 percent; Active component IMR compliance was 82.4 percent and Reserve component IMR compliance was 81.7 percent. The COVID-19 vaccine is voluntary and therefore is not included in the IMR.

The COVID-19 pandemic most affected Dental Readiness and Immunizations. These IMR requirements can only be completed via in-person clinic visits. Of note, throughout the pandemic, medical readiness for deploying servicemembers was prioritized and all personnel are required to be fully medically ready prior to deployment. Capabilities such as virtual and telephonic medical appointments allowed MTFs to continue to provide access to medical readiness support services. We expect IMR rates to quickly recover and return to pre-COVID levels as our vaccination campaign proceeds through spring and summer 2021.

*Healthcare Delivery and Deferred Medical Care.* In both the direct care system and the TRICARE network, the Department has worked to ensure beneficiaries receive medically necessary and readiness-related care throughout the pandemic and we are currently working to address delayed or deferred care. In addition to guidance for MTFs on standard processes to provide medically necessary care that could not be delayed, the Department significantly expanded the use of Virtual Health (VH) to meet beneficiary demand while minimizing unnecessary risks for patients and staff.

MTFs and Markets are increasing the number of available appointments to meet patient demand for care and schedule previously delayed care. Despite additional workload associated with COVID-related deployments and vaccinations, MTF appointment availability is approaching pre-pandemic levels and access to appointments for routine and follow-up care averages 4.8 days, which is better than the

standard of 7.0 days or fewer. Likewise, specialty referrals are up from spring 2020 levels and are approaching pre-pandemic rates. While direct care performance on cancer and other preventive screening is lagging compared to strong pre-pandemic performance, MTF staff members are actively reaching out to beneficiaries to encourage and facilitate screening appointments.

For network care, DHA worked with the managed care support contractors to develop strategies to ensure our beneficiaries' ability to access care in the network, ensured resources were monitored to confirm provider availability, expanded availability of VH and eased beneficiary access to providers by extending referral and authorization limits and adjusting rules impacting beneficiary cost shares.

*Public Health Planning.* The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of integrated DOD and interagency public health planning, which includes conducting realistic exercises with federal, state and local public health partners. However, the MHS pivoted quickly and effectively in responding to the pandemic across a wide range of requirements, both internal to DOD and across the public health universe. In the process, we learned lessons and developed associated recommendations that can have an immediate and sustained impact on the ability of the MHS to support the ongoing pandemic and to prepare for future major public health emergencies. Chief among these actions is developing even tighter integrated coordination with interagency partners within the Departments of Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Veterans Affairs and State to include the CDC, FDA, the Assistant Secretary of HHS for Preparedness and Response, the National Institutes of Health, the Federal Emergency Management Agency and other organizations regarding global medical surveillance of cases and variants of concern. As a primary partner in the interagency scientific community, DOD shares genetic sequencing, seroprevalence information and other relevant surveillance data with interagency partners.

*Medical Education & Training.* The collaborative leadership efforts of the Medical Enlisted Training Campus and the Services resulted in minimal disruptions in training by maximizing the interoperability and capabilities of alternative learning modalities and technology adoption. The MHS kept graduation rates on target, and the end-strength of enlisted medical career fields healthy and ready to support Combatant Commanders. Additionally, the MHS expanded support for continuing education credits for 16 healthcare specialties and awarded over 90 thousand continuing education/medical credits. Continuing education credits are required for health professional licensure and certifications. The Defense Medical Modeling and Simulation Office recognized an opportunity to provide immediate support in meeting COVID-19 related simulation training gaps/needs of the transitioned Markets and associated MTFs.

*COVID-19 Vaccine and Immunization Implementation.* Since December 2020, the Department introduced a global immunization campaign to deliver expanding supplies of vaccines approved for use under an EUA. In December 2020, DHA issued a DHA Interim Procedures Memorandum to implement instructions, assign responsibilities, and prescribe procedures for the COVID-19 Vaccination Program. DHA continues to issue updates on the coordinated strategy for prioritizing, distributing, and administering the COVID-19 vaccine, with the most recent DOD Vaccination Plan modification (MOD-12) released in April 2021.

As of April 16, 2021, the Department had administered over 2.5 million doses of the three vaccines authorized by the FDA under an EUA. However, on April 14th, DOD implemented the CDC and FDA recommendation to pause administration of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine until federal health experts conclude their review of the rare, severe adverse events that have occurred in a small number of individuals. Although DOD was distributing all of its Johnson & Johnson vaccine to overseas locations, the Moderna vaccine still represented the majority of our overseas allocation. If this pause extends beyond several weeks, DOD will consider adjusting its current allocations to accommodate our overseas requirements.

Adapted from the CDC tiered framework for prioritizing individuals for vaccination, the DOD population schema includes persons in critical national security positions and deploying forces in the Tier 1 priorities. Vaccinations are being administered at 350 DOD sites around the world, in addition to access to civilian sources for our beneficiaries. On April 19, 2021, the Department fully opened vaccine appointments to all eligible individuals, consistent with the President's direction to all jurisdictions.

The vaccine remains voluntary for all eligible persons to include Active Duty servicemembers. The Department has implemented a comprehensive outreach and communications effort to encourage all eligible persons seek out these highly safe and effective vaccines. We are encouraged by the trends in vaccine acceptance, and

are confident that all individuals over the age of 15 who want the vaccine will be fully vaccinated by mid-Summer.

*Defense Support to Civilian Authorities.* In addition to the comprehensive response in support of the military mission, the Defense Department has provided significant expertise, logistics support, and personnel to civilian communities. Early in the pandemic, the DHA coordinated the delivery of critical inventory from existing strategic Reserves to FEMA for redistribution to civilian communities. This support included delivery of five million N-95 masks and over two thousand ventilators. The U.S. Navy deployed the USNS *Comfort* and USNS *Mercy* to civilian ports on the east and west coasts to provide hospital bed surge capacity for cities in crisis. Throughout 2020, Army, Navy and Air Force personnel deployed as units to civilian hospitals around the country to augment local staff. Military medical personnel took on key positions with Operation Warp Speed, and infectious disease experts and medical researchers from DOD medical research and development offices collaborated closely with the broader American medical research community.

*COVID-19 After Action Review (AAR).* The MHS is a learning organization, and we are committed to continuously improving our performance—whether in battlefield medicine, health care quality and safety, or our COVID response efforts. Consistent with section 731 of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for fiscal year 2021, the MHS established a rigorous After Action Review (AAR) process, led by the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences. This AAR builds on the MHS interim AAR process and report established by the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health Affairs) in May 2020 and completed in January 2021. The Department will submit a substantive, interim report to Congress under section 731 by 1 June, and submit a final report by the close of 2021.

#### *MHS Reforms and Transition*

The Fiscal Year 2017 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA for fiscal year 2017) enacted sweeping reforms to the organization and management of military medicine. The over-arching direction from Congress was to centralize and standardize many military health care functions in a way that better integrates readiness and health delivery throughout the Department. Included among these reforms: the expanded authority and responsibility of the DHA to manage MTFs worldwide; and the authority to adjust medical infrastructure in the MHS to maintain readiness and core competencies of health care providers.

Following a strategic pause in transition activities due to the initial COVID-19 pandemic response, which was directed and then lifted by the Secretary of Defense in April and November 2020 respectively, the MHS has continued executing the transition of MTFs to DHA management in accordance with the Department's approved, conditions-based execution plan that meets the intent of section 702 of the NDAA for fiscal year 2017.

In the coming weeks, we expect to certify all Wave 1 Market Offices (i.e., San Antonio, Tidewater, Colorado, Puget Sound, and Hawaii). These critical markets account for 34 percent of the MHS' dispositions, 48 percent of the MHS's direct care expenditures, and 11 percent of the MHS's purchased care expenditures—providing tremendous opportunities for continued standardization and optimization. Wave 2 Market Establishment planning is underway, and we plan to institute an intermediate headquarters to manage the remainder of our small hospitals and clinics in early June.

Section 703 of the NDAA for fiscal year 2017 directed the Secretary of Defense to submit to the congressional defense committees an implementation plan to restructure or realign military medical treatment facilities. This report was transmitted to Congress on February 19, 2020. The report articulated the DOD's decisions to align MTFs to increase the readiness of our operational and medical forces and achieve a proper balance between meeting readiness requirements and managing the total cost of health care in the direct and purchased care systems.

All restructuring efforts were paused on April 2, 2020 as a result of the resources required to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Department is revalidating the assumptions made regarding its readiness requirements prior to the pandemic, as well as the assessment of network capacity to absorb additional patients where we intend to proceed with right-sizing plans. The DHA will take a conditions-based approach to any transition of medical services. In other words, transition will only occur when we are certain that local TRICARE networks can provide timely and quality access to health care. If they cannot, we will revise our plans.

#### *MHS Genesis Implementation*

The Department continues to proceed with the multi-year implementation of its new, Electronic Health Record (EHR), MHS Genesis. Although we paused a number



of specific, in-person activities during the COVID-19 response, we still delivered the two Waves scheduled for completion in 2020, two currently in 2021, and remain on schedule for enterprise completion in 2023. As of today, MHS Genesis supports the delivery of safe, high-quality data to patients and providers across 20 MTFs.

The value of MHS Genesis has become even more apparent during the COVID-19 response. We were able to implement COVID-specific configuration changes in MHS Genesis within hours on several occasions that provided senior military and civilian leaders with timely information on COVID laboratory testing results and the health of our force and our beneficiaries; the same changes in our legacy systems took nearly four weeks to implement.

MHS Genesis' mass vaccination capabilities have produced a significant improved workflow that allows the Military Departments to assess the status of servicemember inoculations in order to ensure readiness. For example, medical personnel at Twentynine Palms, California successfully screened 700 Active Duty marine records within days of going live with MHS Genesis in September. The process was so successful that Cerner made the solution part of its baseline product for commercial use.

DOD and VA continue to closely collaborate on a fully integrated EHR with the oversight of the Federal Electronic Health Record Modernization (FEHRM) office. The Departments collaborated with the FEHRM to launch the joint health information exchange (joint HIE) in April 2020, creating a single common gateway through which DOD and VA providers can send data to and retrieve data from participating private sector partners. With the FEHRM's leadership, the Departments support a Federal Enclave providing a single, common record with high cybersecurity standards, joint configuration boards to ensure standardized workflows, and shared risks, schedules and lessons learned.

#### *TRICARE 5th Generation Contracts (T-5)*

The Department continues to manage the TRICARE Program in a manner that seeks to reduce the growth in health care costs while ensuring our health benefit remains an exceptional tool for recruitment and retention of military personnel and their families. Among the most important strategies we pursue is the development of effective TRICARE contracts that deliver high-value, patient-centric care designed to seamlessly integrate military and private sector care in support of readiness and health outcomes.

The T-5 contracts represent the next generation of contracts that provide DHA with the flexibility to adjust network requirements, improve professional services support, and adapt care delivery models in support of evolving mission requirements and changes in American health care delivery. After an extensive, multi-year engagement with Department leaders, industry, and other stakeholders, as well as three draft Requests for Proposal (RFPs) shared with industry, the Department issued the T-5 RFP on April 9, 2021. The goals of this procurement support (1) military medical readiness and the readiness of the medical force; (2) beneficiary choice; (3) high value care; and the adoption of Industry Business Standards.

The Department looks forward to healthy competition from industry and the inclusion of new health care delivery models in the coming proposals. As part of the T-5 process, the Department will conduct "Competitive Demonstrations" during the contract's period of performance. Twenty-one potential markets are identified in geographic areas where MTFs may rightsize, downsize or where DHA provides TRICARE Prime but no MTF exists. The RFP also specifies three innovations: Virtual Value Networks, Advanced Primary Care, and Care Collaboration Tools that will start with T-5 initiation and up to seven other demonstrations are planned during the life of the contract. DHA anticipates receipt of offeror proposals no later than August 13, 2021. The new contracts are planned to begin health care delivery in Calendar Year 2024.

#### *Medical Research and Development*

The Department is grateful for the long-term advocacy and support for its military medical research program. The Defense Health Program research, development, test, and evaluation (RDT&E) focus is to advance the state of medical science in those areas of most pressing need and relevance to today's emerging threats, which includes the COVID-19 pandemic.

We seek to discover and explore innovative approaches to protect and support the readiness, health, and welfare of military personnel; to accelerate the transition of medical technologies to development and acquisition; and to accelerate the translation of advances in knowledge into new standards of care and treatment that can be applied in the field or in military medical treatment facilities.

In the coming years, we hope to leverage new technologies to include artificial intelligence and machine learning, biotechnology, and autonomous systems. The goal is to accelerate the transition of medical technologies to development and acquisition programs, and to further the translation of new standards of care to support and treatment that can be applied in the field or in military medical treatment facilities. We will seek to mitigate deployment-limiting medical conditions for servicemembers by focusing on injury prevention and rehabilitation.

The MHS continue to employ and strengthen our enterprise-wide performance management systems that provide stakeholders—both medical and line leadership—at all levels of the military with visibility into how we are performing on key metrics. These dashboards show longitudinal performance in measures of readiness, health, access, quality, safety and cost. We monitor critical indicators of quality and safety—that point us toward high reliability as a system of care. Access to primary care and specialty care are measured along with patient satisfaction to ensure we are meeting patient expectations. We have provided Department leadership, MTF commanders and staff with visibility into COVID-19 specific measures that include, but are not limited to operational hospital bed capacity and surge capabilities, timely laboratory test results, personal protective equipment inventories, COVID-19 vaccine target population and vaccine administration data, as well as important private sector care data.

Our dashboards can be viewed at an enterprise level, by Service, by market, and by individual hospital or clinic. We will continue to adapt this management system as the MTF transition progresses. Commanders can assess their performance against expected benchmarks, against peer institutions, and—where possible—against civilian sector performance as well. These dashboards help us to both assess how we are doing in these areas, and where we need to invest resources, training, or management attention in order to achieve further improvement.

#### MANPOWER & RESERVE AFFAIRS (M&RA)

The diverse portfolio of the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower & Reserve Affairs) directly supports the priority of taking care of our people and includes Military Personnel Policy, Civilian Personnel Policy, Military Community and Family Policy, Reserve Integration, the Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA) and the Department of Defense Education Agency (DODEA).

#### *Military Personnel Benefits*

We are grateful for Congress' strong support provided in the Fiscal Year 2021 NDAA. Your continued support is vital to ensuring our soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, guardians, and civilians 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. This important legislation supports vital investments in our military's readiness and modernization, allows for more flexibility in hiring and supporting our families, and provides our servicemembers with a substantial pay increase.

In addition to an increase in pay, the NDAA also supported the wide range of benefits we provide our servicemembers, from housing to health care, to congressionally mandated commissary savings. The 13th Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation found that junior enlisted military members are paid at or above the 90th percentile as compared to their private-sector peers. The Department is proud of how we take care of our people but understand there are still challenges facing our servicemembers and their families. We appreciate the Congress' interest on the issue of food insecurity among our Services members, and while the number remains low, even one family struggling financially is too many. We recognize there are servicemembers who have relied on government food assistance programs and food pantries to feed their families, at no fault of their own, for a variety of reasons, and we are committed to providing the education and resources necessary to our servicemembers throughout their careers so they can focus on their mission and not worry about financial stability.

#### *Military & Civilian Workforce Policies*

Since March of 2020, M&RA has been a key part of the DOD response to COVID-19. From the development of stop movement orders to the establishment of the conditions-based, phased approach for resumption of personnel movement M&RA has played a central role in protecting the Nation and our servicemembers, DOD civilians, and families. M&RA's directorates issued updated policies for pay, hiring, and workplace flexibilities for civilian employees and oversaw the rapid mobilization of Reserve forces, enabling more than 65,000 Reserve component members to support the Government's response. In addition, MR&A provided guidance on the modified

operation of child development centers at more than 200 installations worldwide; designed safe, flexible instructional models for both in-person and remote learning at DODEA schools; and managed supply chain shortages to keep commissaries operating during the pandemic.

While M&RA continues to support the Nation's fight against COVID-19, the organization is also advancing many other initiatives across its portfolio to take care of our people and build the DOD workforce needed to protect America now and in the future. This starts by ensuring that all applicants for military service and military servicemembers are treated with dignity and respect at all times. The All-Volunteer Force thrives when it is comprised of diverse Americans who can meet the high standards for military service in an inclusive military force—all of which strengthens our national security posture. At the direction of President Biden and Secretary Austin, the Department has published updated policy on the open service of transgender individuals. Servicemembers who meet appropriate standards are permitted to serve in their self-identified gender without a waiver.

As the Department looks towards goals of modernization and standardization, we are proud to update the Congress on our improvements in the United States Military Entrance Processing Command (USMEPCOM). In February, we launched the MEPCOM Integrated Resource System 1.1, a cloud-based system that streamlines the screening process that includes processing data from cognitive tests, medical evaluation and background checks. No longer are the days of #2 pencils and written answer sheets during processing, or recruits carrying large manila folders with personal information through airports and bus stations. This modernization, along with the hard work and creativity of our 65 processing centers, allowed all Services to remain on track for their end strength goals, while recruiting throughout the pandemic. As the country continues to grapple with the effects of the pandemic, we are paying close attention to how young Americans react to a call to service in a dramatically increasing job market. Ensuring the recruiting mission is appropriately resourced is key to the future success of the All-Volunteer Force, and we are laser focused on providing the necessary resources to that end.

The Department is continuing to enhance our screening capacity of incoming servicemembers. Applicants answer questions about involvement with law enforcement, arrests, charges, citations, parole and probation, detention, and other indicators of concern. All recruits undergo a fingerprint check and a FBI name check. Recruits are also screened for offensive, racist, or supremacist tattoos, including those that may reflect gang affiliation. In 2020, the Under Secretaries of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, and for Intelligence and Security established procedures to incorporate FBI review of questionable tattoos/branding through the FBI Cryptology & Racketeering Records Unit. The Department stands by the statement that the majority of those who serve in uniform, and their civilian colleagues, do so with great integrity and honor, but that any extremist behavior in the force can have an outsized impact. As of today, all Active component military and the Fourth Estate have completed their Secretary directed Department-wide stand-downs to address extremism; the Reserve component will be mission-complete this summer. The Department is committed to maintaining the highest standards of conduct, to understanding the threat of extremist activities, and to taking all appropriate actions to achieve these objectives.

As we continue to build the All-Volunteer Force, the Department continues to innovate to compete with other global powers and be the employer of choice for all young people across America. We strive to become a distinctly data-centered organization that enables readiness for the Joint warfighter, and manages our talent through a comprehensively linked digital architecture to support rapid, data-informed decisions at all levels. For example, in partnership with Institute for Defense Analyses, we have trained a machine learning algorithm that accurately estimates the probability that any given servicemember will remain in the military for any specified time horizon. This algorithm, known as the Retention Prediction Model, allows us to use predictive analytics to solve a range of personnel life cycle related problems with far greater accuracy than ever before.

The Department has been able to maintain numbers during a COVID-19 because of high retention due to the dedication of our servicemembers. However, in addressing various retention issues, the Department is actively pursuing initiatives to increase career path opportunities, identifying non-monetary career-enhancing opportunities, addressing operational tempo, and managing operational commitments to reduce the strain of deployments.

In addition to our servicemembers, the Department understands the importance of building its civilian workforce. To meet this need, we are expanding civilian marketing and recruitment outreach efforts, specifically, targeting critical functional communities such as cyber and digital. The Department appreciates, and continues

to exercise the flexibilities granted by Congress to design and implement programs and policies that promote the health of the total civilian workforce including direct hire authority. As we employ the necessary authorities to efficiently recruit and retain top talent, we continue to work diligently to close critical talent gaps, enhance professional development, and build a robust student pipeline that will position the Department for future success.

#### *Support to Military Families and Spouses*

The readiness of the force is dependent on our servicemembers knowing that their families are cared for. During the pandemic our servicemembers and their families faced enormous challenges and continued to show the great resiliency that makes us the greatest fighting force in the world. The Department looks forward to the partnership with the First Lady and Joining Forces on the critical issues they have identified as priorities.

We know that there are serious issues that face the country as a whole and the Department is not exempt. One of them is the ugliness of domestic violence and child abuse. The Family Advocacy Program is focused on prevention, victim advocacy, trauma-informed victim-centered care, abuser rehabilitation, and family and individual well-being. The Department is on target with the development of a database to track incidents of problematic sexual behaviors for children and youth. We anticipate the system to be fully operational next spring. The Department recognizes the incentive to do all we can to protect our community and will keep working to ensure a positive culture for all that serve.

Another challenge that the country faces, particularly during the pandemic—and our military families were not immune—is access to quality child care. Access to child care is a workforce issue that directly impacts the readiness and retention of the Total Force. The Department is proud of our rigorous national standards and oversight requirements that ensure comprehensive health and safety needs are met and quality programming is provided to participating children. During the pandemic, very few changes had to be made to operations because of the thorough and high standards (e.g., cleaning) that were already in place and implemented daily. In response to COVID-19, installation child development programs are open but are operating at a reduced capacity to accommodate social distancing and health protection condition procedures. The Department recognizes the issue of child care waitlists and continues to work toward solutions. We anticipate the pilot program to provide fee assistance for in-home child care providers will be available for families beginning in the summer of 2021. This initiative will expand the use of fee assistance for in-home child care providers, and assist us in meeting the child care need. In addition to fee assistance, the Department continues to pursue efforts to increase child care staffing, maximize current capacity, explore public-private partnerships, and identify construction requirements.

Military spouses face barriers to employment related to their mobile military lifestyle, including frequent relocations and extended periods of family separation due to deployments. The Spouse Education and Career Opportunities program provides military spouses individualized support and robust tools to plan and finance their education, define and pursue a job or career and grow their professional and personal networks to suit their needs. The Department is also developing plans to expand the financial assistance covered to include continuing education courses and national testing. A good news story is the Department's cooperative agreement with the Council of State Governments (CSG) to provide grants to establish interstate compacts for licensure portability. Five professions have been provided grants to work with CSG to develop compacts: teaching, social work, cosmetology, massage therapy, and dentistry/dental hygiene.

#### FORCE RESILIENCY

The Department's efforts to strengthen resiliency and prevent problematic behaviors is one of our highest priorities. We are developing tools to leverage data in order to gain enhanced visibility of issues at the installation and unit level, while incorporating emerging, evidence-informed best practices.

Within the last year, we have built out an approach that we refer to as integrated violence prevention. All leaders and members of the military community play a role in the prevention of violent, abusive, or harmful acts. An integrated approach enables them to work in mutual support towards the Department's efforts to reduce and stop these readiness detracting behaviors.

Our new Integrated Violence Prevention Policy requires specific prevention personnel, eliminates 'one size fits all' approaches, expands prevention activities to better address risk factors, and establishes an oversight framework. It is a critical com-

ponent of our growing efforts, but more work remains. The Prevention Collaboration Forum is the organizing governance to help drive progress in this area.

We recognize that unhealthy command climates can increase risk and exacerbate problems that can contribute to sexual assault, harassment, and suicide. In January 2021, we updated the command climate survey to improve our detection of unhealthy command climates; enable military leaders to drive change; and, as appropriate, take corrective actions. New survey constructs help assess a range of factors related to high level leadership, intermediate leadership, peer groups, and individuals.

#### *Immediate Actions to Address Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment*

One of Secretary Austin's first actions focused on stopping sexual assault and sexual harassment. Most recently the Secretary directed three Immediate Actions to accelerate our efforts to prevent sexual assault and harassment.

The Secretary directed the Services to complete an assessment of compliance with sexual assault, sexual harassment, and integrated violence prevention policy as well as alignment with the Department's Prevention Plan of Action. Since new initiatives from the Department, Military Services, or the 90-Day Independent Review Commission will be ineffective if the Services do not comply with policies at the installation level, this assessment is critical. This effort is underway and in progress.

The Department is also working to further improve senior leaders' visibility of command climates across installations; give our leaders targeted data that enables them to take specific actions to make improvements and address issues; and, when necessary, hold leaders appropriately accountable for unhealthy climates, and incentivize those who are driving healthy environments. We are gathering data on key climate risk and protective factors force-wide to help identify installations for biennial onsite evaluations to identify opportunities to improve prevention efforts and gather lessons from promising practices. The Department will produce a report on the first iteration of evaluations for the Secretary this fall.

The last immediate action directs the establishment of a prevention workforce. While the Services have taken action to bring their workforces in compliance with best practices for violence prevention, some installations do not yet have appropriate prevention workforce in place to be considered compliant with the Prevention Plan of Action. The Services are currently assessing their staffing, training, and resourcing, and will report on them to the Secretary in the fall.

#### *Suicide Prevention*

Every death by suicide is a tragedy. The Department addresses suicide prevention comprehensively through a public health approach, which incorporates both community-based prevention efforts and clinical care at the individual level. We constantly work to ensure that servicemembers seek help and check-in with each other, while using simple safety measures and precautions to reduce the risk of suicide.

As no two individuals are the same, our suicide prevention efforts address a range of issues that can affect many people. We work to enhance protective factors (e.g., social connections and coping skills) and address risk factors (e.g., relationship, financial, and mental health challenges). The Department's efforts also target our population of greatest concern—young and enlisted servicemembers—and support initiatives to support military families.

We also recognize the potential impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the well-being of our servicemembers and families. The Department has been working to stay ahead of this issue with multiple initiatives and virtual support efforts to promote connectedness and access to care. We have increased telehealth availability, peer support, and leadership engagement. The Services stood-up behavioral health teams to support Military Treatment Facility staff in critical and emergency care. DOD also launched tailored products, resources, and senior leader messages, sharing them through a variety of communication venues to enhance awareness and access.

At this time, it is too early to determine whether suicide rates increased in Calendar Year (CY) 2020. The Department will release official suicide counts and rates in the CY 2020 Annual Suicide Report this fall.

DOD remains steadfast in our commitment to the well-being of our servicemembers and their families. We have much more work ahead of us, and we will not relent in our efforts to prevent these tragedies.

#### *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion*

As Secretary Austin recently stated, "We maintain and enhance force readiness and develop the capabilities we need to protect America when we fully embrace a diversity of backgrounds, experiences, and thoughts." Our commitment to leveraging the strengths of all our people is not only important for who we are and to represent

our values, but these efforts also strengthen our national security. Yet, we are not where we need to be.

Over the last ten years, overall composition of racial/ethnic minorities and women has increased across the officer and enlisted corps, but not to the degree we would like. Our latest data shows that too many minority Active Duty servicemembers experience racial or ethnic harassment or discrimination. This is unacceptable.

Within the last year, the Department has identified numerous actions to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion within the force. Such efforts include publication of a new policy to promote a diverse workforce that appropriately reflects the population of the United States, bolstering minority inclusion, and leveraging data capabilities to target outreach and recruiting efforts to underrepresented populations. Further, to combat problematic behaviors, we recently issued and updated policies to address harassment, discrimination, equal opportunity, and other critical matters. Additionally, to meet requirements from the Fiscal Year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act, the Department has initiated an effort to better identify discrepancies in rates of retention and promotion of officers related to race, ethnicity, and gender, which will help us target potential barriers to diverse military leadership.

Our efforts, though, must continue. More work remains to ensure our commitment to every member of our Total Force—military, civilian, and contractor—can succeed.

*Conclusion:*

Thank you again for the opportunity to discuss the important issues in the fiscal year 2022 military and civilian personnel programs and efforts the Department is taking to ensure our Nation's military remains the greatest fighting force in the world. We also appreciate your continued support to our servicemembers, civilian employees, and families. We look forward to your questions.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you. Ms. Van Winkle, you just said there were areas where you need to shed light where there is no visibility. What areas are those?

Dr. VAN WINKLE. So one of the areas that we have not had visibility is really within the units and at the installation level. As you know, much of our data comes from the Gender Relations Survey, which is a very high level. The problem is if we do not know what is happening on the ground, if we do not know what is happening within those units, then we simply do not have a good sense of whether our initiatives are getting to where they need to be. That was one of the things illustrated by the Fort Hood report, and many of the immediate actions that the Secretary has recently directed is to get just at that—what is happening on the ground so that we really can intervene early and prevent these behaviors from happening.

Senator GILLIBRAND. I am exasperated by that statement. Isn't that the unit commander's job?

Dr. VAN WINKLE. Yes.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Haven't you been asking for the past 8 years we have been focused on this, that commanders can keep their authority? They have had this authority the entire 8 years at the unit commander level, and so for you to state that there is no visibility there is an absurd statement. You have visibility because you have unit commanders, and you had testimony from survivors for the last 8 years I have been working on this, that when they are sexually harassed, 66 percent of the time it comes from their unit commander. So you have had plenty of visibility onto this issue.

Dr. VAN WINKLE. I think you are right, that in the sense of we have been hearing those concerns, and the problem was is how do we get valid information at the ground so that we can start doing something about it.

Senator GILLIBRAND. I am sorry. I am sorry. What is invalid about the information you have been getting from servicemembers, at least for the last 8 years that I have been working on this. Direct testimony saying that they are being harassed, direct testimony saying that when they do come forward with a sexual assault report that they are retaliated against, peer-to-peer, administratively, and professionally.

Dr. VAN WINKLE. It is not that that is invalid. It is that we did not know where it was happening, and so what we are aiming for right now is to ensure—

Senator GILLIBRAND. I am sorry. How do you not know where it is happening? The survivors have come forward and told you. I personally have heard hundreds of stories. For example, when a survivor comes forward and reports a case, and goes to trial, her entire unit sits behind the accused and not her. We have heard testimony of survivors that have come forward and said, "Yeah, I was told by the other members of my unit, 'We cannot wait to get you to Iraq so we can shoot you in the head.'" I don't understand how you don't have eyes on what retaliation looks like and what climate looks like.

Dr. VAN WINKLE. So I think the distinction is in terms of the programs and the policies. You are absolutely right. Every time that we hear those things, that is problematic, and the services and the unit leaders need to be doing the right thing. From where I sit, in terms of the broader policies and programs, what I want to make sure we can do, and what the Secretary is supporting right now, is ensuring that we have that visibility where we don't have victims who feel comfortable coming forward, so that all servicemembers who are experiencing these, we know where it is happening and can intervene.

But you are right, we have heard these stories in the past.

Senator GILLIBRAND. You have about 5,000 victims coming forward every year, reporting openly who attacked them, what happened in those circumstances. Then on top of that you have over 2,000 that report confidentially. So you have a lot of information and a great deal of data, and frankly, the military has more data than any DA's office is ever going to have, because you have a survey, every year, and you have reporting requirements. This is supposed to be something that the command has taken seriously, with zero tolerance for the last decade, since Dick Cheney was the Secretary of Defense.

So I am baffled by your testimony, ma'am. I don't understand it, but I don't understand how you can state what you just stated. This is not a problem that we don't know the details about.

Dr. VAN WINKLE. Again, what I would say is what we did not have visibility on is what is happening at those unit levels and installation levels, specifically, where we can go down, go onsite and see what is going on. With Fort Hood, the way the independent panel went down, those are the types of things that need to happen. It is long overdue. I agree.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Okay. I don't think that is the problem. It is not a lack of visibility. It is not a lack of information. It is a lack of will. If you have unit commanders who are the sources of harassment and assault, if you have unit commanders who turn a blind

eye for people retaliating against other unit members who have come forward, this is not an unknown problem.

So I do not think it is a lack of information, and I do not think it is a lack of prevention, and so I would like you to rework your testimony, because what you have said here is unbelievable.

Dr. Adirim, in the fiscal year 2017 NDAA, we addressed some necessary changes to the Autism Care Demonstration Program, yet I am still hearing concerns from constituents about the execution of the demonstration program and that many have found reduced services for military family members with autism. One of the recent changes the Department of Defense has implemented is the Navigator Program to help families obtain coverage for applied behavioral analysis.

While this program is designed to make the system easier for families, what are you doing to ensure navigators are not acting as gatekeepers and preventing families from getting care? Are there other changes you anticipate making to the Autism Care Demonstration Program and how will these changes improve care for autistic military family members?

Dr. ADIRIM. Yes. Thank you, Senator, for this question, and the opportunity to clarify what these changes are and what they are not. First of all, we spent the last several years under the Autism Demonstration project working very closely, as many as 30 interactions with all stakeholders, including families, advocates, experts within the Military Health System and outside the military health system, academics, and researchers. These are meant to be improvements to the demonstration program. They are not meant to inhibit families from seeking services. The navigator is there to help families, especially new families, understand what their scope of services that they could access and to help them access those services. Those navigators will not have the authority to be gatekeepers. That is number one.

Number two, there is a group of improvements that will be very helpful to families. So, for example, it eliminates the requirement for families to have to have a confirmatory diagnosis. So any Autism Demonstration Program approved provider can refer families for Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapy. There are other improvements including creating programs for families to help them be more engaged in the care of their child, because evidence shows that when families are engaged in the care, outcomes are much better.

So I would say that if you are being told that these are inhibitors to access to the program, I would say that that is not true, and we are happy to meet with anybody to further clarify and explain what these improvements are.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you. Senator Tillis.

Senator TILLIS. Madam Chair, if you don't mind I will defer to Senator Hawley and then I will be called on when you deem necessary.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Senator Hawley.

Senator HAWLEY. Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Senator Tillis.

Dr. Adirim, am I pronouncing that correctly, by the way?

Dr. ADIRIM. Adirim.



Senator HAWLEY. Adirim. Thank you. All right. Be patient with me.

Senator GILLIBRAND. You were not here in the beginning, Josh, and I muddled everybody's name.

Dr. ADIRIM. No, you didn't. You got it perfectly.

Senator HAWLEY. Adirim. I will get it right. Okay. Let me ask you about some of the unique challenges that medical treatment facilities and rural installations face. This is in my home state of Missouri, a particular issue for us, compared with rural installations, compared to urban or suburban centers.

My question is, how is the Department accounting for those challenges in order to ensure that patients at rural military hospitals get the care they need as DHA assumes responsibility for managing those facilities?

Dr. ADIRIM. Senator, I appreciate that question because it is a really tough challenge, I think, for all of health care, and how do we deliver health care in places where there may be gaps in services. What we have done over the last year is greatly expand our virtual health footprint. We have expanded virtual health within our direct care system, where we could bring services to those more rural areas, from those areas where we may have more of those particular services. For example, behavioral health is one of them.

We have also greatly expanded virtual health within our purchased care system as well. So we see that as one piece of expanding health care into rural areas.

Senator HAWLEY. Very good. Thank you for that.

Mr. Herbert—did I get that right? Is it E-bear? A- bear?

Mr. HERBERT. A-bear.

Senator HAWLEY. Zero for two. Mr. Herbert, the Department of Defense stopped planning for a protracted war with a peer adversary after the Cold War ended. With the rise of China now we are obviously facing a new threat of potentially protected war between great powers. My question is, how does this threat of a protracted war, specifically—emphasis, protracted—influence the Department's planning as it think about end strength in both the Active and Reserve components?

Mr. HERBERT. Thank you for the question. As you have articulated, trying to ensure the readiness of the force through protracted warfare is challenging at best. Having been in uniform a number of decades, I will tell you that the models that we followed of prepare for war, go to war, reset the force no longer persists, or are applicable in our case.

So we continue to try and ensure that our forces stay read throughout whatever engagements we are currently in, and whatever engagements we are planning for. In order to do that, we have to have a healthy, a robust, a well-trained force. We have to be agile in our force structure so that we can adapt to whatever requirements come our way.

On the HR side of things, on the personnel side of the business, we owe the forces very agile and adaptable human resource systems and procedures, one that is not mired in bureaucracy but one that can react very readily to whatever individual needs are and whatever service demands are.

Senator HAWLEY. Very good. Thank you for that.

Dr. Van Winkle, the Department has struggled to reduce suicide rates among servicemembers. Let me ask you about your view on this. What are the weak points, in your view, in the Department's current approach to military suicide, and how does the Department plan to address those weaknesses, going forward?

