

RECORD VERSION

STATEMENT BY

SERGEANT MAJOR OF THE ARMY

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BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

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RELATED AGENCIES**

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QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE MILITARY

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Introduction

Chairman Dent, Ranking Member Bishop, distinguished members of this committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you on behalf of the more than two million members of our Army team: Soldiers, their Family members, and our Civilian employees. In my first year as SMA, I'm grateful for the strong, positive, and meaningful dialogue built with this committee. Our relationship continues to improve the quality of life (QOL) for our Soldiers and their families.

The Army team has given blood, sweat and tears to meet every mission our country has required of us for the last fourteen-plus years. Soldiers and Army Civilians have deployed. Families have taken on greater responsibilities to allow their Soldiers to focus on the mission. And Congress has ensured the Total Army team was resourced to succeed. This mutually supporting relationship is the foundation for how we operate in an increasingly complex world. I want to personally thank this committee, its members and staff, for the enduring support you provide. You recognize how important it is for us to take care of our Soldiers and their Families while they give so much to take care of us.

We are especially grateful for the \$974 million in Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 funding provided by Congress for military construction that will improve the quality of life of Active, Reserve and National Guard Soldiers and families. These authorizations and appropriations resulted in tangible QOL and professional improvements including the \$19 million Noncommissioned Officer Academy Complex at Fort Drum, New York. The Noncommissioned Officer Academy Complex will provide the Army's NCOs a state of the art facility to further develop leadership skills and professional standards expected of our nation's Noncommissioned Officer.

Status of Quality of Life

The two most solemn obligations this country has to its military are to provide our Troops with the best training and equipment imaginable and to ensure our troops and their Families are appropriately compensated and cared-for during and after their

service. When America calls, our Soldiers will answer. We must ensure they are prepared to accomplish the mission. With those obligations in mind, I'll share our progress on several key focus areas and identify areas where Congress can make a difference.

QOL in the Army can be defined as the sum of the impacts of programs, services, facilities, and opportunities that result from policy and law. But, really, it's more than that. It's about the morale and the will of the Soldier to serve the Army Profession with unwavering commitment. After visiting and talking with thousands of Soldiers and their Families in the year since I last sat before this committee, I believe that the quality of life for our Soldiers and their Families is stressed. Army leaders are first and foremost committed to the Soldiers, Families and Civilians who make up our Total Army and will continue to keep their interests at heart when making the tough decisions required of us to maintain readiness under constrained resources.

Everything we do in the Army revolves around the people defending freedom, including those who've raised their hands to protect and defend our Nation's freedoms; the Family members who shoulder the sacrifices of serving right alongside their loved ones; and our Army Civilians who provide support in the defense of our Nation. Because of solemn obligation, every decision we make - when I say we, I mean my superiors, this committee, the larger Congress, and I - every decision we make, affects every aspect of the Soldier lifecycle from recruiting to retention, transition, or retirement. Our Total Army tackles every problem and challenge placed in front of it.

Background

For almost 241 years, the U.S. Army has answered the call of our Nation and continues to answer the call in a complex and uncertain security environment. We are able to do this because we are a team of the finest leaders ever assembled, molding and shaping the finest Soldiers.

The principal purpose of the Army remains the same as it was in 1775 – preserve our freedom by fighting and winning our Nation’s wars. Throughout history, successful armies were those that anticipated the future, adapted, and capitalized upon opportunities. Today, the Army faces a changing and more dangerous security environment that will require the Army to make difficult decisions if it is to remain an effective instrument of the Nation’s military power. Given the risk of return to sequestration and the uncertainty of future funding, the Army risks going to war with insufficient readiness to win decisively. Accordingly, to fulfill the security demands of the Nation in fiscal year 2017 (FY17), the Army’s number one priority is readiness. We must ensure our enemies and potential enemies know that we are, and always will be, a formidable adversary. We will continue to ensure our global partners and potential partners know we are and always will be a powerful friend in pursuit of peace. We will demonstrate this focus by making investments in key modernization programs and ensuring Soldiers receive the training, equipment, leadership, and quality of life they need to sustain the world’s greatest Army.

