

**RECORD VERSION**

**STATEMENT BY**

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**BEFORE THE**

**COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS**

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, VETERANS AFFAIRS AND  
RELATED AGENCIES**

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**QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE MILITARY**

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## **Introduction**

Chairman Dent, Ranking Member Wasserman Schultz, distinguished members of this subcommittee, thank you for your unwavering dedication to Soldiers, their Families, and the Army civilians who make our all-volunteer force a one-of-a-kind organization and community. I am honored to be here to provide an update to this committee on the quality of life of the men and women with whom we so proudly serve.

Only a few months ago, our Army was posturing to decrease end strength to its smallest levels since 1940. We were on track to meet the 2018 mandate of 450,000 Soldiers. Today, efforts are underway to regrow the Army in accordance with the National Defense Authorization Act of 2017. Army leaders are approaching this effort responsibly in order to attract and retain the best quality Soldiers and in the best interest of Soldiers, Family members, and tax payers. Our goal is to maintain readiness and retain quality throughout this effort. The rate at which we are required to grow is ambitious, but responsible growth requires sufficient funding to support readiness. An increase in end strength without proper funding, will result in a hollow force that is unsustainable. It is imperative that we repeal the 2011 Budget Control Act, or we risk reversing our current growth initiatives. Additionally, without repeal, we place greater risk on our Soldiers and our Nation.

As public servants we must balance fiscal constraints while keeping faith with the people we serve. We must never compromise our trust with our Soldiers, Family Members, Army civilians, or the American people. We must ensure our military community is properly cared for and resourced. Our budget must be consistent, predictable, and support benefits and services throughout the entire lifecycle of a Soldier – at home and abroad. We appreciate the support outlined in last year's NDAA, which also includes the largest pay raise granted to the military in 5 years, but remain anxious over the pending appropriations.

Additionally, we are grateful for the \$1.45 billion in Fiscal Year 17 funding provided by Congress for military construction. This will improve the quality of life for all Soldiers and Family Members. This appropriation will fund construction projects, to include childcare centers, which are a force multiplier and necessary to maintain the readiness of a very engaged

Army. As a reminder, our Base Operations Support budget covers 154 installations and 39 commands across the Total Army, supporting over 2 million Soldiers and families. We owe them all a quality of life that is commensurate to their sacrifice.

### **Globally Engaged**

With more than 182,000 Soldiers participating in named operations, working to build partner capacity, and deterring aggressors in more than 140 nations around the globe, our Army is in high demand. Over 48 percent of the demand for Joint Forces globally is sourced by Soldiers this year. Additionally, Soldiers make up over 70 percent of emergent demands.

The Army has rotational deployments for brigade combat teams and support elements in Kuwait, Iraq, Afghanistan, The Republic of South Korea, Eastern Europe, and the Horn of Africa. Division and Corps headquarters are supporting contingency operations in Eastern Europe, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Army Elements are also supporting Operation Inherent Resolve in Jordan and Syria. Additionally, Soldiers are allocated to combatant commands supporting partner armies in exercises and contingency responses in the Pacific, South America, and Africa. Our Soldiers and their families have come to expect this rate of deployment and tempo, but again, it is not sustainable in the current fiscal climate. We are now operating with a 1:1 deployment to dwell time ratio for corps and division headquarters and 1:2 for brigades and other units. The growth this year will help ease the stress on our operational units.

Our efforts in Cyber defense and multi-domain battle are two areas for which we assume risk, while maintaining readiness to meet current combatant command requirements. In Cyber, we have 41 teams conducting operations against ISIS, near-peer adversaries, and other global threats. Cyberspace is a globally contested domain that requires 24/7 protection and deterrence. It is key terrain like land, air, sea, and space, and will require sufficient resources to meet mission requirements in the years to come.

The resiliency and determination of Soldiers allowed for sustained counter-insurgency operations for over 15 years. However, our ability to conduct full spectrum operations in multiple domains has degraded. Multi-domain battle refers to warfare in cyberspace, land, air, sea, and space. We

must be afforded the opportunity to innovate, as we are increasingly becoming contested in each domain. Currently, we are already matched or overmatched in ground force capabilities with some of our near-peer adversaries. Our combat commanders need the option to fight across each domain. We must innovate faster than potential adversaries. An edge in cyber, sea, space, and air directly impacts our ground forces' ability to defeat our enemies in close combat.

### **Status of Quality of Life**

Everything we do in the Army revolves around people—Soldiers, Families, and the civilian workers that support the Army. After speaking with thousands of Soldiers and their Families in the year since I last briefed this subcommittee, I believe that the quality of life for our Soldiers and their Families is okay. Many Soldiers and Families are concerned about their futures due to unpredictable funding and future benefits. In order to attract and retain a high quality All-Volunteer Force, we must sustain our benefits and ensure we have sufficient funding to prepare our Soldiers to perform their wartime duties. The Budget Control Act of 2011 caps threaten to reverse many of the gains we have made in manpower, equipment reset, training, benefits, etc. Every decision we make affects specific Soldiers and Families.