Dr. VAN WINKLE. Thanks for the question. One of the initiatives that we have been taking in suicide have been targeted based on the population of highest concern right now. Our population of highest concern is our youngest military members. So we have been working a lot of initiatives to increase problem-solving skills, access to care, those types of things.

In terms of your question, when we I talk about the integrated violence prevention approach, and getting that visibility on the ground, the way we are doing that is by redesigning our command climate surveys. Within that there are metrics that are specifically there to try to get at servicemembers who may not be feeling connected, they don't feel valued, they are having additional stressors in their life, and how they are starting to be able to address these things within their unit so that we will get an early signal of where we may have a problem and we can try to truly prevent that by getting ahead of it.

So that is another initiative that we are working in that integrated violence prevention approach. Suicide prevention is a critical part of that.

Senator HAWLEY. Very good. I may have an additional question or two for you for the record, but I will leave it at that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Dr. VAN WINKLE. Of course.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you, Senator. Senator Tillis.

Senator TILLIS. Thank you, Chair Gillibrand, and thank you all for being here. I had the benefit of getting your pronunciations right, but I really do appreciate you being here.

I want to start with Dr. Adirim. We got information from the DOD this week that just a little under 27 percent of our military personnel are fully vaccinated. It seems to me that this could become a readiness problem for a large part if a broader swath of the members of military decline the vaccine. So I guess, are we reaching a point, if we are saying to the public we need to get as many vaccinated and achieve some steps towards herd immunity, have we reached a point where the President may want to consider mandating vaccines for all but maybe medical or religious reasons?

Dr. ADIRIM. I appreciate that question too. I never thought I would have those words come out of my mouth, but this is something that has been a concern for us, in how do we encourage and engage with our servicemembers for them to accept vaccination. It has been tough, and I think those who want vaccination have been able to get it.

Senator TILLIS. It is not a supply problem anymore, right?

Dr. ADIRIM. Correct, and so what we are doing now is we are using every avenue available to us, from the installation level all the way on up, in order to really engage with those who are hesitant to get vaccinated. What we are finding is that even those who were in the earlier tiers of the prioritization scheme are slowly starting to accept vaccination. It is now 4 or 5 months after we

started vaccinating, and I think a large proportion of our servicemembers, as well as other DOD beneficiaries, have said, "You know what? I would like to wait and see what happens." I think a lot of those people we are starting to capture.

We, at this time, do not plan to make the vaccine mandatory. Certainly we are thinking about once the vaccines are licensed what we will do then, because we do mandate a number of vaccines. But right now the vaccine, while it is under Emergency Use Authorization (EUA), is voluntary.

Senator TILLIS. Okay. Thank you. Mr. Herbert, I am hoping that when you were maybe in your 23rd year in the Air Force and you were a colonel, you would have led by example and gotten the vaccine by now. I think that we should say that to all the people in the senior ranks, you have got to lead by example. I assume you have had your vaccine.

I want to ask you a question about a Government Accountability Office (GAO) report, I think it was released last week. The GAO report said, "The DOD has not collected or reported accurate data for all domestic abuse allegations received, including those that did not meet DOD criteria," which is required by statute. Can you explain to us why we are not collecting that data according to the law?

Mr. HERBERT. Yes, sir.

Senator TILLIS. Thank you for your service.

Mr. HERBERT. Thank you, sir. The GAO report I am very familiar with. There were ten findings that were specific to the Office of the Secretary of Defense. Five of those had, as you indicated, directly to do with data collection. What the Department was doing was collecting data in accordance with the policy that it set forth, but it did not collect data at a much more acute level that would give us visibility to every allegation that was brought forward. It only captured those allegations that were brought forward with certain parameters, that met certain parameters that followed the policy.

So we accepted every one of the findings of the GAO report, and we are redoubling our efforts to get after that in very short order.

Senator TILLIS. Thank you. Dr. Van Winkle, thank you for your time yesterday, and giving a brief on what more you are learning about that. There are two things I wanted to give you an opportunity to talk about. One was the importance of the climate surveys, the command climate surveys, and how that is going to be a very important part of making process, and something else that you mentioned had to do with maybe some concern over recommendations that were set forth that had not been fully implemented on the ground. Can you just give this committee a brief summary of what we are talking about there, what we discussed yesterday?

Dr. VAN WINKLE. Sure. I think what the concern is, is that as we have been putting forward policies and programs, and certainly over the next year with the Independent Review Commission and all that we are doing, we are going to be putting in a lot more really good ideas. But if they are not being implemented on the ground, we are simply not giving them a chance. That has been our concern, and then when the Fort Hood report came out it certainly highlighted that that was a valid concern.

So one of the ways we are doing it, and it is not the only way, is by redesigning that command climate survey, so that we can truly get a sense of what is happening at the installation level, and then dive down further to find out are there certain units of concern, is this an installation issue. The metrics on that survey cover the kind of continuum of harm, so all the way from those very low-level offensive behaviors, as I mentioned for suicide, things like connectedness, all the way to whether folks are experiencing sexual harassment or harassment based on their race/ethnicity, so that we can really start to take action early on and prevent these things from occurring.

Again, it is not going to be the one thing that will solve everything, but it gives us a little bit of a better visibility.

Senator TILLIS. Madam Chair, if I may, I have just one more question. I can't remember the name of the program. I think it is "Catch a Serial Offender." Talk about a little bit of the progress that has been made there. But you also mentioned about how there is a responsibility that falls on everyone in a unit. If they see something, say something. Is there an opportunity there to maybe even encourage, if they are not willing to do it through the normal channels, to possibly expand the Catch basin for data that you can gather to possibly track somebody?

Dr. VAN WINKLE. Thanks for the question. The Catch program is to try to get at, for those folks who do not feel comfortable making an unrestricted report and going through the investigation.

Senator TILLIS. That is for a victim—am I correct?

Dr. VAN WINKLE. Correct. Now in terms of expanding that, I think these are some of the things that the Independent Review Commission is looking at, and so as they start to develop their recommendations they are look at all aspects of this, including how can we ensure that people have the confidence and the trust in the system to come forward and report, even these low-level behaviors.

Senator TILLIS. Well, thank you. I think we have to make progress. You may have sensed a little frustration on the part of the chair. I share that frustration in terms of just executing what we have already authorized, what the Department has already said get it implemented, and we have got to make a lot of progress. A lot of lives are being affected.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you, Senator Tillis. I just have one more question, and if you guys want to take a second round, you may, on mental health. Obviously, there are a great deal of challenges with military life, including frequent deployments, repeated moves, spousal unemployment, that put servicemembers and their families at increased risk of behavioral health and suicide.

This is becoming particularly acute during this pandemic. An August 2020 report by DOD Inspector General revealed significant barriers to accessing mental health care. Of the 13 military treatment facilities, included in the study, 7 failed to meet access to care standards each month. Even more concerning, the report showed that more than 50 percent of those referred to mental health treatment in the purchased care system never received care at all.

Dr. Adirim, three questions for you. Does the Department of Defense have access to the adequate number of behavioral health providers, one? Two, what can be done to increase access to behavioral health, both at military treatment facilities and at private facilities? Three, for those servicemembers and their families that prefer marital counseling outside of the military treatment facility, should TRICARE cover the cost of that counseling?

Dr. ADIRIM. Okay. I think I got all three, Senator. This is a concern of ours as well and something that is a priority and that we work on consistently.

With regard to adequate providers at military treatment facilities, we have, overall, for all behavioral health providers, we are at about a 96 percent fill rate, but that masks some gaps, the gaps being in psychiatrists, which we have a lower fill rate for those, and that includes Active Duty, civilians, and contractors.

We are competing with the private sector where there is, you know, not enough behavioral health providers out in the civilian sector. So we use whatever levers that we have at our disposal in order to recruit and retain our behavioral health providers. It is very important to us, and so this is something that we are cognizant of.

I believe the report that you are referring to did talk about several MTFs that did not meet the 28-day specialty standard. I believe the number was 30 days for those. So it not meeting the standard, but it is just outside the standard.

Second, with regard to access to care within military treatment facilities, again, we work really hard, especially for Active Duty, to get priority access for mental health services. We do this in multiple ways, not just within the military treatment facilities and embedding it within our primary care, but we also embed behavioral health within units as well.

With regard to TRICARE, this is something that we press our managed care support contractors to maintain a robust directory of behavioral health providers. The problem with that is that we are competing in a system where a significant proportion of behavioral health providers are cash-only practices, so keeping them within the network is very difficult. But we work on this consistently.

As I told Senator Hawley, one of the things, if anything, you could say, that came out of the pandemic which was good, is virtual health, and one of the ways that we have been using it has been with behavioral health. We are evaluating that to make sure that it meets the needs of our providers.

Now outside of the medical sphere, Military OneSource does provide non-medical counseling as well. So we use every avenue possible to provide support, and we completely agree, it is an increasing need and the pandemic really has exacerbated that need. Thank you.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you. Dr. Van Winkle and Mr. Herbert, we continue to hear that some do not avail themselves of behavioral health services because of the stigma attached to seeking this type of health care. What is being done, and what can be done to reduce the stigma of seeking behavioral health care?

Dr. VAN WINKLE. So I can take this from my portfolio. Absolutely, the stigma of coming forward is always one of the barriers,

that we have good resources but if folks will not take us up on those, or do not feel comfortable coming forward it will always be a problem. So we are always looking for different avenues by which individuals can seek help. We are also trying to work to ensure that we expand the scope of those people within the community that can offer help and have the tools to help, not only to help if somebody comes forward saying they are having a difficult time, but also recognize warning signs. So we have a pilot right now on recognizing warning signs on social media, and again, expanding that community, so working with chaplains, military families, those peers, so we can try to identify those things early on, as well as offering other types of confidential avenues by which to talk to somebody, whether it is peer-to-peer, through Military OneSource, or through our national hotline.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Mr. Herbert?

Mr. HERBERT. Yes, ma'am. As Senator Tillis indicated earlier, it is a matter of leadership. It is a matter of setting an example. It is a matter of indicating from the top on down that this is expected, this is part of your readiness to be a servicemember, that you need to be mentally and physically fit, and accepting individual responsibility seek out that sort of help. But ultimately it comes from leadership, to make sure that individuals understand that if they seek help, it is not a career- impacting decision.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you. Senator Tillis?

Senator TILLIS. Thank you, Madam Chair. Dr. Adirim, I just had one other question for you. It has to do with the DOD and the deadlines that Congress for transition of all MTFs into DHA. How is it going, and are there particular service lines that are doing better than others? Call them out by name.

Dr. ADIRIM. [Laughs.] Call them out by name. We are working really hard to make the September 30th deadline. I am hopeful that we will. Just even in recent weeks, we have had very good dialogue with all three services. I believe Air Force, we may be almost completely done. We still have some work to do with Army and Navy. But I believe we are getting towards the end, and filling out those last things that we need to do to complete the entire transition.

Senator TILLIS. Thank you, and, Mr. Herbert, I just want to echo what you said about leadership. You know, if you follow behavioral health and you follow the stigma associated with it, there is virtually no one in a command position that does not know someone or have a family member that is not experiencing some behavioral health. It is just a statistical reality with 1 in 5 people experiencing it.

So I think that we need to commute from the command down that it is actually a show of strength to recognize you have a challenge that could impact your readiness, and that they should be proud of the fact that they are seeking help. So this is something that we need to get from the top down, from the Pentagon down to the unit, socialized within our armed services so we can do right and be better prepared for the fight.

Mr. HERBERT. Yes, sir.

Senator TILLIS. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Senator Tuberville.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you very much for being here. I can see you all way back there. That is good. We picked a nice, big room.

I do know what all you all have talked about. I have been in another meeting. But the one thing that I am concerned about, in anything that we do, especially in the military, is recruiting. We have got to fight big tech. We have got to fight big business. There is a lot of money out there for kids coming out of school, kids coming out of high schools. They can make a great living. We need a fighting machine.

One of those situations where I feel like, as a college recruiter for years, we had a small range of people every year that we felt we could pick from to be successful, and I am sure we are the same way. Any comments on recruiting, from any of you all, that you think that we can do better, in terms of building the pool of young men and women to make our services better? Anybody?

Mr. HERBERT. Yes, sir. I appreciate the question. Recruiting is near and dear to all of our hearts, as you can imagine. We bring in a quarter of a million young Americans, young, patriotic Americans every year, and to try and reach out to a population who, more and more, are further removed from knowing someone in their immediate family that has served in the military.

There are challenges. There are challenges in trying to explain what military life is like. There are challenges in being able to communicate in spaces and digital media where they operate, where traditional media does not reach them. The service, I will tell you, in all the years I have been in public service, I have never seen the services lean more forward to try and meet young Americans where they live, where they operate, and to try and approach them and explain to them the value of public service.

We have a tremendous asset in that we have a mission that no corporation can match. They want to be part of something bigger than themselves. The United States military is an opportunity for that to happen.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you. Dr. Van Winkle, during your time with the Department in overseeing sexual assault prevention and response, do you feel like that resources to prevent sexual assault are being utilized the right way?

Dr. VAN WINKLE. Thank you for the question. I think we can always do better in this space. I think the resources that we do have, I think where we have challenges is people feeling comfortable and confident coming forward to utilize those resources. So we provide resources that are both more confidential and anonymous as well as those where they can come forward and go forward with an investigation.

In addition, we also have the "Catch a Serial Offender" program that was previously mentioned, where we have folks who can make a confidential report but provide information to the Department about the offender. If there is a match in the system they are offered the opportunity to convert to an unrestricted report so we can hold offenders more appropriately accountable.

So I think, again, there are resources that are there. It is important that people feel comfortable coming forward, and again, this is an area we can always do better, and the Independent Review

Commission, one of their lines of effort is victim support and care, making sure that we have the right resources. So I look forward to the recommendation.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Do you have any personal suggestions about what we can do to get better, from your insight?

Dr. VAN WINKLE. I think, again, we have to take this from a very holistic standpoint. It is not only putting the right things in place but making sure there are no barriers to people getting there, including just their own fear, whether it is retaliation or fear of trust. So I think I do defer to the Independent Review Commission. It is the right body to be looking at this issue, and they are taking a very comprehensive approach.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you. Thank you to all the witnesses. We appreciate your testimony, and we would like to welcome the next set of witnesses. Thank you.

[Pause.]

Senator GILLIBRAND. Welcome, everyone. You may proceed with your testimony. Lieutenant General Brito, you are first.

**STATEMENT OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL GARY M. BRITO, USA,  
DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF, G-1**

Lieutenant General BRITO. Thank you, Chairwoman Gillibrand. Good afternoon, Chair Gillibrand, Ranking Member Tillis, distinguished members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you on behalf of the men and women of the United States Army. I have submitted a statement for record and would like to highlight a few points from it now.

The Army's number one priority is its people. Our soldiers and Army civilians, families and veterans for life. We are putting people first, not only as a priority but as a philosophy.

Our personnel programs and initiatives are focused on promoting our culture of cohesion and dignity and respect, where every individual can advance as far as their talents and their skills will take them. We have moved quickly to implement new policies to keep our soldiers and their families safe while continuing to execute our mission during the global pandemic.

As our Nation engages in discussion focused on race and equality, we launched listening sessions across the Army to hear the concerns and ideas of our soldiers and our civilians. Our People First task force, of which I am one of three co-chairs, is working very hard to combat sexual harassment, sexual assault, violent crimes, and other harmful behaviors. Modernization efforts, programs, policy, and management models are transforming the Army's personnel systems. These efforts will give the Army an enduring advantage of a transparent, data-rich environment, and improve our ability to compete for and retain talent.

For example, the Integrated Personnel and Pay System Army, more commonly referred to as IPSS-A, is the number one resource modernization effort for the total Army, and I thank Congress for the support of this important program.

Manning the Army is a key component of readiness. Ongoing 21st Century talent management initiatives and actions help us to attract, acquire, and retain a diverse and talented force from across



the Nation. Our nearly 300,000 Army civilians remain an integral part of the Army team, providing unmatched talent in critical areas.

Personnel readiness also means creating installation and environment that allows our soldiers and families to thrive. The Army is committed to quality-of-life priorities that include quality housing, barracks, child care, youth services, and meaningful employment for our Army spouses.

Resilience programs and initiatives aimed at harmful behaviors, and supported by Congress, are critical to help us combat sexual harassment and assault and factors that contribute to suicide. These efforts are also a major focus of the previously mentioned People First Task Force.

As the Army G-1 and Army leader, and the father of a soldier, I acknowledge that sexual assault and harassment is a problem that has plagued our ranks for far too long. We are better than this. Our soldiers and civilians deserve better, and we will get at it.

The Army Soldier For Life program continues to support soldiers, veterans, and their families. The Army's retired soldiers are important to the Army family. I would also highlight that during the pandemic more than 200 retired soldiers with critical skills were recalled to Active Duty and executed critical roles, enabling us to execute our mission against an enemy called COVID-19.

The people of the United States, these men and women who serve our Nation, both in and out of uniform, along with their families, are indeed our strength and our legacy. Accordingly, putting our people first, which is the Army Chief of Staff's number one priority, is key to readiness, modernization, and reform.

Chair Gillibrand, Ranking Member Tillis, members of the committee, I thank you for your generous and unwavering support to our talented soldiers, civilian professionals, and their families, and I look forward to your questions. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Lieutenant General Gary Brito follows:]

#### PREPARED STATEMENT BY LIEUTENANT GENERAL GARY BRITO

Chairwoman Gillibrand, Ranking Member Tillis, 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 Army's number one priority is people—our soldiers and Army civilians, families and veteran Soldiers for Life. All of the Army's personnel programs and initiatives are focused on taking care of our people with dignity and respect and promoting a culture where every individual can not only serve our country honorably, but can do so in a way that allows them to advance professionally as far as their talent and skills will take them. There is no better investment to ensure the readiness of the Army.

We continue to focus on the *Army People Strategy's* mission and vision to *acquire, develop, employ, and retain the diversity of soldier and civilian talent needed to achieve Total Army readiness*. Additionally, three critical enablers from the *Army People Strategy* continue to set conditions for putting people first: Army Culture, Quality of Life, and a 21st Century Talent Management System.

#### *Personnel Modernization*

The foundation of Army Readiness is Personnel Readiness. New technology, programs, policy, innovations and management models are transforming the Army's Personnel Systems and will provide our soldiers and civilians with more opportuni-

ties to excel; give our Army the enduring advantage of a transparent, data rich personnel environment; and improve our ability to compete for and retain talent.

*The Integrated Personnel and Pay System—Army (IPPS-A)*

The Integrated Personnel and Pay System—Army (IPPS-A) is the number one Human Resources (HR) modernization effort for the Total Army and fundamental to the Army People Strategy. IPPS-A is the Army's new web-based HR system which, once fully deployed, will deliver a single, comprehensive, data rich HR and talent management system to the Total Force. IPPS-A will integrate personnel, pay and talent management functions into a secure system, providing soldiers and units with unmatched access to their HR, talent and pay data.

The Army completed fielding to the Army National Guard in March 2020 with resounding success. All 54 states and territories are now on a single system allowing the Army to run HR processes and analytics on the entire Army National Guard at the touch of a button.

In December 2021, the Army will introduce the revolutionary capability of IPPS-A to the Active and Reserve components. Release 3 of IPPS-A will provide mobile access capability for self-service, business intelligence, and strength analytics tools, as well as automated workflow that will improve transparency of actions for soldiers while enabling our commanders and leaders to make informed decisions for a more ready force. IPPS-A will facilitate the Army's ability to better manage the talents of the Total Force based on soldiers' knowledge, skills and behaviors. Release 4 of IPPS-A is scheduled for May of 2025 and will add Army payroll to the system. A plan for continuous improvements through 2030 will enable the Army to continue to modernize a talent management system that will have strategic impacts for years to come.

The introduction of IPPS-A coincides with the Army's execution of a systematic approach to achieving HR data cleanliness; identifying authoritative data sources and services; and decommissioning legacy applications and systems which will be centralized in IPPS-A and a few other key systems. This HR IT modernization effort is linked to a future cloud migration of all HR systems, and is designed to facilitate the creation of a data rich environment that will allow us to fully implement a talent management system to recruit, retain and incentivize the very best personnel.

*Talent Management*

Talent Management provides our Army an enduring competitive advantage. Continued investment in acquiring, developing, employing, and retaining talent will keep our Army at the forefront of human capital development and performance while providing the Nation with a multi-faceted team that can fight and win in unpredictable environments to secure America's interests. Fully embracing lessons learned from industry and the Fiscal Year 2019 NDAA changes, the Army is actively building a talent management system capable of screening, identifying, and leveraging the knowledge, skills, behaviors, and preferences of individuals.

The Fiscal Year 2019 NDAA provided the Army with new authorities to modernize the officer personnel system. Twenty-nine officers have received brevet promotions and another 76 positions are being marketed for brevet promotions this summer. Fourteen Cyber officers have been direct commissioned, and another 87 candidates are currently in the process. More than 65 officers with critical skills have been deferred past their mandatory retirement date. Ninety-four percent of the 83 officers who applied to opt-out of a promotion selection board have been approved. Of the nearly 1,000 officers who opted in to be considered early for promotion, 101 were selected.

The Army is building an attribute framework to support our talent management authorities. The new three-tiered structure, the Army Talent Attribute Framework (ATAF), will enable us to articulate assignment requirements, align talent to positions, and support individualized career paths as soldiers profess their unique knowledge, skills, and behaviors (KSB).

The Command Assessment Program is improving the Army's ability to select more capable leaders at the battalion and brigade levels. From a population of nearly 1,800 officers, 1,050 were selected using psychometric, cognitive/non-cognitive, writing skills, verbal skills, physical fitness, leadership, and peer/subordinate assessments. Those selected are more cognitively capable, better communicators, more physically fit, and more apt to promote a positive command. By the fall of 2022, the Army will expand the Command Assessment Program to include brigade command sergeants major. We are also executing decentralized assessment pilots at local installations to provide insight and better align individual talents with first sergeant positions.

The Army Coaching Program helps Officers and NCOs learn from assessments. Our premier coaching program provides professional insight to support the development of soldiers so that they understand their strengths and weaknesses and can weight their professional options. In fiscal year 2020, at least 1,463 officers participated in the program. In light of the program's exceptionally positive feedback, ATMTF expects to expand the program to approximately 3,000 officers in CY21.

The Army is conducting a focused retention initiative targeting junior officers we want to retain into their field grade years. Selected captains will receive their career path of choice after company command, contingent upon continued high levels of performance. To date in fiscal year 2021, we have extended an opportunity to just under 1,000 highly talented officers. Twelve have received an assured mid-career pathway and another 62 are in the selection process.

Using data gleaned from the assignment marketplace, the Army can see officer talents and link those to opportunities. More than 14,200 jobs and 15,000 Active component officers are participating in the current marketplace where, based on their talents, they may match for their assignment of choice or earn a brevet promotion. A marketplace for master sergeants is expected in December 2021 with IPPS-A's talent management rollout.

Talent Based Branching represents the future of how the Army manages its people, combining talent assessments, coaching, resumes, interviews, and selection panels to put ROTC cadets in the right branch at the start their careers. This "whole person" approach is a significant leap forward over previous systems that screened based on class rank.

#### *The Regionally Aligned Readiness and Modernization Model*

The Regionally Aligned Readiness and Modernization Model (ReARMM) will align units across the total Army Force in a predictable and sustainable life cycle through training, modernization, and mission windows. The model will regionally align units to meet current Joint Force demands, while allowing the Army to meet future challenges through modernization.

In support of ReARMM, the G-1 is developing new Army Manning Guidance (AMG) to drive personnel policy aligned with the ReARMM principles of predictability, stability, and synchronization. Additionally, the G-1 is reviewing personnel policies to include stabilization of key NCO leaders and development of the 21st Century NCO corps.

#### *Marketing*

The Army's marketing efforts focus on acquiring diverse talent in a competitive environment. To attract the talent we require, we must inform and inspire public awareness of the wide array of opportunities the Army offers. Marketing remains a key tool to reaching qualified recruits.

The ad campaign "What's Your Warrior?" launched in 2019 to highlight the breadth and depth of Army careers for Generation Z (Gen Z) youth. "What's Your Warrior?" added more content in late 2020 and the initiatives continue today. "What's Your Warrior?" leverages a mix of traditional and digital advertising to reach Gen Z recruits and their influencers across their preferred platforms including national broadcast, out-of-home advertisement, print, websites, and social media. The campaign reaches audiences through YouTube, GoArmy social media channels, and GoArmy.com with a range of promotional assets designed to appeal to different segments of the "Generation Z" population.

#### *Civilian Workforce Efforts*

Efforts specifically aimed at expediting the hiring of Civilians are increasing personnel readiness and ensuring talented individuals fill critical vacancies.

Direct Hire Authorities (DHAs) are hiring authorities that the Office of Personnel Management can grant to Federal agencies to fill vacancies in specific occupations, grade levels and locations, when it can be proven that there is a critical hiring need or a severe shortage of candidates. DOD-specific DHAs enable the Army to expedite the hiring of qualified applicants for critical/hard-to-fill positions quickly and efficiently by removing some of the lengthier steps of the hiring process, specifically public notice, rating and ranking and Veterans' preference. The Army continues to use DHAs to expedite hiring for critical positions to increase readiness. DHAs cover many critical positions such as scientific, technical, engineering and mathematics (STEM), medical, and cyber. During 1st quarter of fiscal year 2021, the Army utilized DHAs for 70.8 percent of eligible external hiring actions and increased the usage rate to 73.5 percent for 2nd quarter fiscal year 2021.

The Army has implemented several initiatives as part of a broader strategy to reduce Civilian time-to-hire in support of the former Secretary of Defense's fiscal year 2025 hiring goal of 45 days. In conjunction with promoting the use of Direct Hire

Authorities to decrease hiring time, Commanders have been given the authority to defer several conditions of employment that add significant time to the hiring process (e.g., pre-employment physical results, pre-employment drug test results, and completed security clearances). Since implementing various initiatives, we have seen a gradual decrease in fill time—fiscal year 2019 hiring time was 90.63 days, fiscal year 2020 was 83.4 days, and currently for fiscal year 2021 the hiring time is 84.89 days.

In support of the Army People Strategy and Civilian Implementation Program, the Army has developed an Army-wide voluntary reassignment pilot program for Appropriated Fund employees called the Department of the Army Voluntary Re-Assignment Program (DAVRAP). The DAVRAP supports Army-wide human resource goals to reduce time-to-hire and bolster retention of current employees. This program delivers an Army-wide recruitment source that allows selecting officials to quickly fill vacant positions non-competitively with current Army employees. By allowing selecting officials to non-competitively select employees from different commands and/or locations, this program can facilitate the continued employment of current Army employees, to include Veterans and Military Spouses and family members undergoing a permanent change of station (PCS) with their military/civilian sponsor.

#### *Building and Maintaining a Quality Force*

We must attract, acquire, and retain a diverse and talented force from across the Nation to build cohesive teams that are highly trained, disciplined and fit, and ready to fight and win.

##### *Recruiting*

The Army enlisted 61,253 recruits in the Active component (AC), 38,633 recruits in the Army National Guard (ARNG), and 13,706 recruits in the Army Reserve (USAR) in fiscal year 2020.

The AC achieved 38 percent of its fiscal year 2021 recruiting mission. Recruiting continues to be a challenge in the COVID-19 environment. The Army's Recruiting Command has tripled its virtual efforts this year with multiple initiatives, including quarterly virtual campaigns; development of virtual career fair capabilities; and on-line job postings. These virtual efforts have compensated for the loss in face-to-face prospecting opportunities. The AC is on track to achieve its end-strength of 485,900.

The ARNG achieved 45 percent of its fiscal year 2021 recruiting mission. With an aggressive emphasis on retention and attrition management, combined with an improved recruiting strategy, the ARNG is on glide path to achieve its end-strength of 336,500.

The USAR achieved 37 percent of its recruiting mission. The USAR continues its effort to reduce attrition and increase prior service transfers from the AC and Individual Ready Reserve as a means to offset recruiting production. They expect to achieve 98.6 percent of the 189,800 end-strength objective.

The Army is on track to recruit and access more than 4,700 AC officers in fiscal year 2021, with more than 10,000 officers accessed across all components. All sources of commission are expected to meet their fiscal year 2021 accessions mission despite challenges due to COVID-19. The Army's primary commissioning sources (USMA, ROTC, and OCS) continue to advance processes to match talent and build diversity of race and gender across all Army officer branches. Officer Branching is aligned with the Army People Strategy underpinned by the ASA (M&RA)'s diversity guidance to 'build the bench' of our Nation's future leaders. The Reserve component is also on track to exceed their fiscal year 2021 accession goals.

##### *Retention*

The Army's People Strategy requires that we not only recruit and employ the best talent, but that we retain them as well. As part of the Army's People Strategy, we have called for a 20 percent reduction in attrition during initial-entry training and a 15 percent reduction in attrition of soldiers who are within their first 36 months of service by the end of fiscal year 2020. We are seeing significant improvements in attrition-reduction efforts, and we expect to achieve our reduction goals by the end of the fiscal year.

The AC and the USAR each achieved their fiscal year 2020 retention missions, while the ARNG achieved nearly 98 percent of their retention mission. The AC continues to exceed historical retention rates and the fiscal year 2020 retention rate of our eligible population (91.6 percent) was the highest to date. The fiscal year 2020 retention rate was an increase of nearly 10 percent over fiscal year 2019 and 2 percent over fiscal year 2018. In fiscal year 2021, the AC will accomplish its mission requirements. These retention achievements support meeting our NCO require-

ments in the near to mid-term and would not be possible without the funding support for incentives granted by Congress.

The Army saw consistent officer retention in fiscal year 2020, retaining 90 percent of Army Competitive Category (ACC) captains and 96 percent of ACC majors, which is consistent with fiscal year 2019 and a slight increase since fiscal year 2018. Overall, the Army retained 93 percent of all officers and warrant officers in fiscal year 2020. Approximately 71 percent of officers are staying at least one year past their initial Active Duty Service Obligation (ADSO).

#### *Non-Deployable Personnel*

The Army's current initiatives to update regulations concerning non-deployable status have postured the Army to meet the 5 percent goal for non-deployable personnel. When these policy changes occur, the Army is postured to achieve the DOD goal of less than 5 percent by the end of 3rd quarter of fiscal year 2021.

As of March 31, 2021, the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES) non-deployable population consisted of 12,374 personnel. The COVID-19 impact to the medical examination portion of the IDES process resulted in more than 2,800 deferrals. Consequently, the average processing time (from referral until separation) increased from 202 days in fiscal year 2020 to 272 days as of March 2021. We expect the processing time to increase through the summer, level off, then decrease in the fall of 2021 as we clear out deferred cases. The Army will continue to work closely with the Department of Veterans Affairs and DOD to ensure timely delivery of benefits for our Nation's wounded, ill and injured soldiers. Efficient execution of the IDES process is critical to both readiness and taking care of our soldiers and families.

#### *The Diversity of the Force*

Over the last 14 years, the Army's Enlisted Force has become racially and ethnically more diverse, with Hispanics accounting for the biggest increase in minority representation. The Combat Arms Outreach program is a targeted effort to attract and commission a diverse officer talent pool reflective of the Nation we serve and the soldiers it leads. Combat Arms Outreach Engagement Teams will consist of diverse company grade and field grade officers from Combat Arms branches. Teams will conduct engagements at ROTC programs to encourage cadets to join Combat Arms branches.

White, non-Hispanic representation in the Enlisted Force has decreased from 60 percent in 2007 to 51 percent in 2021. Meanwhile, Hispanic representation has increased from 11.7 percent to 18.7 percent over the same period. Asian and Pacific Islanders have also increased as a share of the Enlisted Force from 4 percent in 2007 to 6.3 percent in 2021. Female representation in the Enlisted Force has increased slightly over the last 14 years. In 2007, 13.4 percent of enlisted soldiers were women, whereas today, 14.8 percent of enlisted soldiers are women. The Army is finalizing its Enlisted Diversity Plan, which contains initiatives to address recruiting, developing, and retaining the diverse talent it needs to address sub-population underrepresentation.

Over the last 14 years, the Officer Corps has also become racially and ethnically more diverse, with Hispanics and Asians accounting for the biggest increase in minority representation. White, non-Hispanic representation in the Officer Corps has decreased from 74 percent in 2007 to 70 percent in 2021. Meanwhile, Hispanic and Asian representation has increased from 5 percent to 8 percent over the same period. Non-Hispanic Blacks have declined slightly as a share of the Officer Corps from 12 percent in 2007 to 11 percent in 2021. There has also been an increase in females in the Officer Corps over the last 14 years. In 2007, 16.7 percent of officers were women, whereas today, 19.8 percent of officers are women. In January 2021, the Army published its Expanding Diversity in the Officer Corps Plan, which included 25 initiatives to address diversity shortfalls in the Army Officer Corps.

#### *Women in the Army*

In 2011, 13.5 percent of soldiers were women. Today, 15.5 percent of soldiers are women. In addition to comprising an increased share of the Total Force, women continue to integrate into infantry, armor, and field artillery military occupational specialties at the Brigade Combat Team (BCT) level. As of the end of February 2021, 742 females were serving in infantry or armor roles within BCTs. BCT gender integration has progressed steadily, with 29 of 31 BCTs currently integrated and the remaining two BCTs scheduled to integrate by fall 2021. The Army plans to integrate its BCTs by cohort to ensure female soldiers arrive at a unit with at least one same-gendered battle buddy. Four BCTs already have more than 50 female infantry and armor soldiers, and 20 BCTs have a dozen or more female infantry or armor soldiers. The Army will continue to address female recruitment and accession short-

falls using initiatives set forth in its officers, warrant officers and enlisted cohort diversity plans.

#### *Army Civilians*

Making up approximately 23 percent of the Total Force, nearly 300,000 Army civilians work across the institutional Army in more than 500 unique job series. Army civilians are an integral part of the Army team, and they play a critical role in enabling our soldiers to deploy, fight, and win our Nation's wars. Army civilians provide the Army with unmatched technical competence in essential functional areas including technical, medical, engineering, science, logistics, finance, and administrative disciplines. 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.

#### *COVID-19*

The health and welfare of our people during the pandemic has been our top priority since March 2020 when the Department of Defense (DOD) implemented the Stop Move order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and protect our soldiers, civilians, contractors, and family members. Currently, our vaccination priorities are focused on sustaining and improving our readiness through prioritization and education of all eligible and willing personnel. Our efforts continue to follow CDC and DOD force health protection measures to ensure the safety of our force and reassure our foreign partners that the Army is committed to preventing the spread of the virus into and within their countries.

To support soldiers during transitions, we have authorized them to report up to 30 days early and up to 20 days past their report date. This flexibility allows our personnel to best align transportation, pick up of household goods, and school start dates for their dependents.

We have implemented virtual promotion boards at the junior NCO level and initially suspended professional military education requirements for promotion to the next grade to minimize travel requirements and gatherings of large groups. For officers attending the captains career course, the Secretary of the Army authorized attending in a temporary duty versus permanent change of station status through May 2021 to reduce risk and stress on family members. We have implemented specific compensation and entitlements that include Hardship Duty Pay–Restriction of Movement, isolation allowances, basic allowances for subsistence and meals at no cost, suspension of requirements to receive performance-based special and incentive pays, and Special Leave Accrual. All our efforts are designed to provide financial assistance and prevent undue hardship during this pandemic.

#### *The People First Task Force*

In December 2020, the Secretary of the Army established the People First Task Force (PFTF) to assess findings and recommendations of the Fort Hood Independent Review Committee (FHIRC) and develop options to address critical people issues which eroded public trust in the Army. The PFTF is taking actions to holistically address each of the nine findings and implement all 70 recommendations of the FHIRC, and is well under way to broadly apply meaningful changes through multifaceted plans to combat sexual harassment, sexual assault, violent crimes, and other harmful behaviors that exist in our ranks across the Army, ultimately enhancing a culture of trust and building cohesive teams at all echelons. Deliberate efforts to redesign the Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP) program are in progress and the task force expects to present its recommendations to Army leadership soon for review and implementation.