Over the past year, we’ve been called upon to meet the needs of the Nation in diverse ways, including fighting terrorists around the world, training Afghan and Iraqi Army forces, peacekeeping in the Sinai Peninsula and Kosovo, missile defense in the Persian Gulf, security assistance in Africa and South America, deterrence in Europe, the Republic of Korea and Kuwait, rapid deployment global contingency forces, and response forces for the homeland. These missions require us to be agile and adaptive. They also require us to be trained, equipped and ready. Largely due to our deliberate investments in Soldier training, equipping, and leader development, today’s Army continues to excel at these diverse and enduring missions. However, we cannot become complacent, remain static, and look to the past or present to be a guarantor of future victory. To sustain this high performance and remain prepared for potential contingencies, the Army must make the most of competing requirements – readiness, end strength, and modernization – to ensure America’s Army remains ready to fight and win both today and in the future.

Secretary Murphy, General Milley and I are in awe of what our Troops, Families and Civilians have accomplished and endured this year. Our Soldiers have continuously demonstrated to the American people that U.S. Army Soldiers are consummate professionals. The global security environment continues to degrade and correspondingly places a higher demand on the United States military. Throughout last year, the Army had approximately 190K Soldiers committed in 140 countries advancing our national security interests. We also have mobilized units across the country to respond to natural disaster relief at home. Events once deemed improbable, have repeatedly occurred. The Nation must be prepared to confront a near-peer competitor, while simultaneously opposing regional powers and transnational terrorist organizations. Extremist organizations have seized territory in Iraq, Libya, and Syria, and in 2015 twice attacked France—one of our longest standing allies. Given the continually changing global security environment, the Army must be ready to respond anytime and anywhere.

Readiness

The Army Chief of Staff has identified readiness as our number one priority. As a spokesperson for the American Soldier, I know that mission uncertainty tends to be acceptable to Soldiers, and therefore has minimal effect on individual readiness. But, uncertainty when it comes to possible changes to compensation and benefits, family services and other programs, is a concern. Uncertainty in these areas could degrade the trust we have with our Soldiers and their Families - affecting morale. Morale is an amorphous thing, but show me a unit that doesn't have it, and I can show you a unit that is not ready to accomplish its mission. We cannot let this uncertainty turn to insecurity that distracts our warfighters from their commitment to the Nation. We cannot degrade the trust they have in us to take care of them and their families now and in the future. Together, this committee, the Army and the American people can maintain the balance that allows us to preserve the premiere, trained, and ready All-Volunteer Army.

In my opinion, we can best support readiness by: keeping faith with our greatest asset – the Soldier, increasing deployability, incentivizing deployability, maintaining standards and discipline, and expanding professional development improvements.

Soldiers: Our Greatest Asset

The strength of our Nation is the American people. The Army's collective strength originates from the quality of the citizens we recruit, develop, and eventually reintegrate into communities across America. We build readiness by filling Army formations with ethical and competent Soldiers who are mentally and physically fit to withstand the intense rigors of combat. My biggest concern in the delicate balance of building a quality of life for our Soldiers and Families that enables readiness is how they will experience the cumulative effects of budgetary decisions designed to bring a cost-savings to the military. We have to be cognizant of the fact that continuing to chip away at the Army Family's wallet could violate trust between the Soldier and our government. It could jeopardize their trust that we are committed to securing their wellbeing. Being good stewards of our fiscal resources does not mean we should do so at the expense – literally – of the Soldiers we are asking to give all to this Nation. We have to keep faith with the men and women who make up our Army.

Deployability

We have nearly 100K Soldiers who are unable to deploy. Approximately 80% of these Soldiers are not able to deploy because of medical issues. And, this number very likely underestimates the real readiness gap because of the way we currently report medical readiness. Readiness reporting terms “non-available” versus “available” create ambiguity and do not reflect true deployability. It is critical that Army leaders gain improved visibility and accuracy of readiness levels of the force. Currently, there are more than 16,000 Soldiers with temporary profiles who are reported “available” but who are actually not medically fit to deploy if called tonight. So, we are eliminating these terms from our vocabulary and our culture in favor of “deployable” or “non-deployable”. This requires that our current medical readiness (MR) systems transform to assist Army

leaders in rebalancing the deployable force. MR-related policy revision and the overhaul of IT infrastructure will significantly enhance transparency and simplify the process for commanders to make deployability determinations. As we continue to draw down the Force, it is even more critical that every Soldier within the Army team is fit to fight.