General Milley and I are in awe of what our Soldiers, Families, and civilians have accomplished and endured this year. Our Soldiers have continuously demonstrated to the American people that Soldiers are consummate professionals. The global security environment continues to worsen and, correspondingly, places a higher demand on the United States military. The Nation must be prepared to confront near-peer competitors, while also opposing regional powers and transnational terrorist organizations. As senior leaders, we understand that we must balance current requirements with future challenges, regardless of the complexity of the mission; this has not changed in over 241 years, because of the dedicated individuals who fill our ranks. We preserve our history and learn from our past better than any organization in the world, but it is essential to our way of life and the Army culture that we not allow Soldiers and leaders to compromise tomorrow's fight. We will always focus on readiness and thrive to remain current and relevant on a global scale. We cannot risk sending our Soldiers into harm's way under-trained and under-equipped. We must ensure our allies and adversaries know that we are, and always will be, a global power that is ready to fight at any time, including tonight. We

demonstrate our commitment by taking action to invest in modernization programs to ensure the fight is never fair.

### **Maintain Readiness**

Readiness remains the number one priority of our Total Army. It is the cornerstone of our entire existence and what makes us the most lethal force in the world. Readiness encompasses the quality of our equipment, resources to conduct tough training, and individual Soldier requirements, which includes Family readiness. Soldiers and Families are incredibly resilient and are astoundingly adaptable. Soldiers today fully accept that the mission they train for may not be the fight for which they are called to execute.

Behavioral health research and treatment are an Army priority. Our Soldiers and Families must believe that the Army and our Nation will take care of them. We appreciate the emphasis Congress has placed on behavioral health and other challenges facing our veterans. With more Soldiers receiving care in outpatient settings, behavioral health conditions are being managed earlier and, before crises occur. In 2016, there was a 41 percent decrease in behavioral health inpatient bed days compared to 2012. The Army transformed the behavioral health system of care into a model for the nation. Programs such as Embedded Behavioral Health, Behavioral Health in Primary Care clinics, and School Behavioral Health reach Soldiers and Families where they live and work to reduce any perceived stigma and improve access to care.

Medical readiness and deployability is an ongoing concern in our Army. However, redefined administrative and medical deployment determinations allow commanders to more effectively manage, communicate, and report the readiness of their Soldiers, maximizing unit deployability. We are currently working recommendations that will empower commanders in order to affect the deployability of their formations.

In addition to Soldier quality of life concerns, we must also invest in modernization. Our weaponry and equipment must evolve to increase mobility, lethality, and protection. We are challenged in every domain of warfare – air, sea, land, space, and cyber. The Army has half of the money to spend on modernization and equipment that it had only eight years ago. With the

current constraints, to include personnel costs, we are forced to make only incremental upgrades, limit the number of new programs we begin, and slow down procurement. The Army has chosen to focus its sustainment and modernization efforts on a handful of important platforms, such as M1 Tanks, M2 Bradley Fighting Vehicles, Strykers, Soldier weapons, and ISR Platforms. Many Army platforms are behind on modernization, but we have sustained many programs that allow us to be effective in the near term. Long-term modernization against a near-peer competitor remains in question.

### **Maintaining a Quality Force**

We appreciate Congress allowing the Army to increase its total force structure. Through this authorization, we will be able to fill many of our units. However, we must control the rate of growth without compromising quality and readiness. If the Budget Control Act of 2011 is not repealed, the budget cap set for FY18 will require an additional cut to Army end strength. This will not only place the Army in an unenviable position to involuntarily separate many of the Soldiers that were recruited or retained to grow the Army, but will negatively affect the All-Volunteer Force. In order to preserve the All-Volunteer Force, America's sons and daughters, mothers and fathers must believe that the military is an enduring, necessary, and honorable component of our great Nation.

Currently, we are focused on retaining quality Soldiers. We more than doubled our active duty retention mission for FY17, requiring the reenlistment of approximately 9,000 Soldiers. Our remaining accessions are composed of new officers and new recruits – 1,000 officers and 6,000 Soldiers. Our retention experts have implemented plans that include cash and assignment incentives for Soldiers whose terms of service are scheduled to end in FY17. Soldiers in military occupational specialties who may not have been eligible for incentives can now earn up to \$10,000 for extending their service for a minimum of 12 months. Soldiers will also be able to reenlist up to their separation date, as long as they are otherwise qualified. Finally, we adjusted the length of service authorized for promotable E4s and E5s. Not only are they authorized to stay longer, but they may be eligible for selective retention bonuses.

People are, without a doubt, our greatest asset. 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 all Army formations with ethical and competent Soldiers regardless of religion, gender, or identity. All Soldiers are trained to be mentally and physically fit to withstand the intense rigors of combat.

We must ensure our Army always has the best, brightest, and most talented Soldiers serving within our ranks, no matter their gender, identity, or religious beliefs. The Army has fully implemented gender-neutral occupational standards for all military occupations. Over 233,000 positions have been integrated since 2012. The Occupational Physical Assessment Test became policy in January 2017 for use in recruiting and accessions to mitigate attrition and injuries within Basic Combat Training. To date, 10 female officers graduated the Infantry Basic Officer Leader's Course in and 13 female officers graduated the Armor Basic Officer Leader's Course with hundreds of other officer and enlisted females in the training pipeline.

The Army has successfully accessed and transferred over 300 women – 49 active component leaders in the rank of Sergeant through Captain, 30 reserve component leaders in the rank of Sergeant through Lieutenant, and 262 junior enlisted Soldiers – for Infantry, Armor, and Fire Support Specialist occupations since April 1, 2016.

To address cultural concerns identified through Army Studies, the Army will train and assign leaders into previously closed career fields and units before assigning junior enlisted female Soldiers using the "Leaders First" strategy. The "Leaders First" strategy assigns two leaders in the same career management field into Infantry or Armor company level units prior to the assignment of female junior enlisted Soldiers. Enlisted recruits for