In March, the People First Solarium brought together 100 junior enlisted soldiers and officers from across the Total Army at the U.S. Military Academy to examine Army culture and the behaviors that negatively impact cohesion and trust. This event initiated a deliberate effort to close the communications gap between soldiers and senior leaders combined with 96 listening sessions at 14 locations. Parallel to the Solarium, the This Is My Squad initiative employs a grassroots approach to building cohesive teams that nests with the Army's NCO Strategy to shape the NCO Corps for generations to come. In support of This Is My Squad, the Army developed the Squad Leader Development Course (SLDC) to assist first-line leaders in understanding and embracing their roles. The recently revised SLDC curriculum assists junior leaders as they develop their leadership philosophy by tying their philosophy to their signature character strengths and personal values. Additionally, the Army will aggressively improve criminal investigation structure, crime prevention procedures and missing soldier protocols to empower and protect our soldiers.

The task force is also conducting pilot programs to measure unit cohesion and trust, as well as the effectiveness of programs meant to counter harmful behaviors

such as sexual harassment, at select installations. The assessments include: soldier interviews and small unit visits; surveys measuring morale and trust in leadership; and analysis of a formation's operations with regards to trust and cohesion, leader development programs, training, awards, legal actions, and soldier separation programs.

#### *Equity and Inclusion Efforts*

The Army continues to advance the Army People Strategy Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Annex which includes 5 goals, 25 objectives, and 126 action tasks that serve as the core of the Army's Project Inclusion initiatives and fulfill the Fiscal Year 2020 NDAA section 529 mandate for the military services to develop a diversity and inclusion strategic plan by December 20, 2020. The Annex's five goals center on Leader Commitment, Talent Management, Organizational Structure, Training and Education, and Equitable and Inclusive Environment.

One of the Army's major initiatives is the Your Voice Matters listening sessions where the Army sends diversity and inclusion professionals to installations to discuss race, racism, diversity and inclusion, and their impact on the force. As of April 15, 2021, the Army has conducted 97 listening sessions at 14 different locations, reaching 5,401 soldiers and Department of the Army civilians.

Another initiative is the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion outreach to Affinity Groups program. On January 18, 2021, then Secretary of the Army McCarthy signed a memorandum of agreement with the National Pan Hellenic Council to focus on mutually shared objectives that help diversify the Army; mentor young men and women throughout the National Pan Hellenic Council community; and collaborate on outreach opportunities to build a community of talent, capable of joining the Army and achieving their aspirations and defined ideals of success.

The Army has also inculcated diversity, equity, and inclusion training into Army Professional Military Education. The Training and Doctrine Command has revamped Military Equal Opportunity training to include diversity, equity and inclusion, the Secretary of the Army and the Chief of Staff of the Army signed the Officer Diversity Plan on January 7, 2021. We are working to complete plans for our enlisted, warrant officer and civilian cohort by the end of fiscal year 2021. These plans are designed to help the Army acquire, develop, employ and retain the diverse talent it needs to fight and win our Nation's wars. The Army has also assigned a Senior Diversity Advisor to the Secretary of the Army, as mandated by Fiscal Year 2021 NDAA section 913.

#### *Quality of Life Programs*

People First means creating a duty and installation environment that allows soldiers and their families to thrive. Last year we committed to quality of life priorities that included: quality housing both for families and our soldiers in the barracks; quality childcare and youth services; and meaningful employment for spouses.

The Army continues to execute the Army Housing Campaign Plan to shape policies, procedures, and processes at every echelon. We have fully implemented 14 of 18 Tenant Bill of Rights at 44 installations and expect the remaining 4 tenant rights to be available at most installations with privatized housing by June 1, 2021. We implemented incentive fee metrics to hold privatized companies accountable for proper maintenance and customer service, and hired 114 additional government personnel to provide quality assurance oversight to privatized and government-owned housing. We implemented 100 percent change of occupancy inspections, and 100 percent quality assurance checks on life, health, and safety work orders. We developed environmental hazards (mold and lead) education materials; established an environmental hazard response registry; established habitability and displaced residents' policies; and hired independent, third-party experts to perform financial and development/operations reviews on privatized companies.

Quality childcare is essential in enabling personnel readiness. The Army has a multi-pronged strategy to maintain, and in some cases, increase access to care. We plan, with Congressional support, to build 21 additional Child Development Centers by fiscal year 2030, adding approximately 4,000 childcare spaces. We appreciate Congressional support of the three centers funded in fiscal year 2021, two in Hawaii and one in Alaska. We continue to invest in our people, adjusting compensation to recruit and retain quality staff. We are incentivizing the Family Childcare Program with bonuses for new providers and for families that continue in the program after a move. Finally, we continue to invest in Army fee assistance to buy down the cost of off-post care when on-post care is unavailable or there is a long wait for care.

The Army, with the support of Congress, continues to make improvements in spouse employment initiatives. The Army reimburses spouses up to \$1,000 for professional licensing and certification in a new state. We improved policies for military

spouse hiring preference and strengthened the Employment Readiness Program. We also made the transfer of non-appropriated fund employees between installations easier and streamlined the home-based business application and approval system. We continue to work with DOD to promote workforce development scholarships; improve state license reciprocity and professional license compacts; and reduce overseas employment barriers.

*Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention Program (SHARP)*

The Army continues to show the highest sexual assault and harassment reporting ever recorded. The continued increase in reporting is viewed as a positive trend by DOD and civilian sexual assault/harassment and prevention experts. Soldier surveys, such as the Workplace and Gender Relations Survey and the Defense Organizational Climate Survey (DEOCS), have linked an increase in reporting to greater trust in the chain of command and the SHARP response system. Optimally, we would see an increase in reporting in conjunction with a decrease in prevalence, or the estimated number of assaults.

We are working to redesign the Army's SHARP system and are implementing initiatives to provide Commanders with the essential resources, education, training, and awareness they need to bring an end to sexual harassment and sexual assault in the Army. The PFTF has assembled a team of experts and stakeholders to conduct a comprehensive review of the Army's efforts to prevent sexual harassment and sexual assault, along with providing coordinated, victim-centered and trauma-informed reporting and response services. The PFTF has engaged experts from academia, the public sector, DOD and the Army to develop bold, holistic, and sweeping recommendations to improve the Army's SHARP program. These recommendations will also address the 70 recommendations from the Fort Hood Independent Review. The Army is committed to eradicating sexual harassment and sexual assault in our ranks, and we see the SHARP program redesign as a foundational effort.

Our Army SHARP Academy, the only sexual assault prevention and response-dedicated school among the Services, has introduced new prevention curriculum for all SHARP professionals informed by the DOD Prevention Plan of Action (PPoA). The new curriculum includes a range of unit-level training products that enable interactive learning. In January 2021, the Academy began providing updated and enhanced SHARP training in the Army's Pre-Command Course and work is underway to improve the required content across the full range of Professional Military Education (PME).

We are in the process of seeking an exception to policy to allow the Army to provide SHARP advocacy services to Army Civilians filing unrestricted sexual assault reports regardless of whether they are serving in CONUS or OCONUS. Currently, policies only allow limited SHARP services to Civilians serving OCONUS.

*Resilience Programs*

The Army's Ready and Resilient (R2) program continues to provide the foundation for individuals to build and sustain personal readiness and resilience. Resilience is the Army's number one investment in primary prevention, as well as a protective factor against harmful behaviors.

During the past year, we have increased the ability of Command Teams and Leaders to better "see" their soldiers and units, by deploying the Commander's Risk Reduction Toolkit (CRRT). The toolkit is a web-based application, populated from 26 authoritative data sources and displays up to 40 risk factors to give Command Teams a consolidated history of each soldier's personal information and potential risk. This access provides the Command Teams a consolidated history of each soldier's personal information and potential risk. Battalion Commanders, Command Sergeants Major, Company Commanders, and First Sergeants are the only personnel who can view individual soldier risk related to Personal Identifying Information (PII) and limited Protected Health Information (PHI). We completed fielding of the CRRT to the Active component and are currently rolling out the capability to Reserve and Guard units. CRRT not only provides Command Teams unprecedented visibility of their soldiers' risk factors, it also displays aggregated risk data from Company through Army Command level. This tool provides leaders with a common operating picture consisting of high-risk event trends with relationship to operational events.

*Suicide*

The Army continues to take a multidisciplinary, holistic comprehensive approach that includes awareness, research, and clinical/non-clinical initiatives to address suicide and other harmful behaviors. Unfortunately, Army suicides increased in late 2019, and we continue our efforts to prevent these tragedies through our comprehensive strategies. While we recognize the COVID-19 conditions that increased



isolation and decreased social connectedness could exacerbate suicidality, evidence does not yet exist to support a causal link with the pandemic. We are taking proactive measures such as leader engagement, training and awareness to mitigate associated stressors. We continue to equip commanders with the tools and resources required to strengthen resilience, increase leader visibility and enhance communication, prevention, and intervention capabilities through a collaborative community response.

We are nearing completion of two pilot initiatives. A Suicide Prevention/Resilience Strengthening initiative that include units at Forts Bliss, Hood, and Campbell, is aimed at decreasing the prevalence of suicidality through increases in unit cohesion, trust, and coping and communication skills. During the pilot, we are evaluating two main initiatives: Leader Education and Training and Command Visibility Tools. Pilot findings will assess the impact on reduction of suicides, behavioral health problems and undesirable behaviors such as substance abuse, violence, and crime, and will be available in 3rd quarter of fiscal year 2021. A second pilot, the Behavioral Health Readiness and Suicide Risk Reduction Review (R4) tool, focuses on the populations most at risk of suicide (company level and below) and provides first-line leaders with practical knowledge for communicating with their soldiers on suicide prevention. Initial pilot findings will be complete in 3rd quarter of fiscal year 2021.

We continue to embed multidisciplinary teams of behavioral health (BH) professionals to provide direct support of brigade-level units. The Army expanded BH telehealth appointments during COVID-19, and the Office of the Surgeon General is reviewing the continuation of this service after the pandemic subsides.

The Army is revising how it governs its Suicide Prevention programs to better incorporate Prevention and allow the Department to address early on any new emerging challenges. By elevating our governance process and taking a more holistic prevention approach, our Senior Leaders will have both the continuous visibility and information to reduce the incidents of suicide across our Army.

#### *Alcohol and other Substance Abuse*

Recognizing the nexus between alcohol and substance abuse and other harmful behaviors, the Army is employing a multidisciplinary and holistic prevention approach to reduce alcohol abuse and other substance abuse among soldiers. Our most at-risk population continues to be junior enlisted male soldiers that have co-occurring psychological or physical conditions. Combat exposure and traumatic experiences can also increase the risk of substance abuse within our population. The Army continues to emphasize the importance of deterrence, training, and awareness efforts, and offers self-referral for soldiers struggling with alcohol and other substance abuse problems.

In July 2020, the Army published an update to AR 600-85, Army Substance Abuse Program. Other revisions include the addition of problematic gambling behavior to our Prevention, Education, and Training Objectives. We also provided updated guidance for administrative processing for separation of soldiers for alcohol or other drug abuse and implementing the designation of certain positions as Testing Designation Positions under the Army Drug-Free Federal Workplace Program. These revisions support efforts to implement an integrated and comprehensive prevention model aimed at strengthening soldiers, DA civilians and family members, building protective factors, and fostering a culture of trust that promotes readiness, successful service that is free of alcohol and other substance abuse and organizational cohesion.

We are placing increased emphasis on stigma reduction efforts to encourage those who want assistance, but are hesitant to seek help, due to fears it will negatively impact their careers. In addition, the Army's substance abuse prevention efforts are being aligned with the Centers for Disease Control prevention strategy to ensure a holistic approach to prevent and deter substance abuse.

#### *Transition Assistance Program*

It is in the Army's and our Nation's best interest to ensure soldiers transition successfully back into our communities after their military service. 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 2020, the Army's Veterans Opportunity to Work (VOW) Act compliance is 95 percent. The Transition Assistance Program (TAP) remains available to all veterans for six months after transition, and to all retirees for life.

Even with the challenges of COVID-19, more than 90 percent of transitioning soldiers met the Career Readiness Standards required by DOD and the Army. The Army already had a 24/7 Virtual TAP Center that enabled us to be flexible during this pandemic. Counselors worldwide use our Virtual software, Microsoft Teams,

and telephonic support to ensure soldiers in transition and their families have access to online support and information.

According to data from the Department of Labor, in fiscal year 2020 the unemployment rate for all Veterans increased due to COVID-19. The Army TAP efforts helped to stabilize the unemployment rate for recently transitioned Veterans to be lower than the national average. Between fiscal year 2011 and fiscal year 2020, Army TAP efforts, coupled with the Nation's low Veteran unemployment rates, have contributed to reducing the Army's annual unemployment reimbursement costs from a high of \$514.6 million to \$112.8 million.

The Army TAP's 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 more 4,000 industry partners and sub-partners in the CSP program. In fiscal year 2020, 6,041 soldiers successfully completed a CSP, and 5,586 (or 90 percent) of them were placed into careers following the CSP training, despite a world-wide pandemic that moved most CSP training for the Army to an online and/or virtual platform.

#### *Soldier for Life*

The Army Soldier for Life program continues to expand its efforts to influence policies, programs and services that support soldiers, veterans, and their families. Forced to transition to virtual operations during the pandemic, the program conducted more than 25 key virtual engagements with Army, government and non-government organizations. In support of the Army Quality of Life Task Force focus to support military spouses, Soldier for Life spearheaded the initiative to establish co-working space for self-employed and remote-working military spouses, with pilot programs already established at Forts Belvoir, Knox and Sill. For the past two years, Soldier for Life has increased program awareness through aggressive strategic messaging across all social media platforms with remarkable success. The Soldier for Life podcast produced 89 episodes designed to share resources with the military community. Soldier for Life thrives on creating an environment where soldiers, veterans and their families embrace their positive Army experience and return to their communities to inspire others to serve through personal example.

The Army's Retired Soldiers are both a strategic and tactical asset for the Army. They inspire Americans by telling their Army stories and explaining military service and how critical it is to the strength and security of our Nation. During the pandemic, more than 200 retired soldiers with needed medical skills were recalled to Active Duty to serve in COVID-19 hotspots or to backfill soldiers in military treatment facilities who deployed to these hot spots.

Conclusion. The People of the United States Army—these men and women who serve our Nation, both in and out of uniform, along with their families—are our strength and our legacy. Their talents, courage, and commitment make our Army the greatest in the world. Accordingly, putting our People First is key to readiness, modernization, and reform. 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. Chairwoman Gillibrand, Ranking Member Tillis, members of this committee, I thank you for generous and unwavering support of our outstanding soldiers, civilian professionals, and their families.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you. Vice Admiral Nowell.

#### **STATEMENT OF VICE ADMIRAL JOHN B. NOWELL, JR., USN, DEPUTY CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS, N-1 AND CHIEF OF NAVAL PERSONNEL**

Vice Admiral NOWELL. Chairwoman Gillibrand, Ranking Member Tillis, and distinguished subcommittee members, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to update you on your Navy's personnel programs. First, I would like to give you a quick picture of some of our men and women across the fleet today. You may have seen, this past, the USS *Monterey* seized a massive shipment of illicit weapons in the North Arabian Sea.

In the Indo-Pacific, sailors on the USS *John S. McCain* recently conducted a Taiwan strait transit, demonstrating dedication to our allies and freedom of the seas.

For COVID-19 relief efforts, our sailors continue to support community vaccination centers from Boston and New York to Norfolk and Jacksonville, and sailors on board the John Finn successfully shot down an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) in a critical test of our ballistic missile defense capability.

As we sit here, submariners prowl the depths on board ballistic missile submarines, preserving global peace through strategic deterrence. These are just a few examples of what the men and women of your Navy are doing right now.

Let me double-tap that it has been the service and sacrifice of our sailors and the Navy families, amidst the incredible challenges of a global pandemic, that have enabled our Navy to project power across the world and accomplish all assigned missions here and abroad. I want to start by saying thank you to all of them and to all of their families.

To fight and win in a long-term strategic competition we must attract, develop, and manage the most talented Navy workforce possible. COVID-19 mitigations forced us to shift our recruiting methods to 100 percent digital outreach to find outstanding millennial and centennial talent. Meanwhile, the herculean efforts of our men and women at the Recruit Training Command led to safe bubble-to-bubble training and shipping of new sailors. This prevented any significant COVID-19 outbreaks in our accessions pipeline, as our recruit training command went from an all-stop at the beginning of the pandemic to putting through over 50,000 sailors through our accession supply chain since COVID-19 started.

We have continued to develop this talent through initiatives such as Ready, Relevant Learning and a culture of excellence. Ready, Relevant Learning is the establishment of a career-long learning continuum which is transforming an industrial-age training model into a modern, responsive system. Additionally, our Culture of Excellence is a Navy-wide approach to achieving warfighting excellence by creating an environment of psychological, physical, and emotional toughness, while promoting transparency, trust, inclusion, and connectedness among our sailors and their families.

Following the events of last summer, the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) established Task Force One Navy, to evaluate issues in our society and military that detract from lethality and readiness, such as racism, sexism, and other biases, and they highlighted 56 recommendations, cultivating a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion that the Navy is folding back into our Culture of Excellence campaign plan.

Now without a doubt, the vast majority of our sailors in the Navy serve every day with honor, courage, commitment, and respect. However, we are not under any illusions that extremist behaviors do not exist in the Navy, and as directed by the Secretary of Defense, each command across the fleet conducted a stand-down to address extremism within our ranks, and we remain committed to eliminating it and all of its effects from the fleet.

Last, we are optimizing our talent management systems, providing greater flexibility for sailors in career choice, development, training, and assignments. Thanks to the support of Congress in fully funding our MyNavy HR Transformation programs, we are able to provide our sailors and families with new and innovative

systems. Some of these include our Navy Personnel and Pay System, countless mobile applications, and two MyNavy Career Center contact centers which have provided just-in-time capability to our sailors and their families with 24/7 human resource support during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As we grow our force structure and manpower requirements across all ship classes, we will continue to attract, develop, and manage America's finest talent to ensure fleet readiness, capability, and capacity, with our greatest advantage over our adversaries always being our people.

Thank you for your support of these efforts and for your unwavering commitment to the men and women of the United States Navy and their families. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Vice Admiral John B. Nowell follows:]

#### PREPARED STATEMENT BY VICE ADMIRAL JOHN B. NOWELL

##### INTRODUCTION

Chairwoman Gillibrand, Ranking Member Tillis, 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 Tri-Service Maritime Strategy and Chief of Naval Operations Navigation Plan (NAVPLAN), the United States Navy is engaged in a long-term strategic competition with the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Russian Federation (RF). These two nations have usurped control of valuable sea-based resources, unlawfully violated the sovereignty of our allies through intimidation by force, and hold international waterways and the global economy at risk. With its One Belt, One Road initiative and aggressive naval build-up, as stated by Secretary Austin, the PRC is our pacing threat. Enabled by modernization of tactical nuclear warheads, submarines, and hypersonic missile capability, the RF poses a direct threat to our homeland with an increased capacity to launch kinetic and cyber attacks with no warning. The PRC and RF endeavor to undermine the freedom of the seas that has benefitted the globe since the end of the Cold War and will attempt to outpace and overwhelm us in this long-term competition. However, we will bolster our resolve to deter aggression, fight, and win with the greatest warfighting asset that can outthink and outfight any adversary, our people.

##### ADVANTAGE AT SEA

To be victorious in long-term strategic competition, we must attract, develop, and manage the most talented Navy workforce possible, and these sailors will form the backbone of the Navy that can fight and win. Additionally, we will continue to strengthen our Fleet by establishing a culture of toughness, high standards, and trust. We will increase our lethality by removing bias and prejudice, eliminating discrimination, and learning from and listening to one another with dignity and respect. Lastly, we will inspire our sailors to outthink our adversaries by promoting innovation, initiative, and confidence in their decentralized decision making. Just as we are accelerating the development of a larger, more lethal Fleet, we will produce the best trained and best educated naval force in the world, supported by our core values of honor, courage, and commitment. MyNavy HR's four strategic goals, Build a Navy that Can Fight and Win; Optimize Talent Management; Provide Exceptional Service to our sailors and their families; and Transform the MyNavy HR Enterprise, are vital to maintaining our advantage at sea and defending our Nation for decades to come.

##### ATTRACTING THE NATION'S BEST TALENT

At the beginning of 2020, MyNavy HR focused on maintaining recruiting, retention, and operational readiness due to steady economic growth, historically low unemployment rates, and strong competition from civilian employers. When the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic shocked the U.S. and global econo-

mies, prospective recruits and current sailors were forced to choose between a heavily disrupted and uncertain civilian labor market and military service during a global pandemic. While the immediate effects to recruiting and retention were unknown, COVID-19 mitigation measures forced immediate innovations in the way we attract talent, pivoting to a completely digital recruiting presence to connect with potential sailors.

#### *Accession Mission and Recruiting Modernization*

Despite ongoing challenges driven by COVID-19, we continue to leverage our digital recruiting presence to achieve the fiscal year 2021 accession mission of 34,834 enlisted sailors and 2,513 officers in the Active component (AC), and 6,325 enlisted sailors and 1,319 officers in the Reserve component (RC). MyNavy HR concluded fiscal year 2020 with just over 100 percent (39,678/39,600) of our AC enlisted accession goal. However, record high AC retention created more challenges with RC accessions, as fewer eligible personnel separated from the Navy to affiliate with the selected Reserve. Thus, we achieved 97 percent of goal (5,728/5,907), a manageable deficit, as we continue to meet our RC end strength. For officers, we fell short of mission solely due to the implementation of COVID-19 mitigation measures, as we attained 91 percent (2,160/2,390) of the AC and 78 percent (1,109/1,419) of the RC mission.

COVID-19 mitigations, particularly social distancing, prevented traditional MyNavy HR recruiting processes, creating the opportunity for us to accelerate our timeline to transform and modernize our recruiting model. We expeditiously completed the transition to 26 Navy Talent Acquisition Groups from legacy models three years ahead of schedule, using a transformative business model, which embraces and exploits the speed, accuracy, flexibility, and agility of today's digital environment. Additionally, we deployed a cloud-based Customer Relationship Management software, which facilitated personalized customer service, management decision support via analytics, and opportunity and territory management capabilities. Simultaneously, we established E-Talent teams to focus on digital prospecting and lead efficiency management, greatly reducing the disruption caused by social distancing. Lastly, in January, Navy recruiters began using ZOOM for outreach in schools.

#### *Enlisted Recruiting*

While digital development and modernization enabled MyNavy HR to meet enlisted recruiting goals, accessing sailors in specific high-demand fields continues to be a challenge. Expanding our inventory in areas such as the Nuclear Field, Cyber Warfare, Special Warfare/ Operations, Submarine, and certain aviation specialties is vital to maintaining Fleet readiness at sea. To attract superb talent, we continue to develop and improve recruiting strategies for all demographic groups while discovering methods to best leverage existing incentives to attract personnel. Our touch points were already shifting online prior to COVID-19, but the pandemic hastened our innovations, requiring new virtual platforms to connect with potential recruits. As we optimize these platforms, we consistently review, develop, and improve recruiting strategies to attract the high-quality, diverse, and motivated talent who will strengthen Fleet readiness.

Concerning generational trends, the youngest military-eligible generation, Centennials, comprises the bulk of new accessions. Apart from being the most diverse generation to enter naval service, Centennials also receive information and address issues differently from Millennials, members of Generation X, and Baby Boomers. They are far more comfortable building and maintaining relationships in the digital space, have greater trust in internet sources, and easily learn from online content as was demonstrated by the COVID-19 pandemic. More so than previous generations, they seek physical and psychological stability in a world fraught with turmoil, including COVID-19, long-term strategic competition, civil unrest, and shattered economies, making career readiness, progression, and growth paramount. MyNavy HR is mindful of these generational trends, as we compete for a diverse and talented workforce.

#### *Officer Recruiting*

There continues to be significant interest in commissioning programs through the United States Naval Academy, Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps (NROTC), and Officer Candidate School (OCS), continuing the trend that very qualified candidates exceed allotted appointments. Similar to enlisted recruiting efforts, we increased the use of virtual recruiting by expanding our efforts using digital media such as LinkedIn and Handshake, enhancing our ability to attend virtual career fairs and increase diversity-focused placements in local and national media outlets.

This past year, we grew the highly successful NROTC Preparatory Program (NPP), expanding NROTC scholarship opportunities to untapped talent and pre-

paring them for success in the NROTC program. NROTC Preparatory Scholarship Reservations (NPSR) support this mission by partnering with educational institutions where interested high school students can apply for a one-year institutionally or privately funded scholarship to support room, board, and tuition while they are enrolled in a university NPP. This program expands the relationship between Navy and host academic institutions and offers a performance-based pathway for these midshipmen candidates to earn NROTC scholarships. For academic year (AY) 2019–2020, 67 midshipman candidates enrolled with 49 completing the program and receiving NROTC scholarships. For AY20–21, 109 candidates enrolled, and, at present, 157 reservations are set aside. Over 140 candidates are expected to start NPP in the Fall of 2021. Additionally, starting the summer of 2021, the NROTC program has partnered with the United States Naval Academy to provide 10 reservations for NROTC prospective scholarship applicants to attend Broadened Opportunity for Officer Selection and Training 2.0 (BOOST 2.0) at the Naval Academy Preparatory School.

While we met our recruiting goal for most AC officer communities, recruiting for the Judge Advocate General's Corps and Medical Corps continues to be challenging due to a high level of competition from civilian employers. Our RC officer recruiting goal fell short, as record high retention in the AC made it difficult for our Navy Veterans program to recruit potential selected Reserve officers.

#### *Accession Supply Chain*

At the beginning of the pandemic, Recruit Training Command (RTC) Great Lakes suspended recruit shipping for three weeks to implement safety and health measures. MyNavy HR created a protected “bubble-to-bubble” shipping and training process, as future sailors progressed from recruiting stations to RTC and follow-on duty. With this “bubble-to-bubble” method, RTC resumed training with smaller weekly training groups of 500 recruits, who spent two weeks in off-site restriction of movement (ROM) at private facilities. As RTC solidified safety procedures, weekly shipping incrementally increased from approximately 500 to 750, followed by 1,000 and eventually 1,250 recruits, resulting in a graduation class of 1,259 sailors in one week, the largest class since October 2004.

To consolidate resources, recruits were sent to Fort McCoy, a U.S. Army facility in western Wisconsin, to complete the required two-week ROM. The Navy appreciates the strong support from our Army partners. Two drill halls at RTC were rapidly retrofitted into additional berthing, and we were able to implement 100 percent testing for recruits and staff thanks to the support of the Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center. Additionally, recruits who had previously contracted the virus donated convalescent plasma to support development of potential treatments. However, the success of the “bubble-to-bubble” method would not have been possible without the support from the Navy Air Logistics Office which provided flights to ship more than 10,000 sailors since the beginning of the pandemic.

Officer Training Command (OTC) Newport implemented similar measures to maintain a safe officer supply chain, such as smaller class sizes, conducting ROM on-site where students used online education to prepare for training, and the staff stayed on-site until OTC was able to effectively implement testing, screening and prevention measures. Additionally, 25 NROTC lieutenant instructors were temporarily reassigned to supplement OTC instructors, as they managed ROM requirements. These NROTC instructors taught Navigation, Seamanship, History, Engineering, and Cyber academic courses to over 600 officer candidates. Additionally, many of these personnel assisted in converting the OCS curriculum to a Moodle online learning environment by completing voiceovers and aiding in the development of trainee guides for future OCS candidates.

#### DEVELOPING OUR TALENT

As we attract the Nation's best talent, MyNavy HR continues to invest in our sailors' intellectual capital, enhancing lethality and bolstering our advantage at sea in long-term strategic competition. We achieve these goals by instilling continuous learning behaviors, thus enabling adaptation, institutional improvements, and the ability to outthink and outperform our competitors in any environment. Some of these programs include Ready Relevant Learning (RRL), the United States Naval Community College (USNCC) Pilot, MyNavy Coaching, and Culture of Excellence (COE).

#### *Ready Relevant Learning*

RRL fundamentally changes the way our sailors train, transforming industrial-era, conveyor-belt training into a modern, proactive system. This program accelerates learning for faster response to rapidly changing warfighting requirements in

increasingly dynamic operational environments. Using evolutions in the science of learning, we provide sailors with the right training, at the right time, in the right manner, to maximize sailors' abilities to operate at the extreme technical edge and ultimately win in a high-end fight.

Additionally, RRL changes the "what," "how," and "when" of Navy training to support continual sailor development, improve individual performance, and enhance mission readiness. Through a career-long learning continuum, RRL delivers training at the most appropriate time in a sailor's career, while providing a detailed learning roadmap for every Navy career, covering technical, professional, and leadership training tightly linked to real Fleet needs. In many cases, this shortens initial accession training time while providing more capable sailors to the Fleet sooner.

Leveraging modern technology and maximizing accessibility, RRL delivery uses emerging technology to increase training effectiveness, whether by use of simple tools such as YouTube-like videos and interactive applications, or more complex tools like immersive simulators and virtual reality trainers. These modern tools are designed to be the most effective means of training today's sailors and are intended to build "muscle memory" through multiple "reps and sets" before sailors interact with physical equipment or systems. Additionally, RRL continues to work toward establishing a cloud-based environment to deliver, track, and assess modernized training content. Through our modernized information architecture, all training content will be accessible to sailors where and when they need it, and new training will be delivered to the Fleet much faster than current training systems and processes allow. With this technology, training will be resident on the waterfront, flight line, and available on our afloat units.

To date, we have accession level training completed requirements development for 39 ratings, with an additional nine ratings scheduled to complete in fiscal year 2021 and fiscal year 2022, and 21 more ratings will start development in fiscal year 2023 and beyond. Additionally, 27 ratings are on contract for content modernization, with an additional eight ratings going on contract in fiscal year 2021, and we anticipate three additional ratings will start conversion in fiscal year 2022.

RRL has delivered four modernized A-schools: Operations Specialist, Intelligence Specialist, Quartermaster, and Retail Services Specialist. We project four modernized A-schools will be delivered in fiscal year 2021, and six to eight more ratings will deliver in fiscal year 2022, all as part of the RRL effort to improve sailor development and performance while enhancing mission readiness.

#### *United States Naval Community College*

Further supporting education of our enlisted workforce, the Department of the Navy has established the USNCC Pilot, and the vision at full operational capacity is for all Active Duty enlisted sailors, marines, and coast guardsmen to have the opportunity to enroll in this fully online community college upon completion of basic training. The USNCC will establish a consortium of participating civilian academic institutions to maximize credit earned for servicemembers' technical training. Students will have the opportunity to earn stackable certificates leading to an associate of science degree in a warfighting-relevant concentration, such as nuclear engineering or data analytics, and a Naval Studies certificate at no cost to the student. In January 2021, 558 students began taking courses in General Education (e.g. Mathematics, English, Ethics, and Leadership), Nuclear Technology, Cyber Security, and Data Analytics. The intent of this pilot is to evaluate potential partner institutions and obtain student feedback. The second pilot will begin in January 2022, and the USNCC plans to deliver a Naval Science course to 100 students. Pending the results of these pilots, the USNCC will expand to approximately 5,000 students by fall 2022.

#### *Talent Development*

To maximize our advantage at sea, sustain a culture of excellence, and retain our best talent, MyNavy HR is modernizing and enhancing our development processes, starting with how we grow our sailors, through initiatives to improve development (MyNavy Coaching) and performance evaluation (eNavFit). These integrated and coordinated efforts will shift our culture, practice, and processes and serve as a launching point for future innovations to develop a capable, mission-ready force and retain the Navy's highest performing sailors.

MyNavy Coaching is a science and evidence-based communication program, lending itself to developmental conversations with open, honest, and respectful feedback mechanisms. This initiative is the result of collaboration across numerous military communities, academic, and research organizations, and the Navy is piloting a MyNavy Coaching curriculum across several Navy warfare communities. The key to effective developmental coaching for performance is a structured conversation using

a coaching framework-focused on a willingness to engage sailors with open-ended questions. These questions ask sailors what they want to develop personally and professionally, providing bi-directional feedback to perform as a team as well as taking ownership and accountability of their development and performance. The outcome of these sessions is a robust individual development plan rooted in the coaching framework, which has tangible benefits for the sailor and the command, yielding better development and performance outcomes and providing greater inclusivity within the Navy.

eNavFit transitions sailor performance evaluation from a desktop system with wet signatures and paper-based mail submissions to a web-based system with digital signatures which can be accessed with fully online, intermittent, or disconnected operations. In fiscal year 2020, approximately 24 percent of performance evaluations were rejected due to errors, and the time to complete a performance evaluation and populate a service record took roughly four weeks. eNavFit retains current performance evaluation policy, forms, and performance traits, but transitions to a more modern system. For shore-based commands with regular internet access, eNavFit has fully online functionality, built-in business rules to reduce errors, electronic signature, and web-based submission that can reduce submission time from weeks to days. For Navy platforms with intermittent internet access, the eNavFit intermittent operations workflow allows users to work offline, upload, and submit performance evaluations to the sailor's service record. Finally, for platforms that are fully disconnected from the internet, the disconnected operations workflow allows all work to be completed offline, printed, and submitted by mail to the Navy Personnel Command. eNavFit bridges our current performance evaluation process to a digital environment thus enabling future, transformative performance appraisal enhancements.

#### *Culture of Excellence*

Critical to developing our talent, the Navy's holistic COE campaign plan counters destructive behaviors and champions signature behaviors. We firmly believe if we can focus more on the interrelated and positive behavior space rather than the stove-piped and negative behaviors, the results will ensure the Navy can sustain a lethal warfighting force composed of sailors who are resilient, tough, and ethical. Ultimately, we will improve the trust and respect sailors have for each other, their commands, and the Navy as a whole. The plan focuses on the following lines of effort:

- *Develop Lethal Warfighting Force.* Ready Relevant Learning delivers the right training, at the right time, in the right manner, so that sailors are ready to operate and maintain their equipment at the extreme technical end of its capability to control the high end of maritime conflict.
- *Champion Signature Behaviors.* These ten behaviors support the proactive prevention of destructive behaviors by showing sailors what "right" looks like.
- *Counter Destructive Behaviors.* Destructive behaviors harm our sailors, impact our mission effectiveness, and contribute to unplanned losses. We are executing a campaign plan that unifies and aligns efforts to counter destructive behaviors.
- *Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI).* We actively include all perspectives and harness the creative power of diversity, accelerating Navy's warfighting advantage and lethality.
- *Governance, Analytics, Assessment & Strategic Communications:* We continuously evaluate the governance structure of our programs and strategic communications through Flag-level governance bodies, surveys, and working groups.

We actively address the interpersonal problems associated with suicide through updated policies, programs, campaigns, and training. Key initiatives include:

- Expanding the embedded Mental Health Program;
- Increasing deck-plate leadership through Expanded Operational Stress Control training led by Command Resilience Teams;
- Continuing to offer the Sailor Assistance and Intercept for Life (SAIL) program that provides rapid assistance, ongoing risk management, care coordination, and reintegration assistance for servicemembers identified with a suicide ideation or a suicide attempt; and
- Providing tailored Gatekeeper training to the key communities who tend to interact more often with sailors who are at a heightened risk for suicide.

Navy's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program reflects our force-wide commitment to prevention and that sexual assault is not tolerated, condoned, or ignored. In fiscal year 2020, Navy saw a three percent decrease in total reports from fiscal year 2019. We assess that COVID-19 and resulting response measures, including ROM, may have affected victim reporting. As long as there is a gap between prevalence and reports of sexual assault, work remains in understanding, pre-



venting, and responding to this destructive behavior. Our focus has increased toward metrics-based data to better understand where and why assaults occur, provide a more robust analytic capability, and ensure research-informed approaches to prevention programs and policies. We completed the second phase of the DOD-mandated Prevention Plan of Action, a comprehensive approach to understanding the current environment, determining the scope of the problem, and assessing organizational factors that drive prevention.