In addition to getting the numbers right, we have to also emphasize health-enhancing behaviors. The Army Surgeon General's wellness initiative known as the Performance Triad is the model we are testing to infuse prevention into the daily rituals of our force. By focusing on improving sleep, nutrition and activity (the triad), we expect individual and unit medical readiness will increase. Five installations are conducting pilot studies on the Performance Triad. The studies are far from complete, but to date, these installations are seeing evidence of improved physical fitness scores, fewer injuries and enhanced unit cohesion – all enablers to readiness. I visited the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division at Ft. Campbell recently to see how the pilot was going. I don't think it was a coincidence that of all the installations and units I've visited over the last year, this one was the most motivated and they conducted the most challenging PT sessions. The potential for this initiative to enhance readiness is unlimited. But, it is a culture shift and will take effort and commitment on the part of the whole Army. For years, Soldiers have "toughed it out" when injured, thought of "sleep as a crutch" for the weak, and consumed high-calorie, low nutrition foods with abandon. The Performance Triad turns all these notions of what it means to be a good Soldier on their ear. I'm excited to see the final data and determine how we can begin the Total Army cultural revolution towards one of health enhancement versus medical response. If the data returns as expected, the Performance Triad model could have implications on the Military Health System (MHS).

Incentivizing Deployability

We fight and win. In order to incentivize individual readiness towards that mission, it's time to compensate Soldiers who bear the burden of multiple deployments in support of our Nation's call. Most of our Soldiers would say they don't deploy because of the money, but that doesn't mean they don't deserve it. While they may receive some

special duty pays upon deployment, we are still looking into ways to provide special pays if conducting an extended exercise away from home. This would demonstrate our commitment to caring for our Soldiers for life.

Professional Development

As stated in the 2015 National Military Strategy, “Military and civilian professionals are our decisive advantage.” The Army is committed to build leaders who are technically and tactically proficient, innovative, and committed to life-long learning. It takes time to develop Soldiers who can lead a trained and equipped unit into combat. Leader development starts with a framework of formal professional education coupled with operational assignments and self-study. Professional Military Education (PME) serves as the principle way leaders combine experiences gained during operational assignments with current and emerging doctrinal methods to prepare Soldiers for future combat. Our effort to prioritize readiness has resulted in a larger investment in leader development. After fifteen years focused on combat operations, we have re-established the requirement to have our leaders complete education prior to promotion. Known as S.T.E.P. (Select-Train-Educate-Promote), this requirement ensures that the Army develops technically and tactically proficient leaders and builds individual readiness for the future.

The need for a professional NCO Corps that can meet the requirements of training the Nation’s best and brightest to fight and win in the current operational landscape has never been more critical. Ultimately, a strengthened NCO Corps will help us achieve our national security objectives. To that end, we are running a pilot course (Master Leader Course) at the US Army Sergeants Major Academy for Soldiers competing to achieve the rank of Master Sergeant. Previously, there was no professional military education requirement for NCOs at this rank, which meant no formal continuing education requirement for 5-8 years. This gap was not conducive to readiness. With the full implementation of MLC, self-study courses before each advancement, and the expansion of courses for sergeants major, formal education is delivered nearly every

two to three years. This is a huge increase in the amount of professional education we provide to NCOs – an increase that will enhance readiness.

The Army projects that it will train approximately 127,000 leaders through PME from all components (Active Component, Army National Guard, and Army Reserve) using resident instruction in FY16, and approximately 119,000 leaders in FY17. Predictable funding allows the Army to develop trusted leaders who provide an advantage that neither technology nor weapons can replace. Predictable funding is critical to leader development initiatives that will ensure our NCOs are equipped with the appropriate knowledge, skills and abilities to fight and win in the complex security environment we will continue to face.