Navy's Harassment Prevention and Military Equal Opportunity program promotes an environment free from personal, social, or institutional barriers that prevent sailors from rising to the highest level of responsibility possible. The program promotes equal opportunity as being critical to mission accomplishment, unit cohesiveness, and military readiness. Commanders are required to complete a climate assessment within 90 days after change of command and every 9 to 12 months as follow-up assessments during their tenure.

Navy families are an integral part of our Navy team and a vital contributor to mission success. MyNavy HR is committed to delivering better services and support that are dedicated to the health and well-being of our families. We have worked diligently to ensure our families are provided service delivery options that are immediately accessible, whether in person, virtual or remote locations to include:

- Providing relevant, up-to-date services that keep families informed;
- Providing a service delivery model that meets families where they are;
- Bolstering our virtual capabilities to ensure our family support services are available, 24/7/365;
- Ensuring Navy families are aware of the robust programs and services that are available to them via marketing and education;
- Reimbursing spouse licensure fees incurred due to a permanent change of station (PCS) move for spouses with an average payment of \$369;
- Releasing and updating the MyNavy Family mobile application with input from spouses to identify, consolidate, and standardize information available into one authoritative source; and
- Refining pregnancy policies for our service women, ensuring consistency with professional opportunities, career milestones, and community specific achievements.

#### *Task Force One Navy*

Task Force One Navy (TF1N) was established in July 2020 to analyze and evaluate issues in our society and military that detract from Navy readiness, such as racism, sexism, and other structural and interpersonal biases. The task force was empowered to establish transparent approaches to disparities within the Navy. To achieve this initiative, TF1N leveraged the COE governance structure and its efforts to identify and begin the process of dismantling barriers to equity and inclusion while creating sustainable opportunities and ultimately achieving desired end-state of greater warfighting excellence. The leadership and membership of this task force represented a diversity of background, thought, experience, and perspectives.

The TF1N final report is organized around five specific lines of effort, four of which are each led by a flag officer with specific focus areas to include Recruiting; Talent Management/Retention; Professional Development; and Innovation, Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. There is also a miscellaneous line of effort with a series of recommendations addressing topics such as women's policy issues to naming of ships, buildings, and streets to create a series of additional recommendations. To analyze and evaluate these issues within each line of effort, TF1N:

- Participated in the DOD Board on Diversity and Inclusion to address DOD-wide issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion;
- Leveraged the experience of current and prior Navy leadership by engaging the current Flag Wardroom, Senior Executive Services (SES) Corps, and Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy's Senior Enlisted Leadership Mess as well as the retired Trusted Advisory Group comprising of 21 retired flag officers, SES, and Fleet Master Chief Petty Officers;
- Conducted listening sessions across the Navy with sailors and civilians in the Nation and overseas using consistent themes such as respect, skepticism, empathy, training, accountability, and silence of leadership;
- Conducted special engagements with the National Naval Officers Association, United States Naval Academy Minority Association, Sea Service Leadership Association, and Association of Naval Services Officers;
- Solicited voluntary inputs from a diverse cross-section of sailors by conducting more than 280 focus groups from across Navy;

- Created a Necessary Conversations Guide, a how-to-guide with messaging and tools for leaders to start productive dialogue about DEI topics; and
- Coordinated with the College of Leadership and Ethics at the Naval War College to present a summary of actions, selected problem statements, and key recommendations to the Intermediate Flag and Executive Course to collectively provide a peer review of insight and input directly to the TF1N Director.

In total, 56 recommendations and further areas of proposed study were established for consideration. To ensure these are executed, and enduring initiatives are reassessed and updated continuously, LOE stakeholders will continue to lead with accountability and measure the success of selected recommendations. As we transition to sustain the TF1N framework, leaders will continuously analyze our Navy systems, climate, and culture to ensure differences are valued and that diversity of thought within the organization is promoted. The newly embedded relationship between TF1N and the COE Campaign Plan will support the organization in institutionalizing DEI and further accelerating COE efforts.

Extremist behavior and beliefs are contrary to our values, and we have zero tolerance for it in our Navy. To reach our full potential, we must have an inclusive, respectful, professional fighting force ready to meet the challenges of long-term strategic competition. We expect sailors and our civilian employees to be guided in their actions by a professional ethic that prioritizes the team, the mission, and the Nation. The Navy's leadership plays a significant role in preventing extremism in the ranks, particularly in the creation and sustainment of command climates which discourage and hold accountable such behavior and promote a culture of respect, trust and, professionalism in the Navy. We are leveraging our leadership at the deckplate level to demonstrate accountability, provide standards of behavior, and carry the message that it is on every one of us in the Navy to expunge extremism from our ranks.

We increased our efforts through the Secretary of Defense directed Extremism Stand-Down, which was just one of many tools through which we strengthen the core of our Navy—our people and our core values of honor, courage, and commitment. The stand-down emphasized the meaning and importance of our oaths of office, signature behaviors, and that we must all strive to be inclusive, creating an environment where every individual understands that they are a valued member of the Navy team. We also ensured each sailor and civilian has no doubt that the corrosive behaviors addressed in the stand-down are contrary to our Navy's Culture of Excellence where diversity, equity, and inclusion enable our Navy's warfighting advantage.

#### OPTIMIZE TALENT MANAGEMENT

Having attracted the Nation's best talent, it is not sufficient to stop at developing our sailors for long term strategic competition. We must provide our sailors and families with a sailor-centric talent management system that provides greater career flexibility where they have an active role in career choice, development, training, and assignments. To achieve this, we expanded our Talent Marketplace, creating a modern, flexible and transparent assignment process that aligns the desires of the sailor, their skills, and opportunities for professional development and advancement with mission and operational needs. Enriching a sailor's career by providing exceptional service and improving the way in which they receive human resource services maintains our competitive edge to produce and retain warfighters and enhance readiness.

##### *Enlisted Talent Management*

Our enlisted retention attainment levels are above the forecasted levels in all reenlistment zones from the start of this fiscal year to date. The Navy's retention attainment is determined by both reenlistments and long-term extensions, characterized as 24 months or greater. While overall enlisted retention remains high, competition to retain talent in high-demand, low-density communities such as Nuclear Field, Cyber Warfare, Special Warfare/ Operations, Submarine, and certain aviation specialties remains challenging. These skills are difficult to attract and retain in any job and education market, requiring a proactive retention strategy that includes monetary and non-monetary incentives. Targeted special and incentive pays for high-demand operational ratings continues to be a vital retention tool while our expansion of the Meritorious Advancement Program has assisted in rewarding our top performers through spot advancement. In fiscal year 2021, Advancement-to-Position will continue to expand, incentivizing service in priority or hard-to-fill billets across the Fleet by advancing sailors who fill them to the next pay grade, delivering on-demand, continuous advancements.

As a direct result of the pandemic environment, Navy wide advancement examinations and selection boards were spread out over time to maximize social distancing, and E-4 examinations were cancelled, proving E-4 advancements can be executed without written examinations while also maintaining community health. This provided valuable lessons learned, as we modernize our advancement system. To ensure sailors who advance from E-3 to E-4 have the requisite knowledge, skills, and abilities for their rating, MyNavy HR is piloting the Occupational Advancement Requirement Standards (OARS), a tool that establishes the foundation for basic rating standards expected of an E-4 while providing sailors an opportunity to demonstrate and document knowledge retention and application to “real-world” experiences. While not a replacement for advancement examinations, OARS completion demonstrates the sailor has the knowledge and skillset required to perform as an E-4 in their particular rating.

Finally, MyNavy Assignment (MNA) has replaced the Career Management System-Interactive Detailing and delivers a modern interface and user-friendly experience for both the AC and RC. This initiative expands visibility into assignments and ready access to features such as the Sailor Resume, Job Bookmarking, and the Sailor Application Lifecycle Tracker, as well as enhanced Projected Rotation Date modification request routing and associated incentives for a particular assignment. At the close of last year, MNA began providing a Sailor Aviation Maintainer Experience (AMEX) data display and AMEX unit level data. This year, follow-on releases will enable the rating conversion process for AC and Full Time Support Sailors along with the ability for them to apply for their next assignment.

#### *Officer Talent Management*

MyNavy HR continues to utilize the expanded authorities of the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act provided by Congress to better attract and retain our talented officer corps. These significant force shaping tools include the “Up and Stay” construct, retaining control grade officers beyond statutory limitations, “opting out” of promotion boards, promotion merit reordering, and increased use of spot promotions.

Though most unrestricted line officers remain under the “Up and Out” model until separation, retirement, or lateral transfer, the “Up and Stay” construct permits officers with specialized skills to detour off of traditional career paths. They either remain longer in a specific technical or non-command billet, with limited upward mobility potential, or return at the same or higher pay grade, depending on skill and desires. For example, Professional Flight Instructors serve continuously as flight instructors beyond the department head milestone. This opportunity provides assignment stability for officers and their families, allowing complete focus on developing our newest aviators by supporting instructor manning.

Allowing certain control grade officers serving in targeted skills to remain on Active Duty beyond traditional statutory limits has been expanded to Acquisition Major Program Management positions and Naval and Defense Attachés. This capitalizes on their experience, which cannot be easily replaced or developed.

Promotion Board Consideration Deferment enables us to retain top talent by allowing an officer to “opt-out” of promotion consideration for one year to complete a broadening assignment, advanced education, or a career progression requirement delayed by one of these assignments. This allows officers to pursue highly coveted fellowships and scholarships without detriment to their careers.

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. We have utilized this authority during our fiscal year 2020 and fiscal year 2021 Active Duty promotion selection boards. Additionally, we have now expanded the use of this authority for our Navy Reserve promotion selection boards beginning with the fiscal year 2021 promotion cycle. Since fiscal year 2019, we have conducted semi-annual expanded spot promotion boards for O-4 and O-5 officers to promote to the next higher paygrade, filling shortfalls in critical skill positions with the requisite talent.

Specifically addressing warfare communities, Naval Aviation continues to face pilot retention shortfalls, which pose significant challenges to Fleet manning. Although overall inventory and accessions remain sufficient to meet operational requirements, we missed fiscal year 2021 pilot department head selection goals in nearly all platforms with declination rates on par with fiscal year 2020. The strike fighter community remains a priority concern with all squadrons facing officer manning deficits, and we are addressing these challenges through a number of monetary and non-monetary incentives.

Naval Special Warfare (NSW) officer continuation pay and retention bonuses were renewed in fiscal year 2020 to increase retention across milestone tours. Approval

of NSW Skill Incentive Pay (SKIP), in lieu of hazardous duty incentive pay, has reduced costs, decreased personnel tempo, and removed financial disincentives to seek early medical intervention for lingering injuries. Pay modernization initiatives like NSW SKIP will continue to enhance operational readiness, improve NSW's health and retain the highest caliber of performers.

The Submarine Force continues to have challenges meeting its department head retention goals, falling short of the target number for the previous six years (fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2020). This shortfall is being addressed through several monetary and non-monetary measures to ensure department head sea tours are maintained near nominal tour lengths. We recently completed a division officer survey and symposium and are working on several division officer identified initiatives to improve quality of service. A similar survey was completed by department heads with a symposium scheduled in 2021 to identify any further initiatives for the Submarine Force to take in order to improve quality of service and improve retention. Additionally, a tiered bonus structure was implemented at the start of fiscal year 2021 that incentivizes an earlier and longer commitment to service as well as continued service through all career milestones. Year Group (YG) 2016 and 2017 submarine officers, which are the most recent year groups able to commit to department head tours, have shown an increase in the initial number of contracts signed when compared to the previous five year groups.

The Surface Warfare Officer (SWO) Community faces challenges with department head retention. YG14 officers project to meet approximately 95 percent of the first tour department head demand, up from YG13 (93 percent) and YG12 (85 percent). However, there were significantly more YG14 accessions than YG12-13 accessions, yet YG15-18 accessions are lower compared to YG14 and will have an increasing department head demand. Shortfalls over several years have induced a deficit at O-4, where the SWO Community is approximately 100 officers short of the discrete Officer Programmed Authorization, leading to shortfalls in O-5 and O-6 production. SWO special and incentive pay adjustments are required to reduce these systemic shortfalls. The SWO (Nuclear) Community met department head retention requirements in fiscal year 2016 through fiscal year 2020 following several years of shortfalls. This change was the result of non-monetary incentives based on officer feedback.

The Reserve Officer force experienced parallel retention issues as the AC, as RC implemented similar monetary and non-monetary efforts to improve and maintain the health of the Reserve force. Overall, Reserve retention has remained consistent over the last year at healthy levels in most of the communities. However, shortfalls in aviation accession and retention were comparable to AC retention challenges. Bonus programs remain an essential tool for combating low retention, resulting in an overall increase in bonus acceptance rates and accessions as compared to fiscal year 2019. NSW and Medical communities are experiencing the greatest shortfalls. The Medical and NSW communities are comprised of critical wartime subspecialties in which incentive and special bonuses are offered to assist in recruiting and retaining in support of readiness and global force management requirements.

#### MYNAVY HR SERVICE DELIVERY

To support managing our talent, the Navy is in the middle of sweeping transformation by replacing decades' worth of unchanged processes and outdated technology with a modern, world-class personnel services delivery system. Although transformation on this scale takes time, we achieved critical milestones this past year, propelling us toward our future state vision. MyNavy HR transformation has fundamentally changed our approach to personnel processes, policies, and programs, shifting from a bureaucratic to a customer-centric mindset, as we focus on how the Navy, sailors and families will conduct human resource business in the future.

#### *Modernized Personnel and Pay Systems*

We continue to develop the Navy Personnel and Pay (NP2) system, an auditable, cloud-hosted software suite, enabling Treasury-Direct Disbursement and a single pay source for all sailors. NP2 is our highest transformation priority with an initial operating capability of January 2022. NP2 is key to Active and Reserve component permeability and our ability to smoothly perform a distributed mass mobilization and meet the timelines established in Combatant Commander war plans. The initial NP2 rollout began in 2019 with the launch of MyPCS Mobile, a Command Access Card (CAC)-free mobile access to PCS checklists, orders, travel vouchers, and entitlements calculators. It continued through October 2020 with releases of new travel processing capabilities, access to Reserve orders and travel claim processing, and a preview of MySailor Data, the future replacement of the Navy Standard Integrated Personnel System Electronic Service Record. Continued deployment of NP2 will see

the system integrated into the three Transaction Service Centers (TSCs) located in Norfolk, Memphis, and Great Lakes in addition to 12 Regional Support Centers, designed to support a broad base of customers in Fleet Concentration Areas.

TSC Memphis is responsible for 95 percent of all PCS travel claim processing and has enabled more effective internal control oversight, resulting in the highest travel pay audit rates in history. When faced with record-breaking travel claim volumes due to the COVID-19 stop movement order, TSC Memphis increased production capacity and targeted training and communication with Command Pay and Personnel Administrators in the Fleet. Responsible for Navy Reserve pay and personnel support, TSC Norfolk demonstrated a 100 percent success rate of mobilizing sailors with Active pay accounts and executed the first virtual mass mobilization of approximately 1,250 Reserve medical sailors in support of COVID-19 relief efforts, including hospital ships USNS *Mercy* and USNS *Comfort* and Expeditionary Medical Facility teams from Bethesda and Camp Pendleton. Other personnel and pay actions, like strength gains, are controlled by TSC Great Lakes, which is addressing issues with enlisted to officer pay record conversions, self-service emergency data and dependent applications, and other support.

#### *The Modern Sailor Experience*

In September 2019, MyNavy HR delivered the MyPCS Mobile application, a component of NP2, providing sailors access to PCS-related information and resources using their personal mobile devices with commercial grade multi-factor authentication. Including a tailored checklist, the ability to apply for government housing and childcare, sailors can view orders on their mobile device, and the ability to submit PCS travel vouchers electronically from their mobile device with an electronic signature, significantly improves the PCS experience for our sailors and their families. Legacy travel claims experience 20 to 40 percent rejection rates, yet claims submitted through MyPCS have experienced a zero percent rejection rate as this sailor-facing application prevents the member from submitting an incomplete or incorrectly filed claim.

MyNavy Portal (MNP) is a Single Point of Entry for Sailors to access human resource services and personal data with an interface available to the public, a smartcard-enabled secure private site for sailors, and mobile CAC-free web-browser capability. Over the past year, MNP added the capability for sailors to establish a CAC-free MyNavy HR account using commercial-off-the-shelf multi-factor authentication. This significant accomplishment enables sailors to access their personnel data, submit leave requests, review physical fitness reports, submit travel claims to MyNavy Career Center (MNCC), and complete other career-related tasks.

Mobile applications (App) continue to improve sailor's access to important information regarding issues ranging from uniform requirements, training courses, and financial information. To date, we have created more than 28 Apps, improving the sailor and family customer experience. Some recent accomplishments include:

- Rapidly adding COVID-19 links to the MyNavy Family App that provided access to resource and blog information, as well as capabilities to effectively communicate during any potential future crisis,
- Adding policy alerts to the MyNavy UNIFORMS App that include guidance and graphics for face coverings, temporarily relaxed hair grooming standards, and guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on making face coverings at home,
- Providing monthly updates to Navy Credentialing Opportunities On-Line to support sailors making enlistment decisions, roadmaps to career advancement and retention, in-Service civilian and industry certification and licensing opportunities, and insights into prospective occupations during the eventual transition from the Navy back to the civilian workforce,
- Improving the Professional Military Knowledge—Enlisted Education App by updating E-4, E-5, E-6, and E-7 examination support for Active and Reserve sailors, so they can prepare for these exams at their convenience,
- Adding several new courses to the MyNavy Financial Literacy App to help sailors achieve their personnel financial goals, and
- Creating the Navy Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) App to aid sailors and their families with medical, mental health, and educational needs by providing essential EFMP information to help their family members thrive.

#### *MyNavy Career Center*

For over two years, the MNCC has served as the human resources services delivery operating model for the Navy, and during this time, we have established two 24/7 contact centers, providing the first level of support to sailors and command representatives related to pay and personnel issues. Using leading edge, integrated

commercial capabilities and a world-class telephony system, MNCC captures every customer encounter. When required, it escalates customer concerns for subject matter expert action while maintaining centralized tracking in three locations. MNCC has successfully processed over one million service requests, averaging an overall 87 percent resolution rate within three days and proved to be a “just in time” asset when the COVID-19 pandemic impacted our sailors and families. The challenges of the pandemic demonstrated the positive impact of the MNCC by quickly responding to sailor and family needs, adapting our human resource processes to this dynamic situation, and keeping our sailors informed about issues directly affecting them and their families.

#### *Delivering Modern Analytics*

Capitalizing upon advances in data analytics, MyNavy HR is modernizing our data-driven decision-making for our internal and external stakeholders. A central pillar of our strategy is the development of an Authoritative Data Environment (ADE). This will reduce duplication across disparate data sources preventing contradictions in analysis, facilitating an environment in which decisions are made using timely, accurate data, and leading to automation of human resource functions. Within ADE, analysts and data management staff have access to a wide range of authoritative data assets spanning core human resource functions such as personnel records, personnel assignments, and manpower requirements. These “authoritative” data sets are updated each month with data reaching back to 2020. In the future, additional data sets will allow us to expand our time horizon to past years, enabling analysts and decision-makers to focus primarily on actual decision making vice exhausting time to make data usable. Additionally, these modernizations will lead to better quality performance modeling and advanced analytics including predictive capabilities.

#### OPERATIONAL READINESS

MyNavy HR continues to focus our energy on ensuring the Fleet is properly manned, with the right sailors, in the right place, at the right time, with the right training. All of our efforts to attract, develop, and manage our sailors ensure we build a Navy that can fight and win in long term strategic competition and maintain our Advantage at Sea.

#### *End Strength*

Navy requests funding to sustain our Active Duty end strength, fund special and incentive pays, increase operational manning, invest in the education of our sailors, and modernize the Navy to fight and win in long-term strategic competition. Successfully mitigating for the pandemic, we concluded fiscal year 2020 with 346,520 sailors, or 6,020 above authorized end strength, positioning us well to achieve the fiscal year 2021 authorized end strength of 347,800.

#### *Fleet Readiness and Increasing Fleet Manning*

The number of sailors on operational sea duty is at the highest level since 2014, and we project this trend into fiscal year 2022 and beyond. More than 137,000 sailors have been at sea since May 2020, with a high of 137,588 sailors manning 275 operational units at the start of fiscal year 2021, an increase of 5,000 sailors compared to a low point in October 2015. One of the most significant effects on Fleet manning was the fielding of the MNA platform for enlisted detailing, which added transparency, functionality, and a user-friendly interface for sailors. It also serves as the core for a larger detailing marketplace that encompasses multiple career management functions, including incentive management, reenlistment decisions, skills identification, and career planning.

To improve unit readiness and lethality, we increased sailors onboard our operational platforms. For example, a guided missile destroyer (DDG), the Navy’s most numerous ship class, averaged 25 more sailors on board in fiscal year 2020 compared to fiscal year 2012. To ensure the Fleet is efficiently manned as requirements increase, MyNavy HR has adopted the Performance-to-Plan (P2P) framework. P2P identifies areas for improvement, which will provide the highest return on investment, to effectively communicate to leadership identified barriers and strategies for their removal and to foster collaboration across the various stakeholders within the enterprise.

#### CONCLUSION

To secure our advantage at sea, we will attract, develop, and manage our sailors and leaders to build a Navy that will fight and win in long-term strategic competition. Through our optimization of talent management, MyNavy HR will achieve tal-

ent acquisition excellence, provide sailor-centric initiatives, and reshape the Navy into a leader of diversity, equity, and inclusion. By modernizing the sailor experience and exemplifying the Culture of Excellence, we will provide exceptional service to our sailors and families, and we are actively engaging, elevating, and inspiring all personnel to be their best by leveraging our diversity of talent and people. Finally, we will continue to transform the MyNavy HR enterprise to improve analytics, rapidly adopt new tools and processes, provide transparency, and maintain healthy climates and cultures. Through these endeavors, we will fight and win with the strength of our greatest asset, our people. I look forward to working with you to support our sailors who will win any fight and be ready for any challenges in the future. On behalf of the men and women of the United States Navy, thank you for your unwavering support.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Lieutenant General Kelly.

**STATEMENT OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL BRIAN T. KELLY,  
USAF, DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF FOR MANPOWER, PER-  
SONNEL AND SERVICES**

Lieutenant General KELLY. I think it is on now.

Chairwoman Gillibrand, Ranking Member Tillis, distinguished members of this subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to talk about our airmen and families. I am honored to appear here today with my fellow service personnel chiefs, and I am particularly proud to be here for the first time with my Department of the Air Force Partner, Ms. Pat Mulcahy, who is here representing the U.S. Space Force. The U.S. Space Force was purposely built as an agile and operationally focused service with the United States Air Force providing much of the support for guardians and their families. As such, many of the programs we may discuss today are applicable to both airmen and guardians.

As the Air Force Chief of Staff has articulated, our national security challenges are growing at a rapid pace, and it is clear our Air Force must accelerate the changes we need to successfully meet those challenges or face losing. We are fully focused on this imperative and recognize that our airmen and their families for the essential foundation for our ability to meet those future challenges. As such, it is essential that we also accelerate the creation of the environment, development, and talent management systems needed to unlock our airmen's ability to reach their full potential. We know success squarely depends on our airmen and on them having the ability to operate in a safe and inclusive environment where they can be the best airmen they can possibly be.

If the past year has taught us anything, it is that the world is full of uncertainty. COVID-19 changed the way we work and live, but our mission could not and did not stop. We were forced to accelerate change to meet the challenges of personnel permanent change-of-station moves, recruiting, retention, and increased care needs for our families who have been hit hard by school impacts, child care, and increased demands at home.

As we work through COVID-19, the year continued to bring critical issues to light. The death of George Floyd and the release of the Protect our Defenders report on Air Force military justice and development inequities sparked a renewed focus on the barriers minority groups face within our service. The events at Fort Hood and our own Airman Aposhian case reminded us we must explore new ideas and accelerate our efforts to eradicate sexual assault and

forms of interpersonal violence from our ranks. The events of January 6th took us by surprise, revealing a potential challenge in creating the environment we require for our airmen.

Despite these challenges, the Air Force continues to accomplish our assigned missions and our airmen continue to shine.

Over the last 12 to 14 months, the Department of the Air Force independently launched our own Racial Disparity Review, an Interpersonal Violence Task Force, and a Resiliency Task Force. These major initiatives focused on identifying areas of immediate concern for the well-being and development of our airmen, while producing fresh solutions and strategies to build a culture of connectedness and trust.

The Department recognizes, despite strong efforts over many years, we have not made significant, measurable progress in preventing or reducing the number of sexual assault cases. We remain committed to being persistent in our efforts to combat sexual assault in the ranks and are 100 percent open to using any research or data-informed prevention strategies that can prove effective in helping us reduce and eventually eliminate sexual assault.

In response to the Department of Defense's concerning suicide trends, the Air Force established five prevention priorities which nest within the prevention strategies established by the Centers for Disease Control. Our work has shown that relationship issues are a top-tier factor, as well as personal firearms as the primary means, and we have taken measure to address both. Recognizing a resilient environment for our families is also important. We made significant adjustments and what we believe are major improvements to the Exceptional Family Member Program, and have strengthened our efforts to manage our child care programs more effectively while increasing capacity within the system. The Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP), in particular, has made major strides in providing accessible information for our families and greatly increases the positive nature of the experience that they get when navigating permanent change of stations, legal hurdles with school accommodation, and medical care.

In conclusion, resilient airmen are our competitive advantage and they deserve nothing less than our best. Though we have made progress, the Air Force still has work to do before we have an environment that allows all airmen and their families to reach their full potential. We continue to pursue every practical solution that moves us closer to making this environment a reality, and we look forward to continuing to partner with the Congress in our endeavors to do so.

I thank you for your continued support of the Department of the Air Force and your airmen, both military and civilian, and the families that support them. Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Lieutenant General Brian T. Kelly follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY LIEUTENANT GENERAL BRIAN T. KELLY

#### INTRODUCTION

Chairwoman Gillibrand, Ranking Member Tillis, Distinguished Members of this Committee, thank you for your continued support and for the opportunity to appear



before this committee. America's Air and Space professionals remain steadfast in providing Global Vigilance, Reach, and Power to protect and defend our Nation.

As the Air Force Chief of Staff has articulated, the Nation's national security challenges as outlined in the National Defense Strategy are growing at a rapid pace and it is clear our Air Force must accelerate the changes needed to successfully meet those challenges or face losing. We as an Air Force are fully focused on this imperative and recognize our airmen and their families form the essential foundation for our ability to change and meet those future challenges. As such, it's essential we also accelerate the creation of the environment, development, and talent management systems needed to ensure we can unlock our airmen's ability to reach their full potential. Even with world class equipment and training we know success squarely depends on the skills and resilience of our airmen and on them having the ability to operate in a safe and inclusive environment that allows them to be the best airman they can possibly be.

If the past year has taught us anything, it's that the world is still full of uncertainty and it is imperative our Air and Space Forces and their families remain ready and resilient at all times. COVID-19 has changed the way we work and live, forcing us to address challenges with Permanent Change of Station moves, recruiting and production, unforeseen retention impacts, Basic Military Training capacity, and increased care needs for our families who have all been hit hard by COVID-driven impacts to school, childcare, work-life balance, and increased demands at home. As we continued to work through mitigation of these COVID-19 concerns, other events over the year brought new and significant topics to the forefront, causing us to take a hard look at ourselves and double our efforts to ensure every airman has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

The death of George Floyd sparked a renewed focus on the barriers minority groups face within our force. The death of Army Specialist Vanessa Guillen at Ft Hood Texas, as well as our own Airman First Class Natasha Aposhian, reminded us we must double down, explore new ideas, and accelerate our efforts to eradicate sexual assault and other forms of interpersonal violence from our ranks. As we turned the calendar into 2021, the January 6th events at our Nation's capital revealed yet another potential blind spot that can act as a derailer to creating our desired environment—extremist ideologies that exists both inside and outside our forces. Needless to say, it was an eventful year that added challenges to the high operations tempo of our forces, both home and abroad, and increased demand for military medical personnel to support our national civil response to COVID-19.

Despite the challenges presented over the past year, the Air Force continues to accomplish our assigned missions and our airmen continue to shine. We are prioritizing and accelerating our ability to optimize airmen and family performance. We are developing the Air Force we need to defend our Nation and managing the talent we have to help unleash the full power of the world's greatest Air Force.

It should also be noted the United States Air Force continues to provide much of the member and family support efforts for the overall Department, including the newest military service, the United States Space Force. In discussing all of our support and family related programs, we are providing support to both airmen and guardians. This approach allows the Space Force to remain a lean, operational-focused service. We are also operating under a single military and civilian personnel appropriation and a common authorized end strength although we internally manage end strength between the services, with plans to separate both authorization and appropriations in 2023.

#### HELPING AIRMEN REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL

Our airmen, guardians and families are our greatest advantage. Keeping them first allows our mission capabilities to be limitless. Over the last 12–14 months the Department of the Air Force sharpened its focus on providing the absolute best care for our airmen and their families, while taking all steps necessary to create an environment where every airman can reach their full potential. The Air Force launched two major initiatives in 2020—the Racial Disparity Review and an Interpersonal Violence Task Force—both focused on identifying areas of immediate concern for the well-being and development of our airmen.

##### *Racial Disparity Review*

Following the death of George Floyd and the ensuing protests in the summer of 2020, and the PODs report on justice disparities the Secretary of the Air Force launched a Racial Disparity Review to get an independent assessment of racial disparity in military discipline, personnel development, and career opportunities as they pertain to black/African American airmen and guardians. This scope has since been expanded to include other minority groups and a second survey and data col-

lection effort was launched to look at potential disparities across gender and ethnicity lines as well.

Findings from the initial review were released in December 2020 and confirmed we still have much work to do to address disparities in a number of key policy areas. The review validated 16 disparities for black/African American airmen and guardians in areas such as military justice/discipline, apprehensions, investigations, promotions, developmental opportunities, senior leader representation for military and civilians, trust in chain of command, trust in Equal Employment office actions and others. According to the report, the data does not address why racial disparities exist in these areas, and that while the data show race is a correlating factor, it does not necessarily indicate causality.

Disciplined and detailed root-cause analysis is underway for each finding. This analysis includes identifying mitigation actions to address each root-cause with associated measurements and metrics designed to track progress for each implemented action. Some actions and measures produce early visible results, while others require longer term longitudinal reviews to observe improvements over time. We will monitor implementation to ensure these disparities are removed to the fullest extent possible and provide assurance to all of members that the Department of the Air Force is a place where they are valued and provided with every opportunity to succeed.

#### *Interpersonal Violence Task Force*

Interpersonal violence of all types is counter to Department of the Air Force 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. In July 2020, following incidents at Fort Hood and within the Air Force, the Department of the Air Force established an Interpersonal Violence Task Force focused on our ability to keep airmen safe when they had identified ongoing harassment, bullying, or hazing type activities. While we have programs that respond and support victims of sexual assault and have a variety of prevention efforts, we were concerned we did not cover the space in between these events where our airmen were already unfortunately enduring some type of negative behavior. We wanted to understand this space better and understand our ability to identify these airmen and keep them safe. To do this we garnered feedback from more than 68,000 airmen—both military and civilian—using a total force survey and individual sensing sessions about multiple types of interpersonal violence, including sexual assault. Out of this Task Force, focus groups were formed to look deeper into issues respondents witnessed. Currently, the Task Force is analyzing those responses and we expect a final report in late May 2021.

#### *Combatting Sexual Assault*

Sexual assault is a crime and its impact undermines our force lethality, readiness, and mission success. The Department of the Air Force recognizes, despite strong efforts over many years, that we have not made significant, measurable progress in preventing or reducing the prevalence of sexual assault. As a result, we remain focused and persistent in our efforts to combat sexual assault in the ranks using effective, research-informed prevention strategies and ensuring comprehensive support and response for sexual assault victims.

Sexual assault reporting across the Department of the Air Force has steadily increased since 2010, jumping from 1,271 in fiscal year 2018 to 1,388 in fiscal year 2019, from servicemembers for incidents that occurred during military service. This increase in reporting is concerning—every sexual assault is deeply troubling. There is also a positive aspect to increased reporting as it's an indication that more victims of sexual assault are willing to come forward to receive care and aid efforts to hold alleged perpetrators accountable. Another concern is the increase in prevalence of sexual assaults and the increasing gap between reporting levels and prevalence levels. This gap was closing from 2012–2016 when it again began to diverge to include a large increase in estimated prevalence in 2018. Examining our most current data, the Department of the Air Force sexual assault prevalence numbers increased aligning with Department of Defense patterns. From 2016 to 2018, prevalence among women increased from 2.8 percent to 4.3 percent. Rates among men remained relatively low, but still increased slightly .3 percent to .5 percent. The Department of Defense experienced an increase in prevalence for women and men, rising from 4.3 percent to 6.2 percent and .6 percent to .7 percent respectively. Each of these rises also created a greater gap between reported prevalence and the actual number of reports we received. We want our environment and trust in the system to drive reporting and prevalence to match each other where we then drive both indicators toward zero.

Our Air Force Academy sexual assault reporting was consistent from academic year (AY) 2016–2017 to 2017–2018 with 23 reports each year involving actively-enrolled cadets as either the victim or the subject, but rose to 40 reports in AY 2018–2019 and 41 reports AY 2019–2020. We have yet to attribute any causality to this increase, but the initiation of the “Teal Ropes” Cadet program and a “Safe To Report” policy change have been linked to reducing barriers to reporting. We continue efforts to monitor and reduce incidents across the force to include the Air Force Academy.

Our overall Department of the Air Force strategy is focused on prevention, response, and accountability. Our sexual assault prevention framework includes assessment tools for identifying and screening out those at high risk for unethical behavior, addressing key sexual assault risk factors with long-term goals focused on equipping leaders at all levels, Wingmen intervention skills, and promoting positive unit culture to eradicate sexual assault.

We have several ongoing training initiatives leading our prevention efforts. The Sexual Communication and Consent (SCC) Program, an innovative, evidence-informed sexual assault prevention training developed specifically for delivery during Basic Military Training includes both universal and tailored content. Over 8,000 trainees went through the SCC Program Pilot between September 2019 and April 2020. After the training the trainees had increased knowledge of sexual assault (4.4 percent), knowledge of consent (1.8 percent), and self-efficacy to resist sexual assault (6.8 percent) along with decreases in date rape myth attitudes (-4.2 percent), dating risk behaviors (-3.9 percent), and social risk behaviors (-4.5 percent). The Air Force Academy is building on these Basic Military Training efforts and will initiate a three-year pilot study beginning with the incoming class of 2025. The Department of the Air Force also requires annual, Air Force-wide training consisting of three components: Bystander Intervention Training, Wingman Intervention Training, and Total Force Sexual Assault and Prevention Training. Bystander Intervention Training provides foundational concepts of safe and desired bystander behavior to all airmen and guardians across the total force. Wingman Intervention Training in Technical School and at the First Term Airman Center targets the most at risk age group population for sexual assault. The Total Force Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Training is refreshed annually to ensure continual engagement of this critical issue.

As part of the Department of the Air Force’s response programs, we have established 92 dedicated, installation-level, prevention experts with direct access to command leadership charged with targeting local risk factors based upon collected data to implement tailored prevention strategies at the tactical level. We have Sexual Assault Response Coordinators, Special Victim Advocates, restricted and unrestricted reporting processes, and medical care for victims. We are also an active participant in the Department of Defense’s Catch a Serial Offender program to identify serial offenders via anonymous reporting of sexual assault. As of February 2021, we have 13 of the 24 Department of Defense matches of offenders, with a total of 599 Department of Defense entries from victims.

We expanded our accountability programs, implementing the Sexual Assault Accountability and Investigation Task Force’s recommendations to enhance collaboration among legal offices, military criminal investigators, and circuit trial counsel for investigations of sexual assault, domestic violence and child abuse from investigation through the termination of trial proceedings if applicable. Moreover, we continue to train and educate commanders as well as update policies to enhance victim notification, consultation and input during the military justice process.

Finally, the Department of the Air Force is also exploring the potential of an Air Force Compatibility Assessment designed to assess the risk of disciplinary and counterproductive workplace behaviors in potential recruits that might negatively impact well-being, morale and mission effectiveness. As is common practice in industry, we are looking to ensure those we recruit are not only medically and physically qualified to join, but are also compatible with serving.

#### *Suicide Prevention*

Department of the Air Force Active Duty suicide rates were stable from 2015 to 2018, increasing in 2019. In 2019, the Department of Defense Active Duty suicide rate was 25.9 per 100,000; and the Department of the Air Force suicide rate was 25.1 per 100,000. In response, in the Fall of 2019 the Air Force conducted a Resilience Tactical Pause to help the force focus on small group discussions and sessions designed to identify ways to help prevent suicides. The Department will release official suicide counts and rates for CY 2020 this fall.

In the spring of 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic began to heighten, we implemented a COVID playbook and provided tools and lessons from the previous tac-

tical pause to help maintain social connections during a time of physical distancing. The new tools included our first ever training for family members. This training provides greater awareness about resources and programs available and equips family members to identify warning signs and act as another sensor in our detection and prevention methods. Since implementation, more than 4,785 family members have connected to the site and taken the training. While early and unofficial, our suicide rates to date in 2021 are back at pre-2018 levels.

The largest demographic of Department of the Air Force suicides last year were single men, between the ages of 23–30, and in the rank of E1–E4, who used a firearm as means of death. Leading stressors associated with suicide seem to remain stable over time. Relationship issues are the leading stressor associated with suicide deaths, approximately 40 percent of suicide deaths are preceded by significant relationship problems or failure. An estimated 20–30 percent of airmen and guardians who died by suicide were experiencing two or more stressors. Another 40 percent who die by suicide have no apparent risk factors.

Personally-owned firearms are the most common means of suicide deaths by far. Since 2015, personally-owned firearms are involved in over 70 percent of Department of the Air Force suicide deaths. Over 90 percent of Department of the Air Force suicides occur in the continental United States. Continuing the “Go SLO (Safes, Locks, or Outside the home)” campaign will help build a culture where safe storage is commonplace, reducing immediacy of access to firearms for those in distress and preventing firearm accidents for Air and Space families. Between 2020 and 2021, we distributed 202,000 gun locks along with educational and training materials on safe storage options.

To combat suicide trends, the Department of the Air Force has established five prevention priorities for 2021, all of which nest within the prevention strategies established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Building Connections, Detecting Risk, Promoting Protective Environments, and Equipping our Airmen and their Families to mitigate risk and build resilience. The first priority is Leadership Development that provides our leaders with the information, tools, and resources necessary to combat suicide. We are challenging leaders to build unit connection and purpose. Our second prevention priority is improving and increasing our communications and marketing messaging about resilience and prevention tools and resources.

Our third priority is focusing on time-based prevention; increasing safe storage by encouraging “going SLO” and building time and space between personnel in distress and access to lethal means, helping to prevent accidents. Our fourth priority is empowering and equipping families. We will continue our efforts to engage and equip spouses and family members in resilience and prevention activities. Lastly, we want to evaluate our efforts, assessing implementation and effectiveness of all major resilience and prevention efforts in order to drive program improvements. These priorities are based on program self-assessment results, suicide analysis board results, and latest research within a continuous process improvement framework.

The Department of the Air Force’s True North program continues to support mission readiness by providing commanders resources and guidance to empower assigned personnel to seek assistance from embedded Mental Health providers and Religious Support Teams. Access to mental and religious support teams within a unit is designed to build trust and confidence in help-seeking actions for unit members. Under the True North initiative, mental and spiritual support teams are being embedded in squadrons and groups at 16 installations determined as having the highest need based on tracked negative outcomes over the last five years. These additional support teams should positively influence Airman and family well-being, increasing resilience, and decreasing negative outcomes such as suicide, sexual assault, domestic violence, workplace violence and child maltreatment as well as improve mission readiness and optimize human performance.

### *Resiliency*

The Department of the Air Force has 32 agencies providing Resiliency services to help our members and their families thrive in both their personal and professional lives. These resiliency resources, that are available to help with physical, mental, social, and spiritual needs, include the Chaplain Corps, Mental Health, Airman & Family Readiness Centers, Employee Assistance Program, Deployment Transition Center, Wingman Connect, Sexual Assault Response Coordinators and Morale, Welfare and Recreation Programs. The Air Force is committed to forming solid partnerships with supporting organizations based on individual installation needs and expanding support options to bolster all pillars of resilience for our airmen, guardians and their families.

Although the Department of the Air Force has a large number of agencies providing resiliency services, these offerings are often not connected, making it more difficult for members and their families to get the continuum of care needed quickly. Recently, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force and the Chief of Space Operations chartered a Resiliency Task Force, to perform a top-to-bottom review of current Department of the Air Force Resiliency Programs and develop a new robust, consolidated Resilience Strategy which creates new, or expands existing support and develops sustainable resource and action plans. We are excited about the work this Task Force is doing and hope to improve resiliency for all airmen, guardians, and their families.

#### *Family Care*

The Department of the Air Force remains committed to continued strengthening of our Exceptional Family Member Program further through resourcing, automation and standardization for case management, respite care policy, assignment coordination, education and legal assistance support. Today, there are more than 55,000 family members enrolled in our Exceptional Family Member Program and over 36,000 total force members coded as sponsors. The Air Force identified this program as a key priority and retained a transformation expert from private industry to work full time on program improvements.

#### *Exceptional Family Member Programs*

The Department of the Air Force conducted a rapid improvement event in February 2020 utilizing family feedback to identify problem areas and create solutions focused on improving transparency, automation and communication, resulting in a new “one stop shop” division located at the Air Force Personnel Center. This Exceptional Family Member Program Central Cell integrates multi-disciplinary support subject matter experts in medical, assignments, special education, and legal matters with both a special education attorney and a special education specialist provided to assist our families and school liaisons. Additionally, we added a TRICARE Liaison, Respite Care Coordinator and additional medical and assignment personnel to better facilitate centralized travel screening.

Through the newly launched DAF Family Vector website, the Exceptional Family Member Program cell provides a two-year historical review of travel recommendations by location and specialty, providing families greater visibility of potential duty locations that meet individual family needs. DAF Family Vector provides resources on medical, moving, special education, respite care, frequently asked questions and contact information for the central cell and local base resources and is available without the need for a Common Access Card.

The Department of the Air Force continues to improve Exceptional Family Member Program families’ access to support for their special needs family members. Presently, 105 Airman & Family Readiness Center Exceptional Family Member Program Family Support Coordinators are spread across 78 installations, working to enhance the quality of life of special needs families. Continuing our commitment to strengthening Exceptional Family Member Program support capabilities, 15 DAF attorneys attended a formal, five-day structured Special Education Course along with providing Special Education law training to 197 school liaisons, Family Support Coordinators and Headquarters staff.

The Department of the Air Force also stood up two Developmental and Behavioral Health Family Readiness Centers with pediatric development and psychological clinicians targeting smaller and remote bases through telehealth, teleconsultation and provider travel.

Working through the pandemic, we maintained a connection with our families by hosting several Facebook broadcasts to provide updates on current and upcoming initiatives as well as fostered open communication with families on their needs and concerns. In partnership with our sister services, we held a Respite Care Rapid Improvement Event in late 2020 to identify problems, implement meaningful solutions, and benchmark and utilize sister service best practices to assist with the National Defense Authorization Act 2021 requirement for standardized of respite care services.

Family member feedback is key. We continue communication with families via social media platforms and local outreach efforts. The Exceptional Family Member Program Facebook page has 8,000+ followers and over one million views, to date. The Department of the Air Force is committed to continuing efforts at to strengthen the program and to balance family needs with career progression and mission requirements.

*Child and Youth Programs (CYP)*

Available, affordable, quality child care programs support families and enable our members to focus on the mission. In fiscal year 2020, the Department of the Air Force provided child care for over 39,400 children at installation child development programs. However, at some installations, the local demand for this type of care exceeds program capacity making alternative sources of care instrumental in meeting the needs of airmen and guardians. Our network of Family Child Care homes and providers offer additional care solutions and community-based fee assistance helps support families on a wait list for on-base care or not living near an installation. In fiscal year 2020, 5,199 children were served through the Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood fee assistance program.

The Coronavirus pandemic negatively impacted unmet demand and the wait time for on base child care due to local health conditions, availability of staff, quarantine requirements, and social/physical distancing guidelines. The pandemic challenges illustrated that we must find innovative ways to expand capacity and improve access to child care for airmen and guardians in addition to advocating for resources to fund child care facility requirements. As of the beginning of April 2021, 3,909 children five years of age and under had an unmet child care need with more than half of these children located at ten of 74 installations. The average wait time to satisfy the demand was 153 days.

While we are working to accommodate all child care needs, it's important to recognize the full nature of what is represented by the 3,909 children with unmet demand. These are requests for on-base child care, meaning location in either an on-base Child Development Center or an on-base Family Child Care home. Many of the 3,909 have alternative child care available and in use, to include those matched through Air Force subsidized care via the Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood (MCCYN) fee assistance program. Many families prefer to have child care on-base and sign up for it by identifying a date care is needed. While that request shows up as unmet demand, it is not always accurate nor does it imply there are 3,909 children who do not have any child care. Based on new data collection being done during sign-up and requests, there are 284 children being serviced temporarily via a military childcare facility and 208 serviced temporarily through a community-based child care provider via MCCYN. This leaves 3,417 children without an alternative Air Force-facilitated child care solution while on the wait list. This is the capacity shortfall number we particularly focus on in our various efforts. It includes 1,419 children cared for at home with a parent; 672 in the care of family, friends, or a nanny; and 576 in a family-identified community based childcare program. 750 of the 3,417 indicated they cannot find a childcare alternative or did not indicate how their child would be cared for while on the wait list. The Air Force is making every effort to reduce the unmet demand and provide childcare to those who need it.

The Department addressed the availability and delivery of Child and Youth Programs with targeted efforts to maximize child care options, expand child care capacity, and leverage customer feedback in determining emerging and ongoing needs. We developed a robust communication strategy with online resources that educates supervisors and family members about available care solution options and how to access them. To increase child care options and spaces, we developed targeted recruitment and retention incentives for Family Child Care providers that were implemented at 68 installations from September to November 2020. Although the COVID-19 environment challenged our ability to increase the number of Family Child Care homes, we have been able to retain an average of 300 homes to support hourly and full-time care, 24/7 child care, and other specialized care for our Air and Space families.

Improvements in human resources processes have positively impacted Child and Youth Programs by reducing on-boarding time and facilitating employee transfers. The utilization of the Direct Hiring Authority has continued to positively impact the on-boarding process for appropriated child care staff members, decreasing time required to on-board new appropriated fund staff members by 120 days. To retain trained staff, we implemented a non-appropriated fund employee transfer assistance program that enables transfer of employment from one Department of the Air Force location to another, eliminating the requirement to apply for employment after a relocation.

Seven minor construction expansion projects are currently in the planning process. In addition, the Department of the Air Force is applying funding to the planning and design of child development center construction projects that address child care capacity shortfalls; five projects are currently postured for execution when funds become available.

### *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 a military spouse's ability to achieve their own career goals and aspirations, often leading to reduced employment opportunities or underemployment. The Department of Defense and Department of the Air Force spouse employment programs provide a robust system of support to help military spouses find meaningful employment and connect with available resources. The Department of the Air Force continues to engage with states on improving spouse employment opportunities and advocating for improved professional license portability or pursuing interstate compacts. In 2020, the Department of the Air Force released results of the "Supporting our Military Families" initiative which assesses each state's efforts to support military spouse licensure portability and links military quality of life factors to the strategic basing process. This initiative shifts the strategy from expediting individual state licensing through legislation to encouraging a "universal approach" to licensing and interstate compacts. Results show positive trends, driving many states to look for ways to remove barriers and make portability easier for military spouses. Additionally, the Department of the Air Force reimburses up to \$1000 for re-licensing/re-certification costs resulting from a Permanent Change of Station move for spouses of military members.

The Department of the Air Force utilizes several approaches to recruit and appoint military spouses. The non-competitive military spouse appointment authority has provided the Air Force with the ability to hire approximately 1,800 military spouses from fiscal year 2019 to March 2021. This authority is one of many authorities by which a military spouse could be employed with. Additionally, the Department of Defense Military Spouse Preference program provides federal employment hiring preference for spouses relocating due to a military member's Permanent Change of Station move. Spouses exercise their preference by applying for job vacancy announcements of their choosing. Spouses who are best qualified may be appointed to a federal position over non-military spouse candidates. Employment may be permanent, temporary or term limited. Additionally, the Department of Defense has authorized a pilot program at some foreign overseas locations to permit spouses to exercise their authority up to 30 days in advance of their arrival in order to further increase their opportunity to obtain employment. The Department of the Air Force launched the 18-month pilot in February 2021.

The Department of the Air Force is fully engaged in ensuring our members and their families have awareness and access to care solutions through a Care Solutions Communication Plan. Maximizing awareness and effectiveness of the support available are driving objectives of the plan. We remain engaged at all levels to communicate and deliver Care Solutions that help airmen, guardians and their families reach maximum performance potential.

### THE FORCE WE NEED

As the world around us continues to inject uncertainty and rapid change, the Air Force is focused on maintaining readiness today while building the Air Force we need for tomorrow's high-end fight. A fresh look at the foundational competencies and skills we will need to deter and defeat our pacing threats show us that we are on track. We are appreciative for your support and realize that continued Congressional support is paramount as we seek to balance tight fiscal demands with an increasing appetite for digitization and force modernization. Our end strength targets reflect this balancing act and ensure a minimal viable force to compete and win in the high-end fight, both today and tomorrow.

### *End Strength*

We have successfully increased the size of the force by 26,000 since a low in 2015 of 485,000, bringing us into alignment with the objectives outlined in the 2018 National Defense Strategy. Increased retention since March 2020, largely due to COVID-19, helped the Department meet and exceed fiscal year 2020 end strength targets. This retention trend continued into fiscal year 2021 and has put the Department in position to exceed fiscal year 2021 authorized end strength levels. High retention is a great indicator of the value our airmen place on serving and ensures we maintain the experience we need to face tomorrow's challenges. Despite this positive outcome, we are monitoring retention trends closely to see how a post-COVID environment impacts our airmen's decisions to stay or leave and to ensure we have plenty of room in our allowed force size to continue to recruit and access fresh talent that will sustain us into the future. We will continue to monitor these trends throughout the year and take prudent steps to maintain readiness and con-

tinue to provide our airmen with flexible voluntary force management options, as needed.

Our small military end strength growth includes the establishment of the USSF as a service and balances USAF force structure between legacy and the future force. The USSF growth includes mission transfers from Air Force, Army, Navy, and headquarters growth. The USAF growth from fiscal year 2021 includes temporary restoral of end strength associated with the continued delay of medical manpower reductions, while factoring for decreases to legacy force structure requirements such as C-130H and F-16 modernization, as well compensating for USSF mission transfers. USAF end strength is currently projected to come back down once the temporary restoral for medical manpower expires at the end of fiscal year 2022. This request also grows the Air National Guard for logistics, deployable security forces and ANG recruiting missions; balancing reductions in legacy C-130 aircraft with funding enduring missions such as the A-10.

We thank you for your continued favorable Congressional support of the fiscal year 2022 President's Budget request to ensure the USAF and USSF can access the talent we need to compete in a world defined by ambiguity, rapid change, and great power competition.

#### *Recruiting Goals*

The Department of the Air Force achieved its fiscal year 2020 recruiting goals of 26,398 regular component Enlisted (100 percent of goal) and regular Officers of 4,553 (100 percent of goal). We also met our Air National Guard combined Officer and Enlisted goal by recruiting 11,620 Guard members (108 percent of goal), and our Reserve combined Officer and Enlisted goal of 7,000 (100 percent of goal). Additionally, the Department of the Air Force is on target to reach our fiscal year 2021 recruiting goals of 27,053 regular Enlisted and 4,318 regular Officers; Air National Guard combined Officer and Enlisted goal of 11,428; and Reserve combined Officer and Enlisted goal of 8,800.

While these numbers are good, we are keenly aware of a growing competition for talent and expect the recruiting environment to become even more challenging. 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. Within this eligible population, the Department of the Air Force seeks to increase our pool of diverse candidates and reach the best and brightest from across our Nation while making sure every eligible member who wants to serve has the opportunity to compete to serve.

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 surpassed that goal at the Air Force Academy for the class of 2024, and 30.2 percent of the entering class were women. Last year's graduating class was more than 29 percent female, a 3 percent increase from 2019. 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 2020 ROTC class consisted of 25 percent female, a 1.5 percent increase since 2012. Finally, our 2020 OTS classes were 18.7 percent female across the Total Force, which is a 2.5 percent increase since 2012.

Recruiting diverse 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. We've also partnered with academia to provide \$19 million in Flight Scholarships at historically black universities and colleges. These professionals serve as role models for other talented Americans who can potentially see themselves serving in our force as well.

In the future we plan to invest in the Regular Component's recruiting operations in a multi-year effort, allowing for year round recruiting efforts to meet Total Force accessions goals. The DAF is committed to improving how we recruit tomorrow's airmen and guardians. We have added 159 recruiters and 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. COVID taught recruiting that going virtual expanded reach capabilities that the traditionally store front office lacked. Additionally, 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.



### *Retention*

As important as recruiting is, retention within our high-tech force is equally important. While the DAF is experiencing unprecedented high retention rates in both the Enlisted and Officer Corps, the aggregate success may mask areas with retention challenges. To help ameliorate these retention challenges, the USAF continues to offer targeted monetary incentives. For Enlisted skills, the fiscal year 2021 Selective Retention Bonus program's \$200 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.

Focusing on pilots specifically, the DAF has a fiscal year 2021 budget of \$194.1 million for the Aviation Bonus (AvB). While the take-rate for pilots steadily declined from 68 percent in 2013 through 2020 mainly due to an unprecedented major airline hiring boom, COVID-19's impact on the travel industry resulted in a larger number of pilots continuing to serve and an increased take rate of 51.3 percent in fiscal year 2020, up from 45 percent in fiscal year 2013. Given that we do not expect airline hiring to pick back up until late 2021–2022, or reach pre-COVID-19 hiring rates until 2023–2024, fiscal year 2021's AvB program focuses on targeting specialties with low manning while providing incentives for those who accept longer term contracts to help take advantage of the temporary airline hiring freeze.

### *Force Management*

Overall Air Force retention is the highest it's been in over twenty years, likely influenced by COVID and the economy. While high retention has helped the Department of the Air Force maintain immediate readiness levels, we ended fiscal year 2020 approximately 990 over our authorized end strength and started fiscal year 2021 at 333,790, higher than our fiscal year 2021 year-end authorized end strength of 333,475. As a result, our focus is on balancing high retention with the need to sustain the force over time, ensuring enough headspace to access the talent we need year after year. Recognizing many members have delayed retirement or separation plans during COVID's peak, the Air Force wants to remain flexible to allow airmen to transition from the force as their family situation allows. To provide options we implemented a number of voluntary force management programs to create space for needed accessions within our authorized end strength. We also provided opportunities to waive some limited Active Duty service commitments and expanded the PAL-ACE CHASE transfer program to allow members the opportunity to affiliate and serve their commitments in the Reserve components. Additionally, we paused the Voluntary Retired Return to Active Duty and the Voluntary Limited Period of Active Duty accessions programs given our high retention levels. We are monitoring retention closely to manage impacts to future readiness levels. We are preparing for fiscal year 2022 and the possibility of continued high retention, recognizing we may need additional flexibility. We want to remain agile as we look to the future, knowing we need to preserve our ability to recruit and access new talent.

## MANAGING TALENT

The Air Force's Talent Management systems continue to transform in order to fully support the National Defense Strategy and Department of Defense guidance, develop leaders of competence and character, and produce the talent we need for the future high-end fight. Most Department of the Air Force talent management initiatives are directed towards a system that empowers all airmen (military and civilian) to reach their full potential within a framework that increases agility, improves responsiveness, empowers performance, and provides transparency and simplicity. This framework is centered on defining and knowing what we value, measuring those key items, and incentivizing and rewarding those who demonstrate and excel at the valued qualities.

The Air Force is excited about the progress we are making in talent management. Our initiatives enhance the Air Force's ability to better identify, develop, and promote talent to meet occupational, institutional, and joint requirements that ensure we remain a ready, lethal and agile force now and for the future fight. Some Air Force initiatives include our Space Force partners while they continue to develop and mature their independent service-specific Human Capital Strategy.

### *Air Force Talent Management Initiatives*

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 force which can adapt, innovate, and demonstrate agility in dealing with today's complex security environment, so we appreciate the additional Defense Officer Personnel Management Act authorities given to

us in the fiscal year 2019 National Defense Authorization Act and have instituted several associated programs.

One of the fundamental tenants of our Talent Management system is to be responsive by ensuring we drive our inventory (size, shape, talents) to match our requirements. To that end, the Air Force expanded the previous single Line of the Air Force promotion category allowing for more agility and a wider range of development paths to ensure officers have the needed skills and expertise to fight and win. This was first implemented in March of 2020 for all ranks and is now entering into our second year of operation. Active component line officers are now managed in six developmental categories for promotion instead of a single category. This change clearly acknowledges different specialties require different developmental experiences and progression with tailored pathways to better shape the force toward the skills we need for tomorrow's high end fight.

Additionally, we understand the importance of having role models for officers as they navigate the different stages of their career. Recognizing the significance this plays in development, we instituted a new process to screen and select our best officers for formal instructor and recruiting positions. At the same time, we elevated these positions as a critical and an extremely valued component of their career progression, ensuring our officers with the highest potential have the opportunity to serve as positive examples focused on developing the future force.

Furthermore, the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act flexibilities provided by Congress in 2019 have created pathways for us to be more agile in our officer development. One such way is our recent transition away from below-the-zone promotions to merit based promotions to reward those with the highest potential.

Under this new system, those whose record of performance score the highest at the promotion board, pin-on first, reinforcing the importance of performance. This effort is two-fold, first it provides additional time for officers to gain valuable insight and experience that may have been lost when we accelerated promotions, as well as increases transparency to the force by providing promotion selected officers direct feedback on where they stand in relation to their peers.

Staying with the theme of promotion flexibilities, the Air Force is also postured to capitalize on the Temporary Promotion authority that was provided in 2019. This flexibility offers us the opportunity to temporarily promote officers into a designated position that requires a skill the Air Force has a critical shortage of in-grade personnel. The ability to execute this authority puts us in a much better position to place talent when and where it is needed while incentivizing airmen possessing such skills. The Air Force adaptation of this authority is set to launch in the Fall of 2021.

Likewise, we also realize some airmen miss out on critical career milestones while pursuing other important endeavors for the Air Force. To mitigate any negative impact to an officer's career, we are taking full advantage of the "opt-out" of selection board consideration authority from the 2019 National Defense Authorization Act. We have developed a policy that affords certain officers the ability to "opt-out" of selection board consideration to Major, Lieutenant Colonel, and Colonel and defer to the next year. Not only does it benefit the officer, it will also allow us to better retain and put to use those skills an officer gained while pursuing advanced education or filling an important career broadening position. Current plans allow officers meeting certain boards starting in October of 2021 to utilize this authority.

Airmen remain our competitive advantage, so it is crucial we stay focused on empowering their performance. A pivotal link to empowering performance is through our evaluation system. While development and implementation are still ongoing, we are currently transforming our officer and enlisted evaluation systems. The transformation is centered on evaluating airmen against the qualities we value in performance and know we need our airmen to possess for success in meeting future warfighting requirements outlined in the National Defense Strategy. We designated these valued items as our Airman Leadership Qualities (ALQs) and released them to the force for early use in February 2021. The ALQs represent in the performance characteristics we want to define, develop, incentivize, and measure in our airmen. We are striving for our airmen to embody these ALQs to help them reach their full potential.

Specific to empowering the performance of our enlisted force, we have reformed our Senior Non-Commissioned Officer promotion process. In order to put more of an emphasis on performance in primary duties and responsibilities, we eliminated the promotion testing portion of the process that was not always a good indicator of performance. Instead we instituted a board process to allow more focus to be put on one's record of performance.

To complement our efforts at empowering the performance of our enlisted corps we also established an indefinite enlistment policy for our enlisted airmen with twelve or more years of service. This change allowed for the extension of High Year

Tenure for E-4s, E-5s, and E-6s, reduced the administration burden on our airmen that comes with having to reenlist and increased retention of the skills and experience we need.

As you can see from the sampling of initiatives we have provided, talent management is a priority for us and we are working diligently to build the airmen we need for the future. We also recognize there is much more work to be done in this arena. For instance, we are currently exploring how to modify our promotions and evaluation systems in light of the Racial Disparity Review findings. We must make certain every Airman can realize their full potential and compete fairly for promotion opportunities within the Department of the Air Force—we are committed to seeing every airman succeed.

#### *Civilian Talent Management*

We are also excited at the progress we've made in managing our civilian talent, most notably in our hiring timeliness. The Department of the Air Force has dropped average days of hiring from 114 days in 2019 to 85 days in 2020. This is much needed progress, but still not where we would like to be. We continue to work on hiring timeliness while leveraging Direct Hire and Expedited Hiring Authorities the Congress has generously provided us. In 2020, utilization of these authorities was up to 81.2 percent when eligible which yielded great results, bringing qualified hires into the Department of the Air Force in 75 days on average with many hiring actions taking as little as 10 days from beginning to end.

Additionally, we will continue to leverage two new and impactful programs to reach the civilian talent we need:

In response to our former Secretary of the Air Force's initiative to establish outreach to colleges/universities and focus on recruitment, we instituted the Premier College Intern Program (PCIP) in 2018 with the following goals. First, recruit 500 post-secondary students for internships annually under Direct Hire Authority 1102 National Defense Authorization Act. Second, make the program more focused. Third, non-competitively place graduating PCIP interns into a permanent position or Palace Acquire/Copper Capstone entry level positions. Additionally, the PCIP graduates feed into our formal intern training programs and each year the formal intern training program hires between 450 to 500 interns; since 2001, 7,774 have been hired and the DAF currently has 1,412 on board.

We also developed a program to allow individuals that become medically disqualified at Basic Military Training a second opportunity to serve. The "DRIVE" Program is a newly established program that provides medically disqualified candidates an opportunity to enter civilian service. DRIVE is a Total Force talent recruiting initiative which benefits the entire Air Force. Using special appointing authorities such as direct hire authority, the Department of the Air Force is able to match candidates to hiring needs. Since August 2020, the initiative has already successfully placed seven candidates in diverse career fields such as civil engineering, public affairs, and cyber security.

The DAF continues to identify new initiatives and advocate for new and expanded hiring and retention authorities to secure mission critical civilian talent. We recently obtained a temporary direct hire authority as well as a temporary qualification waiver for our 2181 series pilots and simulator operators recognizing the dated qualification specifying significant flying hours did not adequately address changes in technology that allow for civilian flight instruction to be accomplished in a simulator.

The Department of the Air Force values the talent and skills our civilian workforce brings to the fight and fully recognize that Air and Space Force missions cannot succeed without them. In light of this, we continue to pursue initiatives and authorities that enable us to recruit and retain top tier civilians as a critical component of our Force.

#### *Career Flexibilities*

The Air Force's strategic advantage is our people and to be postured for the future high-end fight, it is imperative we challenge existing paradigms and remain open-minded about the way we attract and retain top-talent in our military and civilian ranks. We must inject flexibility into career paths and focus efforts on capitalizing on diversity within the Total Force while testing unconventional ways to ensure the Air Force is a career choice our airmen are excited about embarking on. To that end, we are currently looking into an array of options to allow airmen and guardians a career path beyond the current paradigms that values who they are, their unique skills, and the perspectives they bring to the fight.

### *Diversity & Inclusion*

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.

In 2020, we adjusted policy so new mothers could defer making a decision on separating from the service for up to 12 months after delivery, providing ample time to decide if military service was still compatible with their growing family. We're working towards updating this policy to be more inclusive to all families. This policy impacts approximately 3,500 airmen per month. Additionally, the Department of the Air Force directed units to provide nursing mothers with access to a lactation facility.

The Department of the Air Force updated hair grooming standards in February 2021, allowing women to wear one or two braids, or a single ponytail as well as longer bangs that touch their eyebrows so long as the bangs do not cover their eyes. These changes which responded to safety and medical concerns are also targeted at improving diversity and inclusion in the ranks by giving women from a variety of races more options that might better suit their hair & health concerns. To that point and to show our commitment to listening and evolving as required, our February 2021 female hair policy will soon undergo modification number one. Shortly after we launched our policy, and despite having diverse race, ethnic, and gender representation on the policy development team, we discovered our new policy was not as inclusive as we desired. As written, the bulk standard established with the braids and pony tails did not allow some women to comply with the standard without damaging their hair or making significant investments to have it straightened. The soon to be released modification will make allowances for those hair types to ensure we are truly being inclusive in our application of policies when possible.

Further, dress and appearance policies were adjusted to allow accent marks and hyphens on name tapes and tags, and qualifying male airmen are now able to receive five year shaving waivers. These changes were part of our on-going efforts to create a more inclusive culture.

The Department must continue to operationalize diversity and inclusion to fully leverage the Nation's greatest strength, it's remarkably diverse citizenry for decisive, lethal advantage.

### *Telework/Remote Work*

In response to COVID-19, the Department of the Air Force has been maximizing telework to both protect our personnel and to continue the Air Force mission. COVID-19 was a catalyst that enabled the Air Force to reassess how we conduct business. As a result, we've initiated a complete top-to-bottom review of current Air Force telework policies and have developed a revised program to help posture the Air Force for the future. Our new telework/remote work guidance will empower our airmen to meet the Air Force mission and enable us to attract and retain top tier talent while generating cost savings in facilities and personnel relocation expenses. The new policies will also provide options and potential stability for members and families who may not want to relocate but can still perform duties from a remote location. This will be particularly applicable to headquarters staff tours for many airmen.

### *Digital Transformation*

The Air Force continues to make strides transforming a portfolio of outdated systems that consume our airman's time, energy and flexibility when handling their Human Resource business affairs. We are now beginning to really provide our airmen with cutting edge cloud based technologies that drastically improves their experience, enhances data protection, and opens the opportunity for mobile access; however, there is much more to do. We need our airman to have the ability to remain mission focused, and are ensuring they have a streamlined end-to-end experience with this much needed upgrade. Your continued support in our Digital Transformation efforts are appreciated.

### CONCLUSION

Resilient and ready airmen and guardians, both military and civilian, are the bedrock of the Department of the Air Force's readiness and lethality. These professionals 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. We look forward to continuing to partner with Congress in our endeavors to protect and de-

fend 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 GILLIBRAND. Thank you. Lieutenant General David Ottignon.

**STATEMENT OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL DAVID A. OTTIGNON,  
USMC, DEPUTY COMMANDANT FOR MANPOWER AND RE-  
SERVE AFFAIRS**

Lieutenant General OTTIGNON. Chairwoman Gillibrand, Ranking Member, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss your marines and our civilian marines who support them. I, too, have submitted my written statement to this committee and my opening remarks will be brief.

This past year has been a challenging time for the Nation as we all continue to navigate our way through the pandemic. However, your marines and sailors continue to demonstrate their resiliency as we make marines and service the Nation's force and readiness.

To echo the sentiments of our commandant, the Marine Corps is entering a period of transformation to produce a modern, elite force that will meet the challenges of the National Defense Strategy and uncertainties of the future. Our marines represent a diverse group of Americans, bonded together by a sense of duty. Our manpower programs and initiatives cover the spectrum of a marine's career and are designed to maximize the fullest potential of our Nation's most precious resources, those dedicated Americans who claim the title of U.S. Marine.

The Marine Corps remains fully committed to their families and civilian marines in the programs that support them. Their contributions and sacrifices are noble and worth our greatest respect and admiration. I am proud to represent your marines, their families, and the civilian employees this afternoon, and I look forward to answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of Lieutenant General David A. Ottignon follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY LIEUTENANT GENERAL DAVID A. OTTIGNON

INTRODUCTION

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

OUR PEOPLE

Your marines are the centerpiece of the Marine Corps. As highlighted in our 38th Commandant's Planning Guidance, our principal emphasis is on our marines. We remain focused on recruiting, educating, training, and retaining elite warriors with the mental toughness, tenacity, initiative, intelligence, aggressiveness, and adaptability in challenging environments.

Force Design 2030 is not possible without the continued excellence of our marines. We are modernizing our talent management processes to ensure we continue to have the right marines in this period of great power competition. Our initiatives cover the spectrum of a marine's career—from accession goals and rating/promotion practices, to re-enlistment incentives and retention policies. We are leveraging technology and data collection to help understand—and someday predict—why individuals decide to join the Marine Corps and remain a marine. To that end, we are implementing longitudinal accession, retention, and exit surveys and cognitive and

non-cognitive testing with the objective of identifying and fitting the right person, with the right skill, into the right job. We are in our third year of developing the Retention Prediction Network, which uses cognitive, non-cognitive, and individual interest tests, performance, and personnel data to predict the probability of a successful Marine Corps career. These modernization initiatives will enable us to tailor our force to compete and win in the modern operating environment.

The Commandant has stated that we will keep faith with our marines as we execute our Force Design 2030 plans. We are thankful to Congress for the force shaping authorities you have given us and are confident that they are sufficient. Of course, we will come to you for additional statutory changes if in the future they become required.

#### *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, COVID-19 impacted recruiting efforts. Social distancing requirements limited the capacity at our depots, delayed shipping activities, closed schools, and canceled community events that we depend on for personal contacts and outreach. We adjusted to these COVID-19 challenges by exploring new digital prospecting tools and researching the market reactions to those endeavors. These actions gave recruiters the means to operate in a reduced personal contact environment. As a result, we were better postured for fiscal year 2021 than first anticipated. COVID-19's long-term impacts on recruiting remain unknown, but we are adapting and learning from the challenge.

The quality of your marines remains exceptionally high. The Department of Defense 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 70.1 percent for Mental Group I–IIIA. We expect to be at these levels in fiscal year 2021.

To meet the challenges ahead, we remain committed to assigning our best marines to recruiting duty. Our recruiters closely reflect the face of the Nation we recruit, which is a testament to our efforts to recruit a more diverse force. Approximately 47 percent of our recruiters have a diverse background, well above our Nation's demographics as a whole. Our recruiting efforts connect marines with the communities they represent. We have recruiters assigned to every zip code in our Nation, and constantly strive to reach all qualified youth and their influencers—from the most rural of small towns to the largest of cities.

For future recruiting success, we must 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 high quality, 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. Advertising funds repay many times over, as they produce lower first-term attrition, higher quality marines, and increased readiness.

#### *Retention*

The essence of Marine Corps talent management is to retain the very best marines capable of fulfilling our leadership and operational needs. Overall, we met all of our retention goals in fiscal year 2020, and are on track for fiscal year 2021. However, there is a continuous challenge to keep high-quality marines in the service, especially in the current competitive civilian job market. We thank this Subcommittee and Congress for the retention authorities and flexibility you have given us. We are using many of these authorities and holding others in Reserve should the need arise.

We are implementing—and continuing to study—the use of monetary and non-monetary incentives; modernizing our performance evaluation systems; and refining the way we match and assign marines to billets. Incentive pays remain critical to our retention effort, allowing the Marine Corps to fill hard to retain positions, such as cyber operators, special operators, and counter intelligence specialists. Selective Reenlistment Bonuses allow us to shape our career force by targeting critical military occupational specialties and supporting lateral movement of marines to these billets.