Soldier for Life

From the moment citizens become Soldiers – they enter into an alliance that never ends. They become Soldiers for Life. After just a single term of service with the U.S. Army, they have skills and attributes that far exceed those of the average 22-year-old. We're giving back highly motivated and skilled workers. But, we want to do more.

A new component of our Professional Development process under the banner of the newly launched Army University system will help create a career-ready workforce. Soldiers have training, experience and talent that can be applied to civilian careers. One of the best ways to translate this into terms that civilian employers understand is through a credential, which can be earned through MOS-producing schools as well as through FORSCOM units. Right now, all Army MOS training proponents have been tasked to conduct an MOS-by-MOS analysis for credentialing opportunities. Our credentialing efforts will: enhance Army readiness by producing a more professional work force that is aligned with civilian practice, encourage Soldier life-long learning, increase overall readiness for our Force, and improve post-service employability.

In FY15, Soldiers attained a total of 29,787 credentials. Of those, 13,819 were voluntary credentials and 15,968 were mandatory credentials required by the Soldiers'

MOS. Soldiers attained 26,750 credentials through TRADOC schools, and 3,037 through MEDCOM schools. The Army COOL (Credentialing Opportunities On-Line) assists Soldiers in finding information on certifications and licenses related to their Army jobs. Soldiers may pursue credentialing independent of their MOS training. Promotion points are awarded to Soldiers for earning certain credentials related to their MOS. Despite these efforts, we still have much that needs to be done. The Army and our sister services will need Congressional support to get us to our end state – every Soldier credentialed in his or her MOS.

This year, Veteran unemployment rates have decreased to below that of the national rate. As of November 2015, the general population unemployment rate was 4.8% and 4.2% for post 9/11-era Veterans. As a result of our synchronous efforts with government agencies and interaction with communities, the Army has seen a decrease in unemployment compensation for former servicemember spending and Veteran unemployment. Expansion of the credentialing efforts is therefore seen as a fiscally responsible endeavor. We estimate it costs less than \$300 per Soldier for credentialing and licensing, which aids in Soldier employment. The cost avoidance is the estimated \$8,000 average per Veteran the Army pays in unemployment compensation. Currently, all credentialing expenditures are absorbed by the schoolhouses, the Career Skills Program or by the individual Soldier.

Family Readiness

The Army Family is like no other. They support the warfighter in ways too numerous to count, which is why developing Family readiness is so important to the Army's senior leaders. Family readiness means being prepared to effectively navigate the challenges of daily living in the unique context of military service. To meet readiness needs, the Army has invested in a wide array of Family programs. Examples include: child care and youth programs that provide peace of mind to Soldiers that children are in safe environments, allowing them to focus on the mission; Family Advocacy for the prevention and treatment of domestic violence and child abuse; and the Exceptional

Family Member Program, which matches special needs Family members with relevant services at their duty locations.

We have statutory requirements, operational imperatives, and a moral obligation to provide a balanced array of programs and services to Soldiers, Army civilians, and their Families that meet the unique demands of military life, foster life-skill competencies, strengthen and sustain physical and mental fitness and resiliency, and promote a strong and ready Army. To those ends, we are conducting a comprehensive review of all Family programs to ensure we continue to focus our critical resources on those services our Families need in order to support readiness.

Soldier and Family Programs are an investment in the Army's most valuable asset – our people. The Army remains committed to providing Soldiers and Families a quality of life commensurate with their service, while being good stewards of taxpayer dollars. We remain committed to protect Soldier and Family programs to the greatest extent possible. We continue to review Family programs to ensure the most efficient delivery of service, where and when it is needed most. The programs that support Soldiers and Families remain a top priority because it is critical they live resilient, stay ready and be Army Strong.

The Army Profession and Ethic

The U.S. Army relies on its squad leaders to build readiness in tactics, techniques, procedures and the conduct of the Army Profession and Ethic. With that in mind, we opened the aperture on our “Not in my Squad” (NIMS) initiative from a focus on a single act of indiscipline (Sexual Assault), to now address the larger gaps in understanding of the Army Profession and Ethic.