The Marine Corps is experiencing shortfalls in the number of fixed wing and tiltrotor aviators required to fill our aviation billets. As a result, we have imple-

mented a narrowly-tailored aviation bonus to stabilize the pilot shortfall and facilitate the proper execution of all aviation staffing demands. We continue to build on the fiscal year 2020 bonus plan in fiscal year 2021. Similarly, and in concert with Force Design, we are offering Assignment Incentive Pay to offensive cyber operators to increase retention and build this capacity. This type of monthly pay is targeted towards hard-to-fill critical billets that have significant training requirements. These incentives help us recruit and retain the best marines. At only one percent of our marine Corps personnel budget, they offer a return on investment many times over.

#### *Reserves*

Your Marine Corps Reserve stands ready to provide forces for employment across the full spectrum of crisis and global engagement. While the Marine Corps Reserve is supporting current Service and Combatant Command requirements, it is also participating in the Service's efforts to redesign our force and our warfighting capabilities to deter against pacing threats as prescribed by the National Defense Strategy.

Despite the numerous recruiting and entry level training challenges presented by COVID-19, the Marine Corps' Selected Reserve is forecasted to meet Force Design recruiting and retention goals for this fiscal year. We continue to mitigate COVID-19 impacts and maintain personnel and training readiness with improvements to our enlisted and officer Reserve force management.

This year the Marine Corps implemented a comprehensive Career Management Plan that provided full-service support to our Reserve officers and Staff NCOs throughout the Selected Reserve. This talent management initiative that will help our NCOs, Staff NCOs, and officers move between commands to enhance their development and military career goals.

Throughout the past year, the Marine Corps Reserve continued global deployments despite the unprecedented challenges presented by COVID-19. The Marine Corps Reserve provided Combatant Commanders with forces focused on combat operations, crisis prevention, crisis response, and theater security cooperation.

This year, the Marine Corps Reserve is slated to mobilize Reservists in support of 28 formations. These operations greatly increase the Reserve component's interoperability with the Active component, joint forces, our allies, and coalition partners.

#### *Diversity and Inclusion*

Diversity and inclusion are force multipliers and take advantage of the wide array of experiences and perspectives necessary to maintain our current and future warfighting excellence. We are committed to capitalizing on the knowledge, skills, abilities, performance, and potential of every marine.

Our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategic Plan will guide our actions over the next five years in the areas of recruiting and accessions, talent management, education, training, and commandership. It provides a framework to align a number of efforts, identify new initiatives, and provide oversight across the Corps for implementation by commanders at every level. A key component of this plan is to target diversity at our senior and General Officer ranks. Leadership must exemplify our core tenets and it is important to continue to improve diversity at our highest levels. To date, 21 percent of Brigadier Generals and Brigadier General-selects are diverse, the highest level of diverse representation at that rank in Marine Corps history. We look forward to seeing this trend continue.

One of our first actions to implement our plan was the appointment of a general officer as the Service's Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer. This position will communicate program goals, develop policy, and action the aforementioned strategic plan. Concurrently, the Marine Corps bolstered the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Review Board (DRB). The DRB serves as the action arm of the Marine Corps Diversity and Inclusion Management Program to address diversity, inclusion, and command climate issues that may impact the Marine Corps.

Outreach and external engagement are an important facet of our holistic approach to diversity and inclusion. We have steadily increased our Outreach Program budget from \$150,000 in fiscal year 2015 to \$1.3 million in fiscal year 2021. This Program provides opportunities for professional development, mentoring, and networking experiences by fully funding approximately 500 marines to attend 19 national/regional conferences hosted by non-federal entity affinity groups events throughout the year. For example, the Marine Corps recently hosted the Petersen Discussion Forum from June to December 2020. The forum was named after Lieutenant General Frank Petersen, the first African-American Marine Corps aviator and the first African-American Marine Corps General Officer. The forum met regularly to examine, analyze, and discuss pertinent issues on the state of race and gender relations in the Marine Corps.

Diversity in the Marine Corps is increasing. Since 2009, diverse enlisted accessions have increased from 34 percent to 43 percent, and diverse officer accessions have increased from 16 percent to 35 percent. Female officers have increased from 8 percent to 13.8 percent during this same time period. Females represented in previously restricted MOS are also on the rise. Last year, 737 females were in previously restricted units; that number is now 1,101. Similarly, 283 women were serving in previously restricted MOS; today that number is 415, including the first woman Reconnaissance Marine.

The Marine Corps is a full partner with the Office of the Secretary of Defense and other Services in accomplishing the recommendations set out in the Secretary's Diversity and Inclusion Board Final Report. However, the Marine Corps is also taking its own initiative to both study and make changes to continue to improve diversity and inclusion.

A host of independent studies are currently underway to better understand diversity and inclusion challenges and make improvements. Next month we expect to have the results of our Fitness Report Bias Study, an analysis which is examining the objectivity of the current performance appraisal process. The Basic School Military Occupational Specialty Assignment Study will examine historical performance data based on demographics to evaluate the impact of performance on MOS assignment. We are funding an independent study to identify and understand any barriers to advancement and retention of women and minorities in the Marine Corps. Finally, our Exit & Milestone Longitudinal Survey provides feedback to better understand personnel satisfaction regarding career opportunities, leadership, performance management, diversity, and work-life programs.

The Marine Corps acknowledges biases exist and is addressing these challenges by incorporating unconscious bias training at every rank through the training continuum. Diversity of thought and experience that each marine brings will help us find more creative and innovative solutions to these future challenges. We must actively work to retain and grow this diversity. Diversity and inclusion are, 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.

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

#### *Sexual Assault Prevention & Response*

Protecting marines and preventing sexual assaults remain 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.

We are dedicated to working with the Department of Defense and Congress on developing prevention measures to reduce the prevalence of this crime. The Marine Corps has reviewed and analyzed the Fort Hood Independent Review Committee report. From this report, the Marine Corps identified many recommendations for implementation focused on program management and structure; training; command climate; and disciplinary action. Additionally, the Marine Corps is directly engaged in the Secretary of Defense's directed 90-day Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military (IRC) and the Immediate Actions to Counter Sexual Assault and Harassment. The Marine Corps has representation in all four of the IRC lines of effort and is in the process of executing the Immediate Actions.

There are a number of important updates to our sexual assault prevention efforts to highlight. Our renewed focus seeks to tailor training to specific levels of leadership. This enables a multi-layered approach to prevention to fit marines of every age, rank, and billet. For example, updated SAPR annual training for Staff Non-Commissioned Officers (SNCO) provides more focus at the small unit level. This 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.

We also updated the SAPR 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. Commanders set the tone of their unit—we know how important it is to ensure they are equipped before they assume command to establish the right command climate—a climate that encourages marines to look out for one another and report destructive behaviors and crimes, and that mandates accountability for perpetrators and enablers.

While we like to highlight our prevention efforts, we acknowledge that we are not where we need to be; we still have incidents of sexual harassment and assault and so we must ensure we provide the best support possible to victims. 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 want to leverage technological developments too. SAPR is implementing online evaluation tools for select SAPR annual training, Victim Advocate (VA) training, and Sexual Assault Response Coordinators (SARC) initial training. The evaluation tools measure changes in knowledge, attitudes, and intentions, as well as training satisfaction, consistency of instruction, and quality of instruction. Beginning with pilots in fiscal year 2021, these evaluation results will inform local SAPR personnel, as well as HQMC personnel, on the effectiveness of the trainings.

Collaboration is key in addressing sexual assault prevention and response. Our SAPR program works together with the other Services, Department of the Navy and Department of

Defense Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Offices, and outside entities to enhance our ability to prevent and respond to sexual assault, identify best practices, and leverage resources. SAPR supports enterprise-wide efforts to prevent sexual assaults within the military and care for marines.

The Marine Corps continually evaluates SAPR initiatives for effectiveness by conducting needs assessments, surveys, and staffing analysis. SARC and VA training curriculum development has been standardized which better ensures that marines understand reporting options, SARCs and VAs are prepared to support victims, and all understand their role in sexual assault prevention.

#### *Suicide Prevention*

The Marine Corps cannot afford to lose any marines to suicide. The Marine Corps approaches suicide prevention by using every resource available to promote and apply the leadership functions of strengthen, mitigate, identify, treat, and reintegrate to increase individual and unit readiness. We are working to reduce suicide by focusing efforts across four prevention lines of effort: (1) Communication: Our efforts equip commanders and Suicide Prevention Program Officers with tools and resources for prevention, response, and postvention, which includes the publication of a monthly newsletter that provides marines with coping and stress management skills, and the distribution of an Embedded Mental Health Guidebook; (2) Collaboration: We coordinate with Navy behavioral health services to ensure non-medical and medical care are accessible and seamless. Community Counseling Program counselors conduct screenings, actively assess needs, provide counseling, and connect servicemembers and families with additional resources. We work with sister services and federal agencies to identify gaps in resources and services, and collaborate on actionable solutions for geographically dispersed servicemembers; (3) Prevention and Resilience: Our new Command Individual Risk and Resiliency Assessment System (CIRRAS) enhances commanders' ability to conduct effective force preservation and prevention efforts; and (4) Use of Data and Research: We track suicide-related events data to include monitoring for any indications of COVID-19 impact. We evaluate the effectiveness of suicide prevention initiatives, and conduct the annual USMC Death by Suicide Review Board, which reviews every marine death by suicide to provide actionable/operational recommendations.

CIRRAS, a Commandant's priority, was released in October 2020, and has received positive feedback from commanders to mitigate personnel challenges. The system provides a single, standardized digital platform that enables proactive identification and assessment of individual marine risk and resiliency factors. This information is compiled in the CIRRAS database by small unit leaders, medical officers, and other authorized support staff. It is transferable between commands so that, as marines move to different commands, a clear picture of those marines who are at higher risk for destructive behaviors is transferred as well. The overarching goal of CIRRAS is to reduce suicide and destructive behaviors by eliminating gaps in information and timeliness of information, as well as provides a safe and secure way to manage Personally Identifiable Information (PII)/ Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Information during the force preservation process. By

presenting timely, prioritized, actionable information to those who can help marines, leaders will be better equipped to reduce destructive behaviors in their units.

We have several other programs and services that contribute to our overall suicide prevention efforts. Our Unit Marine Awareness and Prevention Integrated Training (UMAPIT) teaches every marine the basics of suicide prevention. Our Marine Intercept Program (MIP) provides marines who verbalize suicidal ideations or who attempt suicide access to telephonic and face-to-face contacts to check in, assess risk, plan for safety, and refer to other services as needed. Our Operational Stress Control & Readiness (OSCAR) team includes trained marines and OSCAR program extenders who can recognize the impacts of stress and connect marines to needed support.

The OSCAR program extenders are medical staff skilled in prevention services, chaplains, corpsman, and other professionals who “extend” suicide prevention capabilities.

The importance of force preservation and resiliency cannot be understated for a ready Marine Corps. The Marine Corps force preservation process is the formalized method used by commanders to identify individual marine risk factors and 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.

#### *Wounded Warrior Regiment*

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 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 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 successful healing and transition. WII marines with complex care coordination needs are assessed for post-separation support requirements. When appropriate, those marines are transferred directly to a Department of Veterans Affairs Lead Coordinator prior to their medical discharge to ensure seamless support.

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.

#### *Child and Youth Programs*

High-quality child care is a readiness priority for the Marine Corps. The Marine Corps provides high quality, accessible, and affordable programs and services for eligible families with children six-weeks to 18-years of age.

The Marine Corps is currently operating at 78 percent of child care capacity. COVID-19 and the resulting protocols have significantly impacted our child care capacity. Each installation is impacted differently by COVID-19, and operational status is based on local command needs and circumstances. Modifications of daily operations are in place to mitigate social distancing and operation changes implementing the Center for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines.

Currently, we have a total unmet need of 1,434 children in Priorities 1 & 2 (child development program staff; single and dual-military members; military members with working spouse) with notable waitlists at Camp Pendleton, Hawaii, Quantico, and Camp Lejeune/New River. These four installations maintain approximately 82 percent of the overall immediate waitlist. These are primarily due to a shortage of qualified workers, high turnover/low pay, and lengthy hiring process. We are addressing these issues through increased hiring and a non-competitive child care employee transfer program. We also offer fee assistance for eligible marines who are geographically remote, reside more than 15 miles from an installation, or are assigned to an installation that has a wait list. The program budget is \$5 million in fiscal year 2021 and currently supports 535 marine families.

#### *Spouse Employment*

Spouse unemployment is a concern 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 ca-

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 utilizes several approaches to recruit and appoint military spouses. We participate 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. Additionally, the non-competitive military spouse appointment authority is one of many hiring authorities through which a military spouse can come into Marine Corps service. Furthermore, the Marine Corps participates in the Military Spouse Employment Partnership, which is a DOD-level partnership with employers who agree to offer transferrable, portable career opportunities to relocating military spouse employees.

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 248 individual claims totaling \$89,480. 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 second Lieutenants to first Lieutenants) to pursue licenses, certificates, certifications or Associate Degrees necessary for gainful employment.

#### *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 fifty-seven 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. Overall, our civilians continue to truly shown themselves as Semper Fidelis by keeping our marines and their families in the forefront.

#### CONCLUSION

The marines of our Corps represent a diverse group of individuals bonded together by a sense of duty. Through recruiting, training, education, and retention of men and women of character, we will enhance the quality of our Corps and our overall combat effectiveness. To echo the sentiments of our Commandant—the Marine Corps is entering a period of transformation to produce a modern, elite force that will meet the challenges of the National Defense Strategy and uncertainty of the future. Your marines have sworn an oath to defend and protect our Nation. They stand ready to fight, compete, and win. By ensuring we take care of all marines and their families, we will keep faith with them to honor the commitment they have so freely given.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.  
Semper Fidelis.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you. Now Ms. Patricia Mulcahy.

**STATEMENT OF MS. PATRICIA MULCAHY, CHIEF HUMAN  
CAPITAL OFFICER, UNITED STATES SPACE FORCE**

Ms. MULCAHY. Chairwoman Gillibrand, Ranking Member Tillis, and members of the committee, it is truly an honor to appear before you today, alongside my military colleagues. On behalf of all guardians and families, thank you for your leadership and support that you have provided to the United States Space Force.

We are purposefully building the Space Force to be lean, to be agile, and mission focused, and our talent management efforts are synchronized to ensure we are developing the leaders and the warfighters who will secure space. Because of size in establishing this new warfighting culture, we believe it is vital to be collaborative and connected to all of our guardians, and in a way that you could not be in a larger service. We are interested in what they think, as we provide feedback on their performance and potential.

The mission and the people of the United States Space Force are an ideal match for the information age, which is why guardians are uniquely postured to be born digital. With the digital workforce, we must ensure we have guardians who can lead the digital transformation and cultivate a digital fluency amongst all guardians. And integrating, strengthening, and cultivating this personal resiliency of every guardian is key, as they are members of highly specialized teams who are pushing the frontiers of what is technologically possible in a complex, contested, and brutal space domain.

So to implement our vision, we designed a talent management approach with three principles in mind: managing positions based on competencies required to succeed; providing access to digital tools, training, and services; and developing each guardian according to their needs. Interwoven in our strategy is an important work that we are doing with the Department of the Air Force's Office of Diversity and Inclusion, because our Space Force will be stronger when our ranks reflect the make-up of the Nation we serve.

Over the past 17 months, we have secured a number of wins for our country. First I am proud that more than 11,000 military and civilian guardians joined our ranks from the Air Force and across America. We are on target to achieve the end strength goals we outlined in fiscal year 2020, and we have launched initiatives to ensure we are competitive for the STEM talent we need through our partnerships with select colleges, universities, and other organizations. And our ubiquitous access to digital university and a boot camp-like approach training coders is increasing our digital fluency and impacting our mission accomplishment.

We are developing and implementing our space-focused professional military education programs that will develop space-minded warfighters who are effective in multidomain operations and the joint environment.

Although I am pleased with the progress we have made, we have much work to do. In the second year of building the Space Force, we are focused on integration, including our Reserve components and our sister services. Today we have space professionals in both the Air Guard and Air Force Reserve who provide a tremendous capability to the United States Space Force. We have studied ways to best organization to regular, the Reserve, and the Guard capa-

bilities, and we look forward to working with the Congress once Executive branch coordination is complete.

We are also working closely with our sister services as we prepare to assume space missions from the Army and the Navy. We are excited by the number of soldiers, sailors, and Marines who would like to join us, and are assessing those who recently volunteered for transfer opportunities.

I am honored to serve in the United States Space Force. It is truly an opportunity of a lifetime to work alongside my fellow guardians and to build the service that we need to deter and defend in space, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Patricia Mulcahy follows:]

#### PREPARED STATEMENT BY MS. PATRICIA MULCAHY

##### INTRODUCTION

Chairwoman Gillibrand, Ranking Member Tillis, Distinguished Members of this Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before this committee. As the Nation's newest military Service, it is exciting to come before you today to discuss all of the great work our guardians are doing to build a force capable of defending our Nation's vital interest in the space domain.

##### THE FORCE WE NEED

The Space Force operates in a unique and dynamic personnel environment. As the Nation's newest military Service, we start with a "clean slate" with respect to culture and organizational process and procedure. At the same time, the needs of the Nation dictate that we are operationally capable of deterring conflict and defending our Nation's interests immediately. This need cannot wait for us to finish building the force. To this end, we are building our force rapidly through new accessions and interservice transfers and taking advantage of the progress the Department of the Air Force has made in improving the timeliness of the civilian hiring process.

The Space Force is building culture and structure; it is increasing in end strength; it is developing the systems necessary to be the digital force it must be; and it is employing new and innovative methods of managing talent. We realize that continued Congressional support is necessary to achieve all of these goals at a rapid pace in a dynamic environment and we are appreciative of that support.

##### END STRENGTH

The Department's fiscal year 2022 military end strength request for 512,300 airmen and guardians increases the USSF end strength by 1,966 due to mission transfers from the USAF, Army and Navy and facilitates modest USSF headquarters growth. This increase is steeper than anticipated due to accelerated programming from fiscal year 2023. However, the Space Force has a plan in place to manage personnel inventory to support mission requirements with Congressional support.

##### RECRUITING

The competitive market for STEM talent creates a significant challenge to attracting and recruiting individuals with those unique capabilities into the Space Force. Our recruitment initiatives are focused on expanding the pool of potential STEM applicants through partnerships with colleges, universities, and organizations that produce STEM capable personnel.

While we focus on STEM talent as a whole, we cannot lose focus on the individual. A beta test is underway to evaluate an enhanced selection process that gives the Space Force a better understanding of each recruit. We have instituted interviews, and behavioral assessments, to expand the tools used for a holistic approach to selecting future guardians. This will facilitate the Space Force's ability to select the best fit guardians from a diverse applicant pool.

The Space Force is working with the Department of Defense and Department of the Air Force stakeholders to mitigate potential barriers to service from members of underrepresented groups. We are conducting a comprehensive review of accessions policy, and we will begin a review of all career field entry requirements and assessments to identify opportunities to expand the pool of potential applicants from underrepresented groups.

## MANAGING TALENT

The Space Force is taking a fresh approach to talent management in order to build an organizational culture that emboldens guardians to produce trailblazing outcomes and enable a warfighting ethos.

We expect leaders at every level to take bold, data-driven, and risk-informed actions, while making full use of their team's abilities to overcome obstacles and accomplish the mission.

The Space Force will shift from managing people within prescribed career fields, to managing positions based on the competencies and experiences needed to succeed. To implement this approach, the USSF's Chief Human Capital Officer (CHCO) will centralize and unify talent management activities for all guardians, military and civilian, in an Enterprise Talent Management Office (ETMO) that leverages talent management teams and systems.

The Space Force must provide guardians with the tools to succeed in the 21st Century; we must be a digital Service. All guardians will have access to digital services, allowing them to accelerate innovation of operational and business processes and activities, and foster collaboration. To accomplish this, the Space Force will create digital solutions, dismantle data stovepipes, and establish a digitally enabled culture focused on transparency, communication, and inclusive decision-making. As one of the first steps in creating a digital Service, in fiscal year 2021 the space force launched the Software Development Immersive Program. This 12 week immersive course will build a community of guardians, of any AFSC, skilled in the development, security and operations approach to rapid software development. These "Supra Coders" will enable us to securely deploy cloud-native applications onto Space Force platforms in order to strengthen our digital infrastructure.

Today's newest guardians are tomorrow's Space Force leaders; it is vital that we get this right. The Space Force's brand and Guardian Value Proposition (GVP) will address, distinctively and intentionally, our responsibilities to our society and local communities. The GVP must focus on how our culture, rewards, recognition, opportunity, organization, people, and work differentiates us from others competing for the same talent. The Space Force is committed to recruiting and retaining a diverse force, to include improving outreach to populations from underrepresented communities. We will employ talent-finding platforms to actively seek out and engage people to serve in either a military or civilian guardian capacity. We will use a blend of current competency assessments, potential-measuring assessments, and behavioral assessments to determine fit within the Space Force. Engagement with guardians will not end when they leave the Space Force. The Space Force will create an alumni database called "Guardians for Life" that departing members can choose to join. This will assist with maintaining strong connections to gather feedback, request recruiting support, and welcome back strong performers who desire to return in line with our talent needs.

The Space Force will develop each guardian according to their needs. Every individual will receive tailored training, education, and experiential opportunities to prepare them for specific placement. Developmental feedback will focus on strengthening individual competencies and encouraging growth mindsets. Coaching and mentoring programs are central to our continuous developmental and engagement approach. This will include reverse mentoring programs to ensure senior leaders gain the insights and perspectives from underrepresented demographics and more junior members of the force. We are exploring a new promotion assessment approach that looks at three key indicators of readiness: current performance, psychometrics, and preparedness to address situations common to the next grade.

The Enterprise Talent Management Office (ETMO) will provide all guardians with individualized and command support that enables space warfighter readiness, leader development, and personal growth. They will reduce the gaps between operations, cyber, intel, and acquisitions personnel development and talent management to achieve Space Superiority by unifying execution consistently across the enterprise. The ETMO must unite, leverage, and organize existing talent management capabilities within the force; embrace maximum flexibility by tying geographically dispersed talent together via technology, tapping into excellence wherever located across the globe; and implement expanded permeability programs within the Service, Academia, and Industry.

## UNITED STATES AIR FORCE SUPPORT

As a growing Service, and one that must remain lean, agile and mission-focused, we are grateful to have the continued support of the United States Air Force and the Department of the Air Force across a wide range of personnel and family support activities and programs. Interpersonal violence, sexual assault prevention and

response, suicide prevention, resiliency, and family care are all areas in which the Air Force maintains the lead role. The Department of the Air Force has taken the lead role in diversity and inclusion initiatives. While some of these functions will transfer to the Space Force as we continue to grow, many of them will remain with the Air Force and the Department of the Air Force. We are truly all one team in this fight, and we are grateful for the continued efforts of all members of our team.

#### CONCLUSION

Guardians are the heart of the Space Force. In order to achieve mission success, we must create an environment that fosters their success and recognizes their value. We must develop them according to their individual capabilities and the Service's needs. We must provide leadership that encourages growth. We must provide them the tools, digital and otherwise, necessary to accomplish the mission. We must provide an environment in which they and their families feel safe from any internal threat, an environment where they can thrive. We must ensure that we are doing right by our guardians and their families. We thank you for your continued support for your Space Force, its uniformed and civilian guardians, and their families.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you. I appreciate your testimony.

Lieutenant General Brito, the Army attempted to implement a new physical fitness test, the Army Combat Fitness Test, without an objective assessment of its potential adverse effects on different demographics of the Army. Initial data showed that 60 percent of female soldiers could not pass the test and 83 percent failed the leg tuck portion of the test. As a result, last year's NDA included a provision that I worked on that prohibited the Army from implementing this test until completion of an evaluation by an independent entity of the test validity and its impact on different demographics in the Army. The Army has been allowed to continue to administer the test to provide data on the study as long as no test results are recorded in a soldier's record and the results are not used in any way to evaluate the soldier.

A recent article on military.com stated that "internal Army figures from April show 44 percent of women failed the Army Combat Fitness Test (ACFT) compared to 7 percent of men since October 1.

I have several questions. What is the status of the independent study and who is conducting it? Are you concerned with the recent data showing that 44 percent of women failed the test compared to 7 percent of men? Has the ACFT been shown to actually improve combat readiness? The last two decades have been a never-ending war and our Army was combat ready without the ACFT.

Lieutenant General BRITO. Thank you, Chair Gillibrand, for that question. I am aware of the article as well. We patiently await the results of the RAND study, which is helping us conduct an independent study, and I would mention the actions of the commanders on the ground that are implementing the test, as mentioned, without a record score at this point, to help us assess the data on the six events and the impact that it has on all of our soldiers and genders.

I fully acknowledge that the initial implementation of the test did show that there was a large disparity, one which was a little bit troubling, between genders, and that we will continue to assess and work on.

I would like to mention at this point the ACFT is being trained and tested on across the Army, in all three components, and we are asking the units to put this data into the system so that we can, one, truly assess how soldiers are doing and the validity of all six

events. We will continue to do that up until the next year or so, into 2022, likely, and we will fully take the measurements of the RAND study when we do receive those results.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you. Lieutenant General Kelly, the RAND Corporation has raised questions about the appropriateness of the Air Force PT test across age and gender for all airmen, recommending revision of the test to incorporate more practical measures of everyday health. Is the Air Force reassessing its PT test, and will you commit to ensuring that the Air Force PT test will not discriminate against women and other demographics?

Lieutenant General KELLY. Chairwoman Gillibrand, thank you for that question. So yes, we are committed to that. In fact, we are taking the opportunity right now that COVID provided us. When COVID first started, we suspended PT testing for lots of reasons, based on the health assessment and the health risks for that. During that time, we were able to start some assessments of new testing tools and put those into place, and we will be resuming testing on 1 July. When we resume testing on 1 July, we are going to be making some modifications to the previous test, that was a four-component test, down to a three-component test, and we will be looking at alternate methods for providing options for our airmen, all genders, all everybody, to have options for when they take their PT test.

I would tell you, though, that when we first looked at a number of our qualifications, if you remember when we did the Women in Service Review as an example, we went through an exhaustive process with RAND participating, to make sure that all of the standards that we put in place were gender-neutral, operationally focused, and not biased. I think we are in the same study process here now with our current PT test, and I think we will come out with good results. But yes, we will be committed to that, and you will see some changes in our PT test in the coming months.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Lieutenant General Ottignon, I understand that the Marine Corps is conducting a highly sophisticated study of body composition standards. What is the status of this study, and will it finally tie body composition standards to the ability to perform military duties?

Lieutenant General OTTIGNON. Madam Chairwoman, thank you for the question. Yes, I am familiar with that, and I sat on the brief not more than 45 days ago. It is tied to the body mass index is what the original test was, and if you read the periodicals there is enough data that tells us that that is not a good measure of someone's strength.

So we are looking very hard at that. There are two numbers, for men and women. We have got an independent study that is looking at it as well as Marines that are participating in that. I suspect within the next couple of months there will be additional information that will come on that. I think we are close to finding a standard across both genders.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you. Senator Tillis.

Senator TILLIS. Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you all for being here. I always hate it when members ask yes-no questions because there are virtually none of these, but I think this may be close to one.



We have had a lot of focus on military housing in this committee. We passed a slew of provisions in the 2020 NDA to try and improve the situation that we found. I am particularly focused on Fort Bragg and Camp Lejeune. I understand I think in June we should have the final pieces of the Tenant Bill of Rights complete. Just going down the line, start with General Brito, are we on track for having that complete, implemented, rolled out by the summer?

Lieutenant General BRITO. Senator Tillis, from the indicators I have and the data, yes, we are on track. I have a very responsive bill of rights, and I do know that we are doing some discussions and negotiating with the partners that run our housing as well. That will also be a key to success that, I think, can provide the proper services to all our families and soldiers that clearly do deserve quality housing.

Senator TILLIS. Thank you. Admiral Nowell?

Vice Admiral NOWELL. Yes, sir, we are.

Senator TILLIS. Thank you. General Kelly?

Lieutenant General KELLY. Yes, Senator. I believe we are. As was stated by General Brito, I do think there are a few negotiation issues that are going on with the contractors, but I believe our folks who lead this effort in Assistant Secretary of the Air Force/Installations, Environment and Energy (SAF/IE) are working those and should be on completion by June.

Senator TILLIS. General Ottignon?

Lieutenant General OTTIGNON. Yes, sir, we are.

Senator TILLIS. Ms. Mulcahy?

Ms. MULCAHY. Thank you, Senator, and in concert with General Kelly's response, yes.

Senator TILLIS. I have a question I want to drill down on for, I believe, actually General Kelly. It has to do with the Exceptional Family Member Program. Can you give me, or describe for me, the work that has been done to standardize and improve the program within the Air Force?

Lieutenant General KELLY. Yes, Senator. Thank you for that question. Let me first start by saying I would have said, 18 months ago, if I assessed that program, our EFMP program would have been an F-minus-minus, absolutely not meeting the needs of our airmen and families. About 18 months ago, we took on the effort to bring in airmen and families, get their feedback, and hold some rapid improvement events and some process changes, and through process change and innovation and IT changes, I think we have made some real headway.

Here are some of the key parts of that program. First, we created a centralized cell for us. The centralized cell has medical expertise, it has assignment expertise, it has lawyers in there that can help with legal issues, it has school liaison members in there that can help, and it has folks in there that really can help navigate. So there is a one-stop shop for airmen and families.

Two, we took on an IT challenge and said we have got to make this system better for our airmen and families. They now have a thing we call the My Family Vector where they can reach out and see what they have out there in terms of what are the medical capabilities at a base. If I go to Base X, if I go down to Pope and I am going to be assigned there, and I have this medical condition,

or my dependent has this medical condition, what is the likelihood I am going to be able to get service and what is it going to look like? How many hours away do I have to drive? How long do I have to wait for an appointment and TRICARE? All that kind of information is now available to them.

Then the last part is the way we screen and check for them and go through. We now have an ability in that process to use past claims and past medical data so that we don't have to have every single family member go to see a doctor. In the past, 100 percent went to see a doctor. We are down to like 15 percent of those folks now having to see a doctor before they permanent change of station (PCS). A much higher rate of satisfaction and much less distraction. You can imagine a family of five or six with EFMP members all having to go to see a medical appointment for something they maybe have looked at 2 or 3 years before when they PCS'd.

So lots of changes and lots of positive aspects to that. More to following there, Senator, but I think we are on the right track and we are pretty happy with what we are being able to do with centralizing that program and providing much more standardized care for our family members.

Senator TILLIS. Thank you for that. I tend to agree with your initial grade awhile back, but we have gotten positive reports. You are making progress, and we will submit a question for the record to the other service chiefs, just to see how you are doing, and I would appreciate your feedback in what help we can provide.

Admiral Nowell, I had a question. I am hearing that the Navy is planning on reducing medical billets at a number of facilities—Walter Reed, Camp Lejeune, Camp Pendleton, and Bellingham, I think, at least. I am kind of curious. I got a briefing from Marine Force Special Operations Command (MARSOC) Commander a couple of weeks ago and we are seeing some movement of more Marines to Camp Lejeune. So we are increasing the number of Marines and their families there, and I am wondering if factors like that were taken into account when the billet reductions at Camp Lejeune were being factored in. So I would like to get your feedback on that, and I also wanted to know to what extent did you all work with the DHA to gauge the impact in making sure you have capacity, not only for the servicemembers but for their families through TRICARE.

Vice Admiral NOWELL. Senator, thank you for that, and I would first share that the Military Medical Manpower Report to Congress should be submitted shortly. That will have all the details. But we have worked closely with DHA, along with the other services, to assess the capacity, as you look at the MTFs, getting back to the rural areas, how they can support.

But I will assure you that we will not shift any family member or retiree care, or care for our servicemembers, if it affects military medical force readiness, areas where the network does not have the capability or capacity to absorb it, or any of our graduate medical education, because it is very important in many places. That is how we train those medical providers that we put forward.

Then last I would just mention regarding your specific concerns about Camp Lejeune, we have not cut billets here. In fact, we have increased organic support to the Marine Corps there.

Senator TILLIS. Very good. General Brito, I am not going to go further so that I can get Senator Tuberville's questions in. We have both got a vote that is coming up. I understand that Chair Gillibrand does have a second round of questions so we may have to briefly recess if I get to a point where I have got to go vote, so I am not the last person holding up all the other Senate members.

Senator Tuberville.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you very much. Thanks for your service, and Ms. Mulcahy, thank you for being here today and we look forward to Space Command moving to Huntsville, Alabama, in the near future. We are excited about that.

I want to talk a little bit about, going back to recruiting, which is, you know, people are the lifeblood of what we all do. You have got a tough job, because we went through a Selective Service interview a few weeks ago, and Selective Service people that did this evaluation said that we need to definitely put women in the Selective Service rotation. They need to file for the draft. Now, we might not ever have it again, but they said we need to do that, which is great.

Every year we have between 30 and 35 million eligible people in the age range of draftable. That is the same group that you are recruiting from. Out of those 30 to 35 million, only 450,000 of them are eligible to be taken in the military because of drugs, felonies, not graduating from high school, and not passing the test, so to speak.

There is one other that we are getting ready to add, obviously, and I want to hear your thoughts on this, domestic terrorism. I want to know how we are going to decide and define somebody that is a domestic terrorist in our country. They are not going to add up to it. I just want to kind of go down the line here and get your thoughts on that, because this is going to be huge for our young people trying to get into the military.

General?

Lieutenant General BRITO. Yes. Thank you, Senator, for the question. I would like to start by highlighting our Army people strategy and our actions on this with our 21st Century Talent Management as well. I would say that the actions and activities of our recruiting command for soldiers and command for officers are truly two of the major lines of efforts tied to that strategy.

To break it down a bit further, we are very much focused on the quality of the soldier versus quantity, and I would highlight the aggressive moves for virtual hiring, presence in a vocation that did not have physical presence before, a very aggressive marketing campaign to attract soldiers and allow us to compete for talent, officers as well, across all ranks.

I would also mention through the great and innovative efforts of our recruiting command they do have some very aggressive and thought-provoking vetting procedures to ensure that those soldiers that do want to join, one, meet the quality marks, do not fall into any one of the bins that you mentioned like drugs, alcohol, or other things, and show any tendencies that may put them in an extremist organization of which they may advocate for any violence for intolerance against genders, nationalities, or any types of religions.

As you did mention in your question, sir, that may not be admitted when they come to the recruiter, but certainly aggressive dialogue with the recruiter to the soldier, checking of tattoos and other measures like that, will hopefully prevent any soldier from joining the ranks with that in their mind.

I would mention that same level of building a positive culture of dignity and respect carries on into the initial entry training and on to their first unit of assignment, to assure that we just do not have those plagues in the ranks. Thank you.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you. Anyone else want to add to that?

Lieutenant General KELLY. Sir, I will jump in there, not to repeat what General Brito said, but I will tell you that we were in the midst of transforming the way that we do recruiting prior to COVID, but it meant that we were well postured for COVID. So specifically, we had gone to digital, and in fiscal year 2017, 34 percent of our marketing and advertising was digital. Today it is 98 percent. So that postured us well to go totally virtual, to find those high-quality recruits, which you head the nail right on the head with dwindling numbers, where they are at, and in the medium that they used.

We formed e-talent teams to take all of that and to get a better return on investment for what we got back. To put a fine point on that as you look at our e-talent, 10 percent of advertising leads under the old system resulted in prospective recruits, 30 percent now. We brought new customer relationship management software in, what the civilian world uses, and now we can use better predictive analytics to figure out where we need to go and how do we do a better job attracting and then bringing them on board.

To give you the numbers, last year, amidst COVID, we met a 40,000-sailor accession mission. To put that in perspective, in fiscal year 2016 we brought in 31,000. So we think that those are some ways to really get after it smarter.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you. We probably can continue this, Senator, when we come back?

Senator TILLIS. Keep going. There are only about 40 members that need to vote.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Okay. Anybody else want to add to that?

Lieutenant General KELLY. Senator, I will just add a little bit to the discussion we just had. So the Air Force made their recruiting goal in fiscal year 2020, and we will make it again in fiscal year 2021. We are on track and we will do well here in fiscal year 2021.

But what we have recognized, and what you heard previously from this discussion of the war for talent now, if you want to call it that, is we have to go out and shift our resources. We shifted our resources to going out and exposing and inspiring. We talk about engagements and we talk about, for instance, flight academies, to expose communities of people to aviation that have not been previously exposed to aviation, and understanding what it means and what the opportunities might be.

Whereas we had a lot of resources before that were pretty easily just processing folks that came to us, we have now shifted that to be much more of an outreach organizations, from a recruiting per-

spective. Engaging them in the e-environment, as was discussed by my colleagues, but other ways.

Then the one other point I would want to make on the discussion of extremism is when we had our stand-downs, and we went through the SecDef directive stand-down, one of the big pieces of feedback that came back is there is some room for interpretation in that space, and there is some discussion there, right? So how do you balance the individual constitutional rights of somebody, and what do you do? Clearly on the conduct side we understand that. But on the thought side we do not understand it as well.

What we owe the force and what we owe people back, part of this and part of the screening process is, how do we look at it, how do we clearly define it better than what it is today, and how do we make it easier for our airmen to understand what is permissible and what is not permissible.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you.

Lieutenant General OTTIGNON. Senator, just a couple of things on extremism. One I would say is the Marine Corps is fully committed to supporting the Department's efforts, and Congress, with the support of Congress, to help eliminate supremacist and extremist behavior.

Our stand-down revealed very similar reflections, but I also thought the feedback was incredibly positive to have a small unit conversation, really Civics 101, and understanding about what the oath of office is, and the reflections were very positive.

Our sessions, programs, the way we screen to discover, and the way we process at sessions was considered, you know, a best practice within the Department. So I am confident on the front end, of course with the help of Congress, the tools necessary. It is a comment that was spoken—how do you continue to find people who are in your ranks?

We have a unique order that was written in 2018, a Prohibitive Conduct Order—Activities Conduct Order, excuse me—and since its inception it was designed to go after behavior that was inconsistent with our ethos, and we have identified marines. We have had 16 cases, substantiated cases, where those were either adjudicated through administrative or judicial means, and those individuals were removed from our ranks.

With regards to recruiting and retention, I would just offer that it is a competitive market. We go into the fiscal year 2022 with about 50 percent in our ready pool for enlistments. We do not compromise the quality that we are looking for. We maintain an exceptionally high quality for Tier 1 at 99.5 percent, and we are well above the DOD standard for mental categories.

It is a challenge for our recruiters. They showed great resiliency through COVID. We are coming out of that, but that direct engagement, that sitting in the living room with a young man or young woman with their family, and understanding what we do and the benefits of service to this great country of ours are invaluable, and I think our recruiters who represent our country in every corner of our great 50 states would say that that is the one thing that we want to get back to.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Medicaid. Mulcahy?

Ms. MULCAHY. Thank you, Senator. I want to start first to echo some of my colleagues' comments on extremism. That was a very sobering but positive experience throughout the Space Force with hearing from senior leaders and then having discussions at the small group level. It was a very positive experience.

As far as recruiting goes, we have the benefit of small numbers and people wanting to join the Space Force, and that is very exciting. What I would say, though, is that we would like to be, especially when you look at STEM talent, it tends to be not as diverse and as representative as we would like it to be, and we know we would be stronger with that. So we are looking at some different strategies, especially when it comes to females, about how better to be able to reach out and attract that talent.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you. I used to tell my football team, "I don't care whether you like each other or not. You better love each other, because you are going to fight with each other on Saturday afternoon." I think you are pretty much the same way. You have got different personalities. I mean, there is no way you can bring everybody to think the same way, but they can at the time of need, and I think that is what you are all looking for.

Thank you very much.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Senator Tillis.

Senator TILLIS. Thank you, Senator Gillibrand. I am going to be brief and then I have to go vote. I have some questions for the record, and General Brito, I will just follow up on the incident I was talking about at Fort Bragg. We will just follow up on the discussion that you and I had yesterday.

But Admiral Nowell, the Navy has grown more than any other service line over the last 5 years. Now we are looking at DOD budgets that are going to be flat. Can you give me an idea of how that is going to create a stress on force management?

Vice Admiral NOWELL. Thank you for that, and I will say, you know, we have seen pretty tremendous billet growth again. Our billets are tied to the force of record, and as we are growing those numbers, just to put it in perspective, over the last 3 to 4 years we have increased Navy billets by about 23,000. About 12,000 of those are at sea, and we have already got about 5,000 of those filled. Again, for the Navy Technical Service, it takes me about 1 to 3 years to get folks through that, but again, we have been increasing the accession mission.

So as we look at the future, as we look at the draw on that talent, we know that we have to manage that talent differently. As we look at what we call the detailing marketplace, how do we do that? How do we do it more agilely. I think that is going to be very important.

As we look at great power competition and how we train those sailors, what is that continuum of learning, how can we repurpose that, critical. Then as we look at what skills do we need and how would they change, I was down at Corry Station in Pensacola last week. We have always called that the cradle of Navy aviation. Now we call it the cradle of cyber warfare as well, at how we are doing the cyber mission. So we are looking hard at do we have that right mix, and then do we also have it in the Reserve component? COVID helped us test out and accelerate some of the ways we

could do distributed mass mobilization, and now we are bringing the systems, with Congress' support, of our transformation, to go ahead and get things like this Integrated Personnel System for the AC and the RC. That total force, as we look at the future and great power competition is going to be critical.

Senator TILLIS. Thank you; Just maybe a final notice and then a final comment. The notice is that I am going to back down at Camp Lejeune and back down at Fort Bragg for military housing town halls. It is probably going to happen sometime in July or August. I hate to say this but I have said it before, every time I announce a town hall with military families to focus on housing and other military family issues, the military housing service requests tend to go down precipitously before I get there. I just want to make it very clear to the families at Camp Lejeune and at Fort Bragg that they are still on my radar and we are going to hear their voice here over the next couple of months.

Then a final statement for all of you. You are the Service Chiefs. Military sexual assault is a big problem. We heard, in the first panel, from Dr. Van Winkle, that we have command climate surveys. It seems like there is a disconnect, sometime at the command level, sometimes down at the unit level. We hear that some of the programs that we expected to be implemented on the ground have not been implemented on the ground. You guys are the leaders. You men and women are the leaders of the service lines. It comes from the top first, and we expect to see a lot of progress there.

I applaud Senator Gillibrand for all the work she has done staying focus on this. We have not made near the progress that she or I would like to make, but I appreciate her leadership and keeping her shoulder into it.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you very much, Senator Tillis, and I echo your comments. I appreciate your leadership on this committee and I appreciate all the questions.

Since I missed a couple of the questions the others asked while I went to vote, I just wanted to ask a little bit about extremism. I know somebody did mention that earlier.

Earlier this year, Secretary of Defense Austin directed a military stand-down to address extremism in the ranks. What did your service learn during the stand-down about extremism in the ranks? What is your personal assessment about the extent of extremism in your service?

Why don't we just start at the beginning and go down the line?

Lieutenant General BRITO. Yes. Thank you, Chair Gillibrand. One, we did conduct, at all three components, the training, and the one that directed but more desired from the unit leadership with the soldiers and civilians. What we did learn, that it is definitely a concern of our soldiers. I would assess that extremism is not a rampant problem across the United States Army. What I would offer, one is too many, and clearly something that we need to look at. Anything that fractures the cohesion and dignity and respect and cohesive teams that our Army deserves, and the contract that we have with the parents of the soldiers that join, needs to be addressed.

So not a rampant problem, one is too many, and definitely something we learned from listening to our soldiers and our civilians. Thank you.

Vice Admiral NOWELL. Madam Chairwoman, what we found was that, one, many sailors said, "I don't see it at the unit I am at but I have seen it before in the Navy." So we do think those numbers are small, but we think that it is there. So the one thing that the stand-down did, across the entire Navy—Active, Reserve—as well as our civilians, was to draw a clear line in the sand and say, "Not in our Navy. Not now. Not ever." I think that was important.

The other thing that we heard is at these listening sessions that we started as part of Task Force One Navy last summer—and they can be hard conversations, in listening to experiences that our shipmates have had—continuing those in the stand-down, and they continue today, that our sailors appreciate that and they think that that is very important. Then it emphasized the fact that this is about deckplate leadership. It is about the culture and climate. We are doing many things there in a concerted fashion. But it just reinforced that it is about shipmates taking care of shipmates. We expect bystander intervention. I think it helped clear up some issues with what do I do when I see something.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you. Lieutenant General Kelly?

Lieutenant General KELLY. Madam Chairwoman, I think similar to my colleagues I would say the sessions that we had and the feedback that we got from airmen was that it was good to have these small group discussions and they felt it was helpful to be able to talk through the issues.

I think, just like the others had said, I think our numbers are small, but we frankly learned we don't know what we don't know. You know, A1C McCaffrey is a pretty visible case for us. He made it through basic training, made it to tech school, and before we realized a lot of things that were available to folks out on social media.

So some of the feedback that came back to us from this discussion, and is right now being addressed in an Office of Secretary of Defense (OSD) working group, are we need a little bit better definition for the force in terms of what is extremism, as the definitions are in the DOD instructions today about active participation, and what does active participation mean, and what are permissible and impermissible behaviors?

Then lastly, and this follows from Senator Tuberville's question, is screen. Social media screening for our recruiters is a spot that we have to improve upon. We don't do social media screening today. We do lots of other law enforcement checks. We do lots of other asking. You know, we check for tattoos, we check for extremist behavior, and ask questions. But the ability to scale and look at the social media thing I think is going to come back to us, and I think the OSD working group, for which we are all participating, is going to take that on, and I think that will be an important aspect going forward as well.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you.

Lieutenant General OTTIGNON. Madam Chairwoman, just again, echoing my colleagues. Definitely the feedback we got was incredibly positive. The small unit leader discussions were very fruitful.



I am reminded that, you know, this is something that has got the Commandant's attention, clearly. We also remember 2018 from Charlottesville. And so this was not our first time at this.

We took steps, as well, 3 years ago, to create the Prohibitive Activities Conduct Order that kind of closed the seam that gave a commander a tool to hold people accountable. We have had 16 cases where they were either administrative or judiciously removed from service because of it.

So we have the means to do that. I think I would echo what Admiral Nowell said. I think there were some reflections of "I have seen it but it is not in my unit," which I thought was a pretty good reflection. I think, finally, what I would say is that many of the commanders said they appreciated the opportunity to have that time to talk to their marines and sailors, to readminister the oath of office, and to really double-tap why it is important, what we do as a Marine Corps for our great Nation.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you. Ms. Mulcahy?

Ms. MULCAHY. Yes, Chairwoman Gillibrand. I am going to echo my colleagues as well. The training was really well received, especially because we were able to do a combination of senior leader introduction into the importance of the values and the oaths of the office that we take, and then get it down to the small unit discussions. Many of our organizations also included local authorities and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and that was very informative as well.

Our guardians, as I know similar have said, for some clarity on this distinction between membership and active participation, and we are in full concert with DOD to work through that.

I would say it does not seem to be, from our view, an apparent problem pervasive in the Space Force, but I would also echo General Kelly, that there is a little bit of you don't know what you don't know.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Right. Thank you. With regard to Space Force transition, we understand that the Space Force will transition several thousand more servicemembers into the ranks by the end of fiscal year 2022, as many as 9,000. What challenges are you experiencing as the Space Force executes this transition, and both for Lieutenant General Kelly and Ms. Mulcahy.

Ms. MULCAHY. Thank you for that question, Chairwoman Gillibrand. I think maybe one of the challenges is we have had overwhelming support and folks who are looking to join the space for in concert with the other services, so making those selections is a bit of a challenge for next year. I think by virtue of the manpower and the end strength that we are targeting for the end of next year, we do not see any issue with being able to make that number. I would say, though, that because of how quickly we are growing, we will, over time, have some challenges with senior NCOs and with officers, field-grade officers, so we expected that. But again, trying to ameliorate that with getting some expertise from the other services as well.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you. Lieutenant General?

Lieutenant General KELLY. Madam Chair, thank you for the question. As Ms. Mulcahy said, we have been working hand-in-

hand with them, and I think, you know, the process of transferring airmen into the Space Force has worked pretty well.

What we have been doing internal management, at Ms. Mulcahy's and my level, is even though we do not have a separate appropriation or a separate end strength, we are already managing that way inside the Department. So we know what are numbers are. We are managing toward it in the Space Force and the Air Force and sort of keeping track on that, which helps.

One of the challenges for us, on the Air Force side, is how do we make sure the airmen who are supporting and are assigned as Space Force base or Space Force unit, how do we make sure that those airmen are not either disadvantaged or advantaged in any way. We need our airmen to go to those units and not feel any different than they do if they went to an Air Force unit. So we are working really hard with our partners and trying to make sure that is a seamless thing for our airmen so they do not feel any different when they are out there supporting or assigned to a Space Force unit.

Senator GILLIBRAND. With regard to—we have talked about this with some of the other Senators, the cyber workforce, we had a hearing a couple of weeks ago about the make-up of the cyber workforce, and who we need, how do we get them, how do we pay them, how do we keep them, with an eye towards building and sustaining the force we need over the next 10 years.

Much of the discussion was about recruiting and retention, the appropriate mix between military and civilian workforces. What are your views on the appropriate mix of personnel and our ability to recruit and retain this specialized workforce? Do you believe we should use National Guard in performance of the cyber mission, and is there any untapped capacity in the Guard for these missions?

Let's start with Lieutenant General Brito.

Lieutenant General BRITO. Yes, ma'am. It would be hard to put an actual percentage on the mix for military and civilian, but I would mention that we definitely need specialized skill, both in our civilian and military, in uniformed skills as well.

I would mention that we are working in conjunction with Army Cyber, that we have redesigned our traditional legacy hiring practices, and they have actually set up a centralized [inaudible]—I am sorry, Rock Island, Illinois, to help us recruit the talented civilians that we need and expedite the talent hiring practices, to get this talented skill into the force.

If I may shift to the military, one, if it took it back about 2 years ago, we assessed and recruited the talent, many of which right out of college, and put them into our direct commissioning program. Present day we are assessing leaders and soldiers into this specific branch. Clearly, looking at the talents of some of the soldiers of all ranks in our National Guard and Reserves, if they have the skills and talent, certainly it is an asset that we should tap to execute our very important cyber mission for our country.

Vice Admiral NOWELL. Madam Chairwoman, thank you. As I mentioned earlier, I was down at Corry Station just last week, looking at how we are training these operators, both offensive and defensive, and it is a mix, enlisted and officer. I will tell you that

one of the things we have been doing is, is that force the way that we want it organized now, what could it look like in the future, and then leveraging some of the authorities that you have given us, I think, of the NDAA 2019 DOTMA reforms, which we have used with lateral entry for cyber, to permit doing that at higher grades with respect to the age restrictions.

Some of this is about bonuses and things like that. I mentioned earlier some of our recruiting initiatives, getting into digital, how do we go find folks. But then, as well, we have actually recreated some rates or ranks, if you will. We brought back our Warrant 1 for the first time since Vietnam and applied it to cyber. When I was in Corry Station, the feedback there was great. We would take an E-5 who has got about 5 or 6 years in, but who has the aptitude, and then we can entice them, because it is a great pay raise, they get to do what they want to do as a Warrant 1, which is sit in a dark room and defend or attack. We get about an extra 5 or 6 years out of them as an operator, as compared to the old model.

Additionally, we expanded our cyber warfare engineer designator career path from O-1 to O-3, to O-1 to O-6, and so we can commission them at all pay grades.

So we are leaning into this, not just with the tools we have but are we organized for what we need in the future.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you. Lieutenant General Kelly?

Lieutenant General KELLY. Madam Chairwoman, I will not repeat what my colleagues have already put out there, but I would just add to that and say, because we are all thinking about it very similarly, but we have been thinking about on trying to work on, how do you change your model, from a model that as you brought talent in and talent stayed with you for a long time, to understanding, in the cyberspace, sometimes talent is going to come in for a few years, work on a specific problem, and depart out. So being able to tap into the Guard and Reserve and our component, being able to tap into civilians who are going to be extremely talented in the cyberspace but are not going to be necessarily interested in uniformed service, and how do you make sure you do that?

We have been thinking about civilian auxiliary services and civilian cyber services, and that in that way we have been thinking about the portability and the lateral entry, not lateral entry for career but lateral entry for 2 or 3 years, to work on a specific cyber problem and provide specific talent, and then transition in and out.

So we are thinking about this cyber talent in a much more flexible way than we did in our human capital before.

Lieutenant General OTTIGNON. Madam Chairwoman, I just would acknowledge a very complex problem, as we try to fulfill the requirements of both joint and within service, I have regular conversations with the Deputy Commandant for Information as well as our Commanding General for Marine Forces Cyber. For us, again, it's a matter of incentives, both monetary and non-monetary, to do that to retain and attract. But it is an absolute challenge.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Ms. Mulcahy?

Ms. MULCAHY. Yes, Chairwoman Gillibrand. You asked for about what percent of the force, so for us in the Space Force it is about 20 percent. But what we are also realizing is that this business of coding is so important in all of our disciplines in space, and so it

is not just the cyber experts, but we are identifying folks in the other specialties that we have to become coders. We have this 12-week boot camp that we just ran this past year, and had some 25 graduates, and they came from different specialties, and then they will go back in all functions and be able to support and help, and we just think that is so important in our service.

We are also working on fluency, and so digital university has licenses, and as we got started we had hundreds of them. Now we have thousands of them. So it is part of the culture now, and not just our military but our civilian as well, we have this high expectation.

The last thing I would like to say is one of our NCOs had the idea, as we brought our first seven guardians into the Force last fall, to issue a tablet and some of this license and courseware. There was back and forth—how much would they do on their own? Those seven guardians did 122 hours in about the first 10 days of basic military training.

So there is a way that we believe that we can still connect and make use as we are trying to expand to get more talent in for cyber.

Senator GILLIBRAND. So I have an idea that I want to get your thoughts on. So I have been sitting on the Board of Visitors for West Point for most of the last decade, and it has been one of the most helpful experiences I have ever had and extremely inspiring. We do not have a special school for cyber, but we need cyber professionals in the whole of government. So we need them in the DOD, we need them in the intelligence services, we need them in Commerce, we need them everywhere.

What do you think about the idea of having a national cyber school that is for whole-of-government, not just one service, so that you would be able to recruit from this school directly? The reason why I am suggesting this is one of the challenge we have in cyber, specifically, that I think is so important, is we really excel when we have diversity. When we have kids from all over the globe, all over the country coming to do cyber, their expertise and skills are so extraordinary, we want to be able to cultivate them. Because the service academies are so successful at bringing up men and women to not only have a heart of service but a dedication to this country, I think it would be worth considering having a cyber school that can be recruited from each of the services but also from the intelligence services and other aspects of government where we need it.

To develop that love of public service and love of leadership, what is so unique about the service academies, they teach leadership. You do not go to any other school in America where they teach leadership except for the service academies. I think that makes them profoundly important to the future of this country.

I would like your thoughts, and if you do not have one today, because I did not ask you in advance, I would like your thoughts of what would you want if we did stand up a cyber school that could be used for whole-of-government needs so that we get the diversity we are looking for, so that we get the upfront training in areas that we need our kids to have.

We do have some already in the service academies. West Point has one of the best cyber majors you could have, and it is fantastic.

But I'm thinking to create an onramp for public service of all types of students. Because as we have discussed, it is a hard mix, because you have talent that may not look like a typical servicemember. They may not be able to bench press X number of pounds and do so many pushups and all those things. They may not want to become an expert in shooting and arms and everything else that our military members develop. But they may be the best in the country, and we want access to them.

So I was thinking that might be a way to recruit directly from the best of the best. What are your thoughts on that? Whoever has one can jump in.

Vice Admiral NOWELL. Ma'am, I will just jump in there, because the Naval Academy just recently opened Hopper Hall, named for Grace Hopper, which is all about cyber operations, state of the art, I think probably similar to West Point. When we looked at that, some of this is how you think about it. It is also accepting that when we say "warfighters," what we have been working in the Navy is typically that is applied to a surface warfare officer, like me, an aviator, explosive ordnance, a SEAL, a submariner. But our cyber warriors may very well be the ones who launch the first attack or, you know, defend against that last salvo.

So I think looking at different models would be good, and certainly we are doing that a micro scale, if you look at what we are doing at the Academy. We have increased the number of folks that we are allowing now to go into that specialty, as they come out of the Academy, recognizing that that is a necessity.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Let me just comment on that. So to get into the Naval Academy, it is really hard. You have to be top of your class, excellent scores, excellent physical fitness, several sports would be preferred. I mean, it is a certain person. But that is not going to get all the talent we need in cyber. So that is why I think the service academies are smart to have cyber specialties at each of them. But the pond is not big enough, is my problem. Only certain kids know about service academies. I mean, that is a huge problem. Only certain kids know about it, aspire to it, and then create a high school career to be able to get in.

I am looking for a larger pond that you can then feed from, do your specialized training at the service academies, for people who know they want to be in the Navy since they were age 15 and that is where they are going. But this other kid, who just might be a fantastic engineer or coder, who we could inspire to do public service, through free education with the commitment for service, that is a big net.

So to the extent you want to spend some time thinking about it, and how you might be able to recruit from that one body, the extra 10 percent of cyber specialists you need, that might be the key to the competitiveness that we are lacking. Because lots of kids would love to do public service, but not lots of kids have a background in military or aspire to it. But we want access to those kids too, and I think if we created something meaningful we could get it.

Any other comments before we finish? Ms. Mulcahy, I would like to know your opinion, since you do not have a specific service academy for Space Force.

Ms. MULCAHY. Yeah, this is intriguing, Chairwoman Gillibrand. I would say, as far as a separate academy goes for Space Force, I think nesting with the Air Force Academy is just right and just perfect for us now. But this is something to think about, as a separate school. I have also been thinking about—and I know that we have certain missions in all of our services that have to be done by military people that have cyber skills, but we have other ones that civilians can do, and so perhaps this is something that caters to both.

Lieutenant General BRITO. Yes, and Chair Gillibrand, if I may add, similar to an approach we are trying, we are working with our 21st Century Talent Management now. We have seen the challenges of, one, attracting, inviting those special skills to the service, and more importantly, retaining them, because Google and others may offer more money and opportunities. So certainly an exciting approach, and definitely something I would like to learn more about.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you all for your testimony. Thank you all for your service. I am deeply grateful that you continue to serve our country as ably and as bravely as you do. Count on this Subcommittee to support the men and women who serve under you. It is our job to make sure the personnel are ready and strong and able. So thank you

[Whereupon, at 4:27 p.m., the Subcommittee adjourned.]

[Questions for the record with answers supplied follow:]

#### QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR THOM TILLIS

##### CRIME

1. Senator TILLIS. Lieutenant General Brito, the Uniform Federal Crime Reporting Act of 1988 and Department of Defense (DOD) Directive 7730.47 requires the DOD to report criminal incident data to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) as a part of the Uniform Crime Reports Program. The program was conceived to meet the need for reliable uniform crime statistics. An Inspector General of the DOD evaluation found that although DOD is a Federal agency that routinely investigates complaints of criminal activity, it does not provide detailed reports about such crimes to the FBI for inclusion in the National Incident-Based Reporting System database and the annual uniform crime reports. While this deficiency impacts informed analysis of DOD criminal activity prevention, there is much more that needs to be done at the department and service levels to ensure servicemembers, their families, and members of the community are protected. Recent events at Fort Hood and Fort Bragg highlight a perceived increase in murder, sexual assault, and other high profile criminal acts at Army installations. What actions are you, as the personnel readiness advocate for the Army, doing to combat crime?

Lieutenant General BRITO. Crime prevention is everyone's responsibility, at all echelons. Within the People First Task Force, the Prevention Line of Effort is focused on holistic prevention of all harmful behaviors, as a precursor to preventing crime and informed by the Fort Hood Independent Review Commission report. We are taking proactive measures to target our prevention programs to those at risk with an emphasis on the environmental factors that contribute to harmful behaviors. We are working closely with the Provost Marshall General to revise crime prevention policy and are providing additional guidance through an Army-wide Execution Order. This execution order directs a coordinated Army crime prevention program to ensure Commanders have measures and procedures in place to reduce the victimization of soldiers and achieve enduring change. Included in the order are procedures for standardized recurring crime analysis and reporting of crime trends to improve information sharing between installations and civilian law enforcement agencies and increase crime awareness and law enforcement reporting procedures by Army personnel.

## EXCEPTIONAL FAMILY MEMBER PROGRAM

2. Senator TILLIS. Lieutenant General Brito, Vice Admiral Nowell, Lieutenant General Ottignon, and Ms. Mulcahy, in last year's NDAA, Congress mandated major reforms to the Exceptional Family Member Program. As you all are aware, there have been challenges ensuring program and process standardization across the services. Families have been frustrated trying to find health care, getting support for their children in school, and having access to adequate housing. The Air Force has done a lot of good work to improve its EFMP that DOD and the other services should adopt. Can you briefly describe the work your service has done to standardize and improve the EFMP?

Lieutenant General BRITO. The Army established an EFMP Board of Directors, chaired by the DCS, G-9, that meet at least every six months with 2 & 3-star leaders to evaluate the EFMP performance and address critical issues with the program.

The Army has updated our regulation governing legal services to soldiers and families to include special education law. As a result, all our Army legal assistance attorneys will now be available to provide basic legal counseling to all eligible clients, including EFMP families, in the area of special education law. Over the last year, the Army has focused on providing our attorneys with in-depth training in this complex area of the law. Last year, we partnered with a nationally renowned law school to train 31 legal assistance attorneys and 6 paralegals across 22 installations on special education and disability law. The course will be offered again this year to train additional legal assistance personnel. Additionally, training on the basics of education law is available at any time from the American Bar Association through on-demand, virtual training for attorneys in between the more in-depth annual training. Finally, the Army has also partnered with the American Bar Association military program to provide pro bono legal assistance to eligible EFMP families when particularly complex cases arise.

The Army is developing an integrated enterprise EFMP system, which will provide holistic overview of installation and MTF capabilities, enhanced medical/assignment coordination and family support access, case management that initiates and monitors career-long EFMP enrollment, and a dashboard for stakeholders and users to access and share data. The Army partnered with the Air Force to leverage their current EFMP solution and framework to expedite the development of the Army Enterprise EFMP system.

The week of 14-18 Jun, the Army conducted a Rapid Improvement Event to review current holistic EFMP processes and identify gaps. This information will help with the planning of an Army centralized office.

The Army attends the DOD Office of Special Needs workgroups to map out EFMP processes in an effort to standardize processes across the Services.

Vice Admiral NOWELL. Navy is actively working to standardize and improve the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) by participating in a joint Department of Defense EFMP Working Group to standardize EFMP processes across the Services to make it easier for our families to enroll and gain access to support services. We are also developing a model to consolidate the EFMP at a single headquarters site to serve as the single lead for all EFMP matters within Navy. Additionally, we recently met with the Air Force and Marine Corps to garner lessons learned and to ensure our implementation plan mirrors other special education legal support services to determine the number of attorneys needed to provide the necessary legal support to our families across the Fleet. As part of this effort, we developed special education training for our other attorneys to immediately expand our legal support. We are also hiring additional EFMP staff at our installations to improve and increase support to our EFMP families at the point of service.

Lieutenant General OTTIGNON. While I cannot speak for the Air Force, I can say that the Marine Corps is very proud of the work we've done. The Marine Corps is in full compliance with NDAA 2021 requirements for EFMP. Our staffing model (1 staff: 225 families) ensures we have sufficient numbers of family support providers to assist families at all times and we place particular emphasis on support during PCS, as families are transitioning medical, educational and community support services.

We identify, document, and liaise with military housing offices to ensure families with medically necessary housing accommodations or modifications are appropriately assisted and accommodated.

We provide a variety of special education support, including attending special education meetings with families and free specialized legal support and representation, when needed. Attorneys are located regionally at Camp Pendleton, Camp Lejeune and MCB Hawaii. A fourth attorney will assist families in the National Capital Region, effective January 2022.

We routinely evaluate the effectiveness of the program and make adjustments, as needed. During the most recent comprehensive program evaluation in 2020, customers reported that the USMC EFMP is the primary and most reliable and proficient source of information for EFMP families. They also noted that families who use EFMP to address their needs are highly satisfied and EFMP policy and services align with the top customer identified needs.

Ms. MULCAHY. The DAF implemented major changes to the EFMP based on feedback from our Air and Space Force families. As a result, an EFMP Centralized Cell, a one-stop shop for families, was established integrating multi-disciplinary experts in medical, assignments, special education and legal matters with both a special education attorney and a special education specialist to assist our families and school liaisons. We added additional medical and assignment personnel to better facilitate family member travel screening; and, will add a TRICARE Liaison and Respite Care Coordinator before the end of the summer.

Additionally, we made improvements to PCS processes and EFMP support staff training to better support families. We are utilizing a review of medical claims/records and moving away from doctor visits to clear families prior to a PCS. Through our newly launched DAF Family Vector website, the EFMP cell provides a two-year historical review of travel recommendations by location and specialty, providing families greater visibility of potential duty locations that meet individual family needs. DAF Family Vector provides resources on medical, moving, special education, respite care, frequently asked questions and contact information for the central cell and local resources – and does not require a Common Access Card. Department of the Air Force Airmen and Family Readiness and Child and Youth Programs partnered to offer training on Special Education (“Wright’s Law Training”) to Installation EFMP–Family Support Specialists, School Liaisons, and Legal representatives.

In order to ensure we are supporting EFMP family needs, we maintain connections with our families via social media platforms and local outreach efforts and continuously solicit their input.

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#### QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MAZIE HIRONO

##### SEXUAL ASSAULT/HARASSMENT

3. Senator HIRONO. Dr. Van Winkle, the Sexual Assault Independent Review Commission (IRC) provided some initial accountability recommendations to Secretary Austin, including transferring court-martial charging decisions outside of the chain of command for sexual assault and sexual harassment and requiring all sexual harassment allegations to be investigated outside of the immediate chain of command. What are your thoughts on these initial IRC recommendations?

Dr. VAN WINKLE. This is an extremely important topic. Matters related to court-martial charging decisions fall under the purview of the DOD Office of General Counsel, and recently the Independent Review Commission has evaluated this topic as well to provide recommendations for consideration by Secretary Austin and the President.

That said, I can speak about the critical role of the commander with respect to two priority areas for our ongoing efforts: prevention and command climate. In any military, good order and discipline is essential to project the power necessary to win on the battlefield. We also recognize that pursuing good order and discipline is about shaping behaviors. We want to use that ability to shape behaviors to prevent sexual assault from occurring in the first place.

As we continue to further improve best practices for prevention and enhance use of command climate tools, it is our continuing belief that commanders have a unique ability to set expectations for behaviors and demand positive, respectful command climates. So commanders can and must also help us reduce the likelihood of sexual assault and sexual harassment. Although prevention and command climate are separate from military justice procedures, including decisions related to court-martials that take place after an alleged crime has occurred, commanders are key to potentially helping stop these crimes from occurring in the first place.

4. Senator HIRONO. Dr. Van Winkle, do you agree with the creation of a punitive article in the UCMJ to specifically prohibit sexual harassment, which is a provision in the ‘I Am Vanessa Guillen Act’?

Dr. VAN WINKLE. Yes, I support creating a specific criminal offense of sexual harassment. This was the first recommendation of the Sexual Assault Accountability and Investigation Task Force, which I co-led.



5. Senator HIRONO. Dr. Van Winkle, in March, the GAO completed a report which concluded DOD had not implemented several previous GAO recommendations from 2015 and 2017 related to sexual assault prevention, including the identification of sexual assault risk and protective factors, in coordination with the Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines; development of Department specific performance measures for the prevention of sexual assault so that the measures include all key attributes of successful performance measures; and incorporating elements for establishing a long-term, results oriented strategic planning framework in its sexual assault prevention strategy. Why hasn't DOD implemented these recommendations, especially the identification of sexual assault risk and protective factors unique to DOD?

Dr. VAN WINKLE. The GAO agreed to close out this action item on June 10, 2021.

DOD Prevention Plan of Action Objectives 4.4.1 and 4.4.3 directed DOD and Services/National Guard Bureau (NGB) to identify and utilize risk and protective factors to plan and evaluate prevention activities. As part of the required Prevention Self-Assessment (due Dec 31, 2019), DOD and Services/NGB considered their existing efforts to identify key contributing factors of sexual assault across their full population and at-risk populations. Based on their assessment findings, DOD and Services/NGB developed a plan of action and milestones. The DOD Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office offered, and continues to offer, technical assistance opportunities through agreement with the Centers for Diseases Control and Prevention (CDC) to support DOD and Service/NGB planning efforts and also funded research on contributing factors for at-risk populations.

#### VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN THE ARMED FORCES

6. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Herbert and Dr. Van Winkle, Secretary Austin recently announced immediate actions to counter extremism in the military and the establishment of the Countering Extremism Working Group. One of the lines of effort for this working group is to evaluate whether seeking to amend the Uniformed Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) is appropriate to address extremism. A challenge associated with eradicating extremism is clarifying the definition. I am cognizant of the need to protect free speech for our servicemembers; however, servicemembers that have ties to extremist ideologies are a threat to both the military and the nation at large. How is the Department progressing on the definition of "extremism"?

Mr. HERBERT. and Dr. VAN WINKLE. Thank you for the question, Senator. As you mentioned, Secretary Austin has taken immediate actions to address the threat of extremism in our Armed Forces. To be clear, the vast majority of the men and women in this Department serve with honor and uphold our core values. One of Secretary Austin's actions to address the question of extremism in the ranks was the creation of the Countering Extremism Working Group, or CEWG, comprised of experts from across the Department and Services. The CEWG is hard at work reviewing the Department's extremism policy, which includes ensuring any changes to this policy balance the rights of our servicemembers with the need to protect our people and our mission from the threat of extremism in the ranks. I look forward to updating the Committee once this question has been resolved.

7. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Brito, Vice Admiral Nowell, Lieutenant General Kelly, Lieutenant General Ottignon, and Ms. Mulcahy, at the beginning of this year, Secretary Austin ordered a 60 day 'stand down' to address troubling reports of extremism in the ranks. What are some lessons learned from this stand down?

Lieutenant General BRITO. HQDA published an Execution Order on 18 February 2021, directing the Army to conduct a stand-down event addressing the impacts of extremism in the ranks. Army commanders and supervisors led discussions emphasizing the responsibility to guard against participation in extremist ideologies activities." . To assist leaders, the Army provided the Office of the Secretary of Defense-approved stand-down framework entitled "Office of the Secretary of Defense: Leadership Stand-Down to Address Extremism in the Force" and additional educational materials to facilitate discussion.

Initial lessons learned indicate most personnel appreciated the stand-down. Additionally, many personnel think the dialogue generated by the stand-down should be recurring or ongoing.

Both standardized instruction and case studies with small group discussions were useful. The products developed by HQDA provided clear left and right limits for leaders.

For many organizations, facilitating virtual conversations in the COVID-19 environment was challenging. It was difficult to assess attention and receptiveness in

an online setting. In-person discussions were optimal, providing leaders the ability to directly engage their teams and influence the group's level of involvement.

Some organizations felt that the civilian oath of office was under-emphasized. While the military oath is an important part of every promotion ceremony, the civilian analog can frequently seem like an afterthought. The Army should place commensurate emphasis on the civilian oath.

Vice Admiral NOWELL. Navy received over 1,200 lessons learned and best practices in response to the Secretary of Defense's (SECDEF) 60-day Stand-Down to Address Extremism in the Ranks. Our sailors had great feedback, and Navy is leveraging these lessons learned to inform the SECDEF Countering Extremism Working Group (CEWG). Sailors were concerned the Department of Defense (DOD) does not have an approved definition for extremism, a defined list of extremist groups, or specific extremist-affiliated tattoos. They also suggested that DOD needs a mechanism for misconduct with a marker for extremism to track and assess the magnitude of, and the progress made to combat extremism. Additionally, we received feedback that DOD needs a mechanism to support screening for extremist activities prior to accession and ongoing in-service screenings while also informing sailors about the rules, laws, and regulations regarding extremism upon separation or retirement. These are just a few lessons learned, and the recommendations that will come from the CEWG are expected to include actions that address many of these issues.