NIMS is a grassroots – not a senior-leader driven – initiative founded in the Army Profession and Ethic, focused on building mutual trust and cohesion at the team and squad level. The NIMS ideals can be seen in any concept that starts because junior leaders sought a way to make their unit or the Army a better place. One way junior

leaders can begin using the NIMS method is by conducting a workshop with the support of the Center for the Army Profession and Ethic (C.A.P.E.), or on their own with resources available online. Command teams are expected to support these workshops by providing resources and time. Leaders are also expected to commit to actively pursue solutions to the junior-leader identified issues. They are also expected to implement solutions identified by these junior-leaders.

To date, we've conducted five workshops and we are putting together a plan to conduct six more in FY16. So far, these workshops have identified several trends that we are beginning to systematically address. We believe this method has the potential to increase trust between our Soldiers and their leaders, because they are seeing our sincere dedication to giving them a voice in how the Army runs. NIMS also gives our squad leaders - a unit's most influential models of the Army Profession and Ethic – an avenue to share best practices, find solutions and develop relationships with peers. Over time, this method will build mutual trust and cohesion within our units. Cohesive teams built on trust, self-regulate. Indiscipline in these units rarely exists, but when it does, the indiscipline is dealt with appropriately, strengthening the team from the experience. These squads are ready to execute the mission: to fight and win our Nation's wars.

Preventing and responding to our most destructive of challenges –sexual assault/sexual harassment - requires both buy-in from junior leadership and engagement from senior leaders. To that end, our FY17 budget has provisions for expanding our SHARP Academy – where we provide standardized training to our sexual assault/sexual harassment prevention and response professionals. We are also making strides in support to victims, encouraging reporting, reducing the perception of retaliation, and command/senior leader accountability.

I know how important this issue is to this committee and to the American people. As a leader, I feel a responsibility to the mothers and fathers who have left their sons and daughters in our care. Our leaders feel the same responsibility. These young Soldiers

deserve our best efforts to solve these problems. While I understand the concern that exists from our government leaders and from the American people, we are resolutely working on innovative prevention efforts and response protocols. It is my sincere opinion that Army commanders must retain their authority over the disposition of sexual assault cases. Removal of that authority would make it harder to respond to the needs of Soldiers within the command.

Some of our biggest challenges can, and I believe will, be solved with a combination of great leadership and junior-leader involvement. I think we are moving in the right direction.

Closing

The topics I've highlighted here carry one thread – people. Everything we do is about the people who wear this uniform now and in the future. As decisions are being made about programs to keep, facilities to maintain, services to provide and people to stay – I'm cognizant that these decisions impact people. And, individually, a change to one program or service can and will be weathered. But, slashing a little bit from many areas carries a cumulative impact on Soldiers and their Families.

The amazing thing about the American Soldier and the Army Family is that despite these challenges, fears and frustrations – they stand tall in defense of our Nation. Throughout this past year, while continuing the fight, drawing down our force, and working within fiscal constraints, our Soldiers have demonstrated their professionalism. Moreover, they have demonstrated they still do have trust in us to take care of them. The Soldiers who make up today's All-Volunteer Force, their Families and the Civilian workforce that supports us, stand ever-ready and willing to answer the Nation's call. We must ensure that our decisions never weaken such a solemn bond.

Today's Army, prioritizes Army readiness to achieve superiority over our Nation's adversaries. With the full support of Congress, we will be ready for the challenges that face our Nation as we have for more than 240 years. The Army's capacity and

capabilities serve as the critical foundation of a Joint Force that exists for one purpose—to deter, and when required, fight and win wars in defense of the United States national interests. To meet this non-negotiable obligation to the Nation, the Army requires predictable funding to build readiness, modernize equipment, and provide sufficient Soldier compensation commensurate with their service and sacrifice.

In closing, I want to recognize the tireless work that our Army Team does every single day. As the Sergeant Major of the Army, the best part of my job is being around the greatest team the world has ever known. The professionalism, dedication, and sacrifice they exhibit is astonishing. It is the reason our Army is envied worldwide. Today, our Soldiers are the best-trained, best-manned, best-equipped, and best-led force in our history. It is essential that we maintain the right level of resourcing to remain that way.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak before you today and I look forward to continuing our dialogue. *This We'll Defend.*