Lieutenant General OTTIGNON. The Marine Corps is fully committed to supporting the Department's efforts, with the support of Congress, to help eliminate supremacist and extremist behavior. We received incredibly positive feedback regarding the opportunity to have a small-unit, civics based conversation and discussing the importance of the oath of office. The small unit leader discussions were very fruitful and they were some reflections that indicate Marines' have seen elements of extremist activity, but not in their individual unit. Finally, many of the commanders said they appreciated the opportunity to have that time to connect with their marines and discuss why what we do for our great Nation is important.

Ms. MULCAHY. and Lieutenant General KELLY. The execution of the DAF's unit stand down day provided an opportunity for leadership to engage with their members and have frank conversations on extremism. While the Department provided overall structure, and training resources, units also had the opportunity to tailor the training based on individual needs while communicating SecDef's critical message and intent. Because units differ in mission, scope and demographics, the delivery of training received varied by unit. Most units delivered the training remotely due to the current COVID environment, while some had the ability to train in small groups and in person.

The DAF provided a unit feedback mechanism for unit commanders and leaders. Because of this, we were able to pull general themes and lessons learned from unit feedback. We've learned that the current governing DOD guidance is vague and requires clarification to better understand the definition of extremism and to better delineate permissible and impermissible conduct. The Department of the Air Force is currently working closely with OSD to update the DOD instruction and will update the respective Department of the Air Force Instruction and policy soon after.

We've also learned that there is a desire for more measured communication and educational touch points. We believe there is merit in reviewing our approach and establishing a more routine and deliberate approach to training and educating our servicemembers in diversity and inclusion, equal opportunity, the dangers and threats of extremism, and the roles and responsibilities of veteran citizens. Notwithstanding, we are cognizant of the fact that the overwhelming majority of our Airmen and Guardians serve their Nation honorably and we must structure any approach to education and training so that it is executed in a positive and constructive manner that is designed to reinforce our values, build organizations and is not divisive in its own right. Creating these deliberate opportunities in such a manner will develop stronger, more cohesive teams that sets an inclusive culture, while not tolerating discrimination or harassment in any form.

8. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Herbert and Dr. Van Winkle, Lieutenant General Brito, Vice Admiral Nowell, Lieutenant General Kelly, Lieutenant General Ottignon, and Ms. Mulcahy, what are your thoughts on creating a standalone punitive article of the Uniform Code of Military Justice to address violent extremism in the ranks and send a clear message that this conduct will not be tolerated?

Mr. HERBERT. and Dr. VAN WINKLE. Thank you, Senator. On April 9th, Secretary Austin created the Countering Extremism Working Group to discuss, among other things, this very issue. As part of the CEWG's first, "Military Justice and Policy" Line of Effort, experts from across the Department and Services have begun dis-

discussing whether amending the Uniform Code of Military Justice is appropriate in order to address extremism. I look forward to updating the Committee once this question has been resolved.

Lieutenant General BRITO. The Army is currently participating in the DOD Countering Extremist Activity Working Group where a standalone punitive article is being considered as a potential course of action. The creation of any new criminal statute must be conducted with care to ensure it is both legally viable and effectively addresses the conduct concerned. Army Implementation of Fort Hood Report Recommendations.

Vice Admiral NOWELL. On April 9, 2021, the Secretary of Defense established the Countering Extremism Working Group to proactively address the issue of extremism in the Department of Defense (DOD). Included in its mandate, this working group is tasked with evaluating whether it is advisable to recommend amending the Uniform Code of Military Justice related to extremist conduct. It would be appropriate to await the working group's recommendations to inform further analysis of this issue. I support and welcome all efforts to eliminate extremism and cultivate a safe environment for all of our DOD personnel.

Lieutenant General OTTIGNON. This is one of the many important issues currently under review by the Secretary of Defense's Countering Extremism Working Group (CEWG). The CEWG's report is due to the Secretary of Defense on 14 July 2021. Following the completion of the CEWG, the Marine Corps will diligently implement the policies, programs, and processes related to countering extremism as directed by the Secretary of Defense.

Ms. MULCAHY and Lieutenant General KELLY. I believe it is worth exploring. We want to ensure this message is clear, but we also want to ensure we are giving commanders and JAGs the proper tools to hold individuals accountable. I know there was a proposal for a standalone article last year out of the House Armed Services Committee that was not adopted, but the idea merits further discussion. Currently, there is a working group of DOD subject matter experts who are examining the issue, and who will ultimately make a recommendation as to the best way forward. I note the Rules for Courts-Martial currently allow for aggravation evidence during sentencing that the accused intentionally selected the victim because of their actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, gender, disability, or sexual orientation. One of the aspects for consideration will be whether that existing language is sufficient, or whether something more is required. I look forward to reviewing the recommendations of the working group.

#### ARMY IMPLEMENTATION OF FORT HOOD REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

9. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Brito, you provided the full Committee a briefing earlier this year on the Fort Hood Independent Review Committee Report, which found, among other troubling things, a permissive environment for sexual harassment and sexual assault at Fort Hood, Texas. What is the overall status of the Army's implementation of the 70 recommendations in the Fort Hood Report?

Lieutenant General BRITO. The Army immediately began to take action on findings and recommendations of the Report of the Fort Hood Independent Review Committee (FHIRC) upon release in December 2020. Of the 70 FHIRC recommendations, 9 recommendations have been implemented Army-wide. Fifteen additional recommendations have been implemented locally at Fort Hood. Of the 61 recommendations not yet implemented Army-wide, 54 are aligned with an approved implementation strategy. Many of these recommendations are related to SHARP redesign and the reorganization of the Army Criminal Investigative Command (USACIDC) which require significant Department level organizational structure and policy changes, currently in progress. The remaining 7 FHIRC recommendations are still undergoing analysis to determine most effective implementation strategy.

10. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Brito, how is the restructuring of the Army's Criminal Investigation Division is proceeding, especially given the Report's findings that too few experienced sexual assault investigators were assigned at Fort Hood, which led to slow and inadequate investigations which undermined victims' trust?

Lieutenant General BRITO. Per the direction of the Secretary of the Army, the process to restructure US Army Criminal Investigation Command (CID) is well underway. The implementation plan includes measures to enhance capabilities and capacity organized with and led by civilian and military agents, officers, and enlisted soldiers. The establishment and hiring of a civilian CID Director

(SES-2) position, who will initially report to the Under Secretary of the Army, is anticipated to be complete 4th quarter fiscal year 2021. The new Director will actively participate in and guide the restructure process. The Army will implement

the remainder of the redesign in phases. The first phase has begun at Fort Hood, Fort Bragg, and Fort Carson and includes intensive assessments to codify the baseline measures of effectiveness which will inform and streamline additional restructuring measures. Pending actions include increasing the ratio of civilian criminal investigators to military special agents and adding investigative support capability, ultimately increasing continuity and investigative experience. These efforts will reinforce sustained relationships with local and regional law enforcement entities. We are planning to increase the number of scientists and forensic analysis experts at the Defense Forensic Science Center which serves as the Department of Defense crime laboratory. Continuous assessments of the three designated installations will inform the Army and provide feedback on future structural changes to CID. Infusing qualified civilians into the formation is an integral piece of the overall restructure of CID and will align criminal investigations with industry best practices enabling CID to maintain military agents for wartime requirements and effectively deter and investigate felony crimes at camps, posts, and stations worldwide. We are confident these planned CID-related recommendations will lead them well into the future.

#### IMPLEMENTATION OF GENDER INTEGRATION IN THE MARINE CORPS

11. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Ottignon, the fiscal year 2020 NDAA included a requirement for the Marine Corps to integrate the genders during all recruit training—with a 5 year deadline to do so at Marine Corps Recruit Depot Paris Island, South Carolina, and an 8 year deadline at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego. What is the status of gender integration in the Marine Corps?

Lieutenant General OTTIGNON. The Marine Corps is committed to getting gender integrated recruit training right. We will meet the requirements of the fiscal year 2020 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) within the specified timelines through deliberate planning, adaptation, evaluation, and refinement while assuring our continued ability to make Marines and maintain our combat capability.

In January 2019, Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island (MCRD PI) initiated a pilot to test gender integration at the company level; the first gender integrated company graduated in Mar 2019. Starting in July 2019, the Marine Corps adopted the company integration method, applying the lessons learned in the pilot and the 2017 Center for Naval Analyses study that recommended this method. In 2020, MCRD PI graduated 8 integrated companies, and is projected to graduate 10 integrated companies in 2021. In this model, all recruits are billeted by platoon in single-gender squad bays, in compliance with 10 USC 8431. Recruits execute the same Program of Instruction as an integrated company, but they are trained and led by Drill Instructors of the same gender.

The Marine Corps expanded gender integrated recruit training to Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego (MCRD SD) in February 2021, when MCRD SD received its first shipment of female recruits and commenced its first iteration of gender integrated training. Female platoons train alongside male platoons and progressively integrate over the course of the 13-week training. By the final phase of the 13 weeks, essentially all training is mixed gender. These initial iterations of integrated training will serve to identify lessons learned that will be used for future planning at both depots.

12. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Ottignon, how are the units with full gender integration performing compared to the all-male or all-female units?

Lieutenant General OTTIGNON. Units that have been gender integrated are performing to standard just as previous units have. The Marine Corps has initiated a competitively awarded study to the University of Pittsburgh (UPitt). This independent study will assist the Marine Corps in complying with the NDAA mandate by analyzing the Corps' approach to gender-integrated recruit training, comparing it to that of other Services, and recommending best practices based on analytical data and an unbiased academic viewpoint. Results are expected no earlier than spring 2022.

#### MENTAL HEALTH

13. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Brito, Vice Admiral Nowell, Lieutenant General Kelly, Lieutenant General Ottignon, and Ms. Mulcahy, in just over 16 months, three sailors connected to the Pacific Fleet Submarine Force have died by suicide in Hawaii on three separate occasions. This is alarming and while there are no easy solutions, we must do more to support servicemembers when they need help. What processes are in place to identify servicemembers who may be distressed or at risk of suicide?

Lieutenant General BRITO. A death by suicide affects countless family members, friends, teammates, co-workers, and first responders. In addition to being a profound tragedy, suicide negatively impacts unit and organizational readiness.

Suicide is the result of complex, interrelated factors, and the Army takes a multidisciplinary, holistic comprehensive approach that includes awareness, research, and clinical/non-clinical initiatives to address suicide and other harmful behaviors that undermine trust and cohesion across our Force.

The Army's approach to preventing suicide focuses on strengthening resilience, increasing leader visibility and enhancing prevention and intervention capabilities for soldiers, families, and Army civilians through a collaborative community response.

Several recent initiatives include:

**This Is My Squad (TIMS) Initiative.** TIMS is a leadership philosophy intended to cultivate a culture of care, pride and ownership in small units across the Total Army; Junior NCOs are empowered to care for their soldiers and families.

**Behavioral Health (BH) Pulse Tool.** An anonymous, mobile friendly survey that provides leaders with visibility of a variety of BH problems, BH utilization, command climate, social relationships and risky behaviors.

**Suicide Prevention Pilot (SPP).** G-1 executed a pilot at Bliss, Hood, and Campbell, and select ARNG and USAR units to decrease the prevalence of suicidality through increases in unit cohesion, trust, coping, and communication skills. The two main SPP initiatives executed were (1) Leader Education and Training and (2) Command Visibility. The Army is currently evaluating each initiative to assess impact on behavioral health as well as increased resilience skills and unit climate. Results of the pilot, which began in October 2019, are anticipated in 4th quarter fiscal year 2021.

**The Behavioral Health Readiness and Suicide Risk Reduction Review (R4) Pilot.** The Army recently completed a pilot on the R4, an instrument that focuses on the populations most at risk of suicide (company level and below). The instrument supports the chain of command by providing first-line leaders with the practical knowledge for communicating with their soldiers on suicide prevention. The formal report is projected for completion during the 4th quarter fiscal year 2021.

**Army Policy Action published June 2020** supports lethal means safety by requiring Personally Owned Firearms (POF) to be registered for those living on-base, for those coming on base, and regulating their storage on-base. Suicide Prevention personnel collaborate with community and retailers to offer free gun-locks and safety devices.

The People First Task Force is taking a holistic approach to preventing all harmful behaviors and will include the Suicide Prevention program.

**Vice Admiral NOWELL.** Every sailor lost to suicide is one too many. Navy's approach to recognizing distressed sailors at risk for suicide is threefold: public health, general medical providers, and Embedded Mental Health (EMH) providers. Suicide is a public health problem and, as such, requires that all sailors receive training in suicide prevention. Suicide prevention training is an annual requirement and requires that sailors are taught risk factors and warning signs of suicide. Navy also teaches sailors to ACT (Ask, Care, Treat) when they have recognized suicide risk in their shipmates as a method to intervene and connect them with care. Further, Pacific Fleet developed a suicide prevention continuum initiative that charged the Chief's Mess with monthly conversations with their sailors about suicide prevention, including how to recognize distressed shipmates who may be at risk for suicide and ACT. Additionally, Navy continues to offer the Sailor Assistance and Intercept for Life program that provides rapid assistance, ongoing risk management, care coordination, and reintegration.

All Navy medical providers who are likely to contact sailors at risk for suicide, including primary care providers, Independent Duty Corpsmen, and mental health providers, are required to complete annual training on suicide risk assessment. A Mental Health Assessment that screens for suicide risk has been incorporated into the required annual Periodic Health Assessment, and EMH providers have been embedded within operational units. The proportion of Active Duty EMH billets has increased to 30 percent over the past few years. Additionally, aircraft carriers and large amphibious assault ships have Deployed Resiliency Counselors onboard who are civilian licensed mental health professionals.

Lieutenant General OTTIGNON. The Marine Corps approaches suicide prevention by using every resource available to promote and apply the leadership functions of strengthen, mitigate, identify, treat, and reintegrate to increase individual and unit readiness. We are working to reduce suicide by focusing efforts across four prevention lines of effort: (1) Communication: Our efforts equip commanders and Suicide Prevention Program Officers with tools and resources for prevention, response, and postvention, which includes the publication of a monthly newsletter that provides Marines with coping and stress management skills, and the distribution of an Em-

bedded Mental Health Guidebook; (2) Collaboration: We coordinate with Navy behavioral health services to ensure non-medical and medical care are accessible and seamless. Community Counseling Program counselors conduct screenings, actively assess needs, provide counseling, and connect servicemembers and families with additional resources. We work with sister services and federal agencies to identify gaps in resources and services, and collaborate on actionable solutions for geographically dispersed servicemembers; (3) Prevention and Resilience: Our new Command Individual Risk and Resiliency Assessment System (CIRRAS) enhances commanders' ability to conduct effective force preservation and prevention efforts; and (4) Use of Data and Research: We track suicide-related events data to include monitoring for any indications of COVID-19 impact. We evaluate the effectiveness of suicide prevention initiatives, and conduct the annual USMC Death by Suicide Review Board, which reviews every Marine death by suicide to provide actionable/operational recommendations.

Ms. MULCAHY and Lieutenant General KELLY. We are committed to fostering a culture that values and encourages help-seeking behavior and enhances individual competence and confidence in accessing appropriate helping resources. The DAF has a number of programs to assist commanders, airmen, guardians and their families identify risk and access resources for help. Airmen and guardians who have been informed that they are under investigations for possible UCMJ violations are 18–20 times more likely to die by suicide. Commanders are required to use a checklist that supports connectedness, access to resources and safety planning measures for airmen and guardians under investigation. Online family member suicide prevention training was developed and launched late CY20 that equips and empowers families of airmen and guardians to identify behaviors of members in distress. The DAF Resilience webpage is a “one stop shop” for leaders, airmen, guardians and families and is loaded with prevention, intervention, and postvention tools, as well as programs and information that assist with many aspects of distressed or at risk for suicide airmen and guardians. Lastly, embedded mental and spiritual health programs such as True North build trust/increase likelihood of help-seeking behavior by providing embedded Mental Health and Religious Support Team personnel currently across 16 installations, with scheduled expansion to other installations.

14. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Brito, Vice Admiral Nowell, Lieutenant General Kelly, Lieutenant General Ottignon, and Ms. Mulcahy, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, servicemembers and their families have faced virus-related isolation, extended deployments, financial disruptions, remote schooling, and loss of child care. Some have also lost family members and friends to the virus. What changes have been made in your respective Services to help servicemembers cope with these new challenges?

Lieutenant General BRITO. Commanders must continue to increase visibility and awareness of their soldiers to establish connections and develop the familiarity needed to perceive behaviors that are out of character for the individual, or are a deviation from Army standards. The Army is equipping Command Teams with leader visibility tools and other resources to help them better “see” their soldiers and develop appropriate prevention programs and targeted interventions.

The Army Resilience Directorate developed the Ready and Resilient Resource and Activity Guide, a collection of resources to be used by unit leaders, soldiers, DACs, and family members. For each of the five ready and resilient dimensions, the guide contains: 1) training and activities for unit, individual, and family use; 2) information and tips; and 3) applications, podcasts and other online training and education resources.

Additionally, the Army Resilience Directorate produces a monthly ‘Resilience in Focus’ multimedia publication that provides skills and resources to assist members of the Total Army deal with common challenges.

The Army is executing Engage and the Junior Leader Development Course training to build communication skills and unit cohesion while fostering trust. Engage trains soldiers to develop the skills to improve one-on-one communication through professional engagements, especially on difficult topics. The Junior Leader Development Course empowers junior leaders with skills to build cohesive teams, mentor subordinates, and improve communication.

The Commander's Risk Reduction Toolkit (CRRT) provides Command Teams visibility on the risk factor history of every soldier newly assigned to their unit. This awareness allows leaders to focus on establishing connections and develop the personal familiarity needed to prevent undesirable behaviors.

Multidisciplinary teams of behavioral health (BH) professionals are embedded in units, located in clinics with close proximity to unit work areas, and able to provide direct support of brigade-level units. Additionally, Behavioral Health has expanded

telehealth appointments during COVID-19, and is reviewing the continuation of this service after the pandemic subsides.

The Chaplain Corps is establishing a Public Private Partnership with Dr. Lisa Miller and Teachers College, Columbia University, to provide academic courses, workshops, and research opportunities in uniting spirituality and psychology. The partnership with Teachers College will broaden and enhance the Chaplain Corps' spiritual, psychological, and scientific base, skill, and range of practices to support the unique spiritual needs of soldiers, families, and communities. Areas of impact include care of the soldier's spiritual core, fitness, resilience, recovery, retention, ethics, decision making and development over the lifespan.

Vice Admiral NOWELL. Navy quickly realized the effects the COVID-19 pandemic on sailors and their families. Mandatory closure of child care facilities placed significant stress on Navy families, affecting our operational readiness. Almost immediately, Navy released guidance to commanders to remain flexible with both work schedules, maximizing telework whenever possible, and Family Care Plan enforcement. Further, we provided virtual counseling services for sailors and families that covered the portfolio of support services delivered by our Fleet and Family Support Centers from financial counseling to family advocacy. We increased the counselors aboard our ships, provided COVID-19 related educational resources through our family mobile application and websites, extended application deadlines for spouse licensure reimbursement, and delivered mandatory transition assistance training and other family-related training through recently developed online learning platforms. Additionally, Navy provided virtual services for both medical and mental health needs. Lastly, we continued to execute our Culture of Excellence Campaign Plan, focusing on primary prevention to include command resilience teams and operational stress control.

Lieutenant General OTTIGNON. The Marine Corps is taking an integrated and coordinated approach to prevention to build the skills and resources needed to promote positive behaviors and reduce domestic and child abuse, suicide, substance misuse, and sexual assault. Our Behavioral Programs promote the social, behavioral, and psychological fitness of Marines and families in order to enhance mission effectiveness.

We publish the Prevention in Action Newsletter that released its first issue in June of 2020 and shares actionable solutions and skill-building ideas framed across a central theme and designed for the Marine Corps Total Force. The monthly newsletter has addressed a range of topics including: networks, problem solving, connectedness, financial management, and leadership. Planned future themes will address: total force fitness, reset and reboot, inclusion, individual optimization, and healthy relationships. Also, the Innovation, Prevention, and Outreach Forum is a helpful tool that involves a partnership with National Guard Bureau and incorporates other government agencies to focus on developing and implementing solutions for geographically dispersed Servicemembers. Finally, we have invested \$19.5 million through fiscal year 2021 developing an application based tool, CIRRAS, that will help provide commanders a single, standardized platform that enables proactive identification and assessment of individual Marine risk and resiliency factors. This data is transferable between commands so that as Marines change duty stations, gaining commands receive a clear picture of those Marines who are at higher risk for destructive behaviors. This data is transferred with the Marine allowing for proactive, vice re-active, support from the command.

Ms. MULCAHY and Lieutenant General KELLY. DAF adjusted our counseling capabilities, focused on maintaining connections despite social[MRGMUA3S1] distancing, optimized schooling support, tailored family supports service delivery and developed remote and telework policies to better support airmen, guardians, and families through the pandemic.

OSD negotiated a temporary telehealth contract option to ensure Military Family Life Counseling program remained available for supported populations across the Department of Defense. As COVID-19 conditions improved, Air Force Services worked with OSD to expedite the return of Military Family Life Counseling to face-to-face (F2F) support based on critical needs of installations. Military Family Life Counselors focus on support to individuals, couples, families and groups for a range of issues including, but not limited to, deployment stress, reintegration, relocation adjustment, separation, anger management, conflict resolution, parenting, parent-child communication, relationship and family issues, coping skills, homesickness, and grief and loss.

The Department of the Air Force Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and the Civilian Health Promotion Services (CHPS) saw a significant drop in use during the onset of COVID-19; this was mirrored throughout the DOD enterprise for utilization of similar services. To increase access to care and awareness of available infor-

mation, the DAF worked with the vendor to implement the following adjustments: 1) incorporate telehealth services, 2) highlight the website virtual functions to include live chat capability with a counselor, and 3) implement a series of live weekly trainings conducted by the onsite counselors that were available to civilians and their family members in real time and then later for on-demand viewing. As a result, participation in the EAP program increased 294 percent since the initial decline resulting from COVID-19. Additionally, the CHPS program has experienced an 800 percent increase in utilization.

To support our force and their families, the DAF Integrated Resilience Office worked with installations to provide resilience toolkits to the force, focused on maintaining connection while physically distancing and practicing self-care. Quarterly Small Group Discussion Tools were also sent to the force to continue encouraging connection building even while physically distancing. A Suicide Prevention “Call to Action” initiative launched Sep 2020, directed installation prevention personnel to provide Squadron and above leadership necessary information to drive prevention activities to mitigate risk during COVID-19.

We also addressed challenges of remote schooling. Installation School Liaisons garnered school district support (devices, equipment/materials, and even the employment of Teacher Aides at School Age and Youth Programs, at some locations). Installation School Age Care programs modified hours in concert with school district decisions for remote or in-person instruction.

Airman and Family Readiness Centers rapidly shifted traditional face-to-face support to virtual modalities at the beginning of the pandemic to ensure the supported population retained access to quality of life support, and continue integrating hybrid approaches (both face to face and virtual) as health conditions improve or worsen at specific locations. Airman and Family Readiness Centers leveraged and expanded virtual options for financial education and real time Personal Financial Counselors conducted live consultations over secure, video capable platforms. We will continue to offer airmen and guardians their choice of in-person or virtual trainings and consultations whenever possible.

Additionally, the DAF developed and issued guidance regarding remote work and full-time telework guidance for the total force. This guidance will help posture the DAF for continuity of operations while also serving as method for which we can attract and retain talent.

#### DIVERSITY EFFORTS IN THE ARMY AND SPACE FORCE

15. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Brito, what insights are you and other senior Army leaders gaining from soldiers who have participated in the “Your Voice Matters” listening sessions?

Lieutenant General BRITO. Our soldiers have shared personal experiences and perceptions of inequities and concerns regarding race/sex discrimination, command climate concerns and areas of quality of life. Soldiers articulated there is a need to reexamine and address policies pertaining to leadership; behavioral and physical health care access and responsiveness; dining facility quality, choice and access; the ACFT; pregnancy and postpartum issues; housing safety, and inequities regarding rank, professional development/mentoring, access, and opportunity.

The following are the top 15 issues discussed during sessions conducted at 18 installations:

- Housing/BAH/Barracks/DFAC continue to be concerns among soldiers and their families (e.g., mold, poor quality of facilities, safety, and food, unfair BAH rates).
- Behavioral health, and operational factors contributing to it, are a concern among soldiers in relation to care, access, stigma, and concern from leadership.
- Leaders are not held accountable for their actions (swept under the rug), inactions, or lack of caring (e.g. toxicity, discriminatory behavior, tolerance toward divisive symbols, lack of empathy, “lazy leadership”).
- The idea of People First Strategy is lacking within several organizations. Units are completely mission-driven and therefore soldiers are not getting support with personal/family issues. Soldiers do not have time to decompress.
- Height/weight, body composition, and hair and grooming standards need a thorough review.
- Listening sessions are valuable; however, listening sessions and Project Inclusion are not well known or understood in the field and often seen as “check the block” non-sincere events.
- DE&I training and awareness needs to occur at all levels. (e.g., during enlistment and the accessions process).



- Senior leaders were slow to address racial tension or messaging not clear; fear of saying the wrong thing; Army leaders are not providing guidance or addressing racism, discrimination, and equity in the workplace.
- Good leaders/soldiers are leaving the military due to improper recognitions, toxic leadership, lack of diversity in the ranks, talent management, etc.
- Disciplinary actions are not consistent (e.g., UCMJ), and such application falls disproportionately on minorities.
- Perception that favoritism pervades in promotion and selection boards and Civilian hiring. (e.g. good ole boy system).
- Female soldiers see the ACFT as silent discrimination (e.g. leg tuck)
- Leaders should develop or enhance mentorship programs with diverse senior leader involvement to develop and retain diverse talent.
- There is a fear for family members and their psychological safety off-post in the wake of the civil unrest.
- Racial imbalance between Officer and Enlisted exist with minority representation found predominately within the enlisted ranks.

16. Senator HIRONO. Ms. Mulcahy, in your testimony you stated that the Space Force's developmental approach will include reverse mentoring programs to give senior leaders opportunities to learn from junior members of the force. What do you think senior Space Force leaders will gain from participating in such programs?

Ms. MULCAHY. A reverse mentoring program provides an opportunity for USSF senior leaders to gain skills and knowledge from junior Guardians. As the Space Force endeavors to be the first truly digital Military Service, this program can help senior leaders better understand the vast technology options that exist and use of such technologies to benefit the Force. Additionally, junior Guardians can provide insights into areas such as teleworking, recruitment, and retention. Just as important, are the benefits to junior Guardians. This program can help empower newer Guardians and make them feel valued and trusted. As well, reverse mentoring can engender better communication and collaboration for all involved, while supporting our goal of fostering diversity and inclusion.

[MRGMUA3S1] Recommend use of the term, "physical distancing," to mirror phrasing in more-recent DOD and DAF guidance.

#### DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN THE NAVY

17. Senator HIRONO. Vice Admiral Nowell, Task Force One Navy made 57 recommendations broken down into several lines of effort, including recruiting, talent management and retention, professional development, and innovation and STEM. What is the status of the Navy's efforts to implement these recommendations?

Vice Admiral NOWELL. Navy has implemented eight of the 56 Task Force One Navy (TF1N) recommendations with an ambitious plan to implement them all. To date, we have completed:

- Expanded use of diversity data in Record of Proceeding;
- Assigned a Special Assistant to the Commander for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at Naval Personnel Command and assigned a trained Command Climate Specialist;
- Expanded post-board statistics;
- Formally track diverse board membership statistics;
- Institutionalized Naval Junior Officer Counsel;
- Resumed Navy Leader Development Framework Briefs;
- Designated an advisor in Navy's 21st Century Sailor Office for Women's Policy Issues; and
- Established partnerships with civilian counterparts on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

Navy has incorporated the TF1N recommendations into our existing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion line of effort as part of the Culture of Excellence Campaign Plan and will continue to implement the remaining recommendations.

18. Senator HIRONO. Vice Admiral Nowell, a large part of the ultimate success in an officer's career, and their promotion potential, is superior achievement in high profile, challenging jobs. What steps is Navy Personnel Command taking to ensure women and minorities are getting a chance to fill these types of career enhancing jobs?

Vice Admiral NOWELL. Navy is dedicated to equality of treatment and opportunity for all personnel without regard to race, religion, color, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, or national origin. Discrimination on any of these bases is contrary to the Department of the Navy's core values of Honor, Courage, and Commitment. Navy benefits when we capitalize on the diverse experience, perspective, innovative

spirit, background, and ideas in our ranks, directly leading to increased readiness and lethality.

The evaluation of all candidates must be fair and equitable as directed by the selection board precept. Accordingly, it is codified within the board's charter to determine the candidates who are "best and fully qualified," and that candidates of every race, religion, color, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, and national origin are given fair and equitable consideration. Selection Board members are directed to be particularly vigilant in the evaluation of records so no candidate's selection opportunity is disadvantaged by service utilization policies or practices. Each candidate's potential to assume the responsibilities of a specific program or billet, including his or her ability to successfully lead a diverse organization, is carefully evaluated against the billet and the talent is matched against the person being considered for assignment.

#### CHANGES TO THE TRICARE AUTISM DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM

19. Senator HIRONO. Dr. Adirim, there have been significant treatment changes issued in the latest TRICARE Operations Manual (TOM) for the TRICARE Autism Care Demonstration Program. What was the rationale for these changes?

Dr. ADIRIM, The recent changes to the Autism Care Demonstration (ACD) were the result of three years of work and collaboration with industry stakeholders and lessons learned over the duration of this demonstration. These changes included but were not limited to: clinical reviews, analyses of outcomes, and evaluations of fraud, waste, and abuse. Each change was carefully evaluated and revised to ensure the change aligned with the authority and goals of the demonstration. This revision focuses on providing enhanced beneficiary and family support, improving outcomes, encouraging parental involvement, and expanding clinically appropriate applied behavior analysis (ABA) services such as the inclusion of the group services codes for beneficiaries and families.

20. Senator HIRONO. Dr. Adirim, have you provided sufficient time and notice to families participating in the Autism Demonstration Program to have adequate time to plan for the changes outlined in the latest TOM for the Autism Care Demonstration Program?

Dr. ADIRIM, Yes. The ACD policy change has a phased implementation plan over 270 days (see timeline below) to give adequate time for education and awareness of the changes each step of the way for all stakeholders. The ACD policy change was published on March 23, 2021. A notification of the policy publication was announced on March 22, 2021 on [www.health.mil/autism](http://www.health.mil/autism) and an email notification was sent to all ACD subscribers from the government messaging platform, GovDelivery. The email notification invited stakeholders to attend four Defense Health Agency (DHA)-hosted informational webinars (March 24, April 7, April 16, and April 21) to educate all interested stakeholders, both within and outside of the Military Health System (MHS), on the changes. Additionally, the DHA will be hosting an Exceptional Family Member Program staff meeting on June 1, 2021, a MHS diagnosing provider meeting on June 11, 2021, and a beneficiary centered webinar with Military OneSource on June 24, 2021.

21. Senator HIRONO. Dr. Adirim, will there be a degradation in services provided to patients under the most recent changes to the TOM for the TRICARE Autism Care Demonstration Program?

Dr. ADIRIM, No. In fact, there is an expansion in the clinically necessary and appropriate ABA services available to all TRICARE eligible beneficiaries enrolled in the ACD. Additionally, there are a wide range of other medical and non-medical services available both within and outside of the military health system. Medical services may include: speech therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy, nutritional services, medication management, psychotherapy, parent-mediated programs, medical respite, etc. Non-medical services may include: support groups, Military OneSource, Service-respite care, local community programs, etc. The new Autism Services Navigator (ASN) role is geared toward connecting ACD families with all available services so that the family can choose the right services and supports at the right time for their child and family needs.

The recent changes to the ACD also expand the coverage of two Current Procedural Terminology (CPT) Adaptive Behavior Services codes as well as adds the CPT code for medical team conferences. Additionally, revisions include increases in the daily number of units for certain CPT codes, the expansion of the use of telehealth parent/caregiver training, addition of medical coordination codes, and improvements to the utilization of covered CPT codes.

The DHA is aware of the perception that ABA services have been cut, i.e., the use of behavior technicians (BTs) in the school setting. However, this change is a clarification, not a degradation, which went into effect May 1, 2021. It was never the intent to reimburse for non-clinical or educational services. School services, where BTs serve as school supports, shadows, or aides, are beyond the scope of ABA services covered under the ACD. Clinically appropriate ABA services rendered by BTs are still reimbursable when appropriately authorized and completed in an appropriate setting, i.e. the home or clinic. The ACD is authorized to reimburse for the active delivery of ABA services. When clinically necessary and appropriate ABA services are requested, the contractors may authorize only Board Certified Behavior Analysts to provide targeted and time-limited ABA services in the school setting.

#### CAREGIVER LEAVE

22. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Ottignon and Vice Admiral Nowell, in the 2020 Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) annual report, DACOWITS recommended the Secretary of Defense direct the Navy and Marine Corps to authorize their servicemembers the full 21 days of secondary caregiver leave provided for in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017 due to the importance of caregiver leave in recruiting and retaining a ready force. Has the Navy and Marine Corps modified their parental leave policy to provide 21 days of secondary caregiver leave?

Vice Admiral NOWELL. Navy has not modified parental leave policy to provide 21 days of secondary caregiver leave, as we provide 14 days of secondary caregiver leave for eligible sailors. While Navy recognizes the value of secondary caregiver leave, the expeditionary nature of our service requires us to balance any additional non-chargeable leave with maintaining operational readiness. With more than 17,000 sailors becoming a non-birth parent every year, expanding secondary caregiver leave from two weeks to three weeks would result in more than 325 work years of additional time off. Many of those lost work years would affect operational ships, submarines, and squadrons whose broad mission portfolios already stretch the capacity of their assigned crews.

Lieutenant General OTTIGNON. No, the Marine Corps has not modified our secondary caregiver leave policy. We are comfortable with the 14 days of secondary caregiver leave and believe the balance between providing support to marine parents and maintain readiness is well struck.

23. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Herbert, in the 2020 Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) annual report, DACOWITS recommended the Secretary of Defense should direct the Military Services to implement flexible (non-continuous) primary and secondary caregiver leave options, in accordance with the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020, to ensure caregivers have maximum flexibility in making caregiving arrangements best suited to their family and service circumstances. What is the Department's position on this recommendation?

Mr. HERBERT. The Department is in the process of implementing the non-continuous primary care giver leave option enacted in section 521 of the Nation Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020. The option to allow servicemembers to take primary caregiver leave in more than one increment, under DOD's Military Parental Leave Program (MPLP), will be incorporated into a revision to our leave and liberty policy instruction (DODI 1327.06) along with other updates. We anticipate publishing the revised DODI by the end of the year.

Of note, the fiscal year 2020 NDAA legislation, however, did not provide companion authority for non-continuous secondary caregiver leave (currently up to three weeks). The law still requires this leave to be taken in only one increment.

24. Senator HIRONO. Mr. Herbert, in the 2020 Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) annual report, DACOWITS recommended the Secretary of Defense should direct the Military Services to remove all barriers that prohibit servicemembers from determining as a family which parent shall be designated the primary caregiver and which shall be designated the secondary caregiver. What is the Department's position on this recommendation?

Mr. HERBERT. Our discussions with the Military Services indicate that additional guidance is not warranted. The Department's Military Parental Leave Program (MPLP) guidance, and the supplementary implementing guidance for each of the Military Services will clearly indicate that this election is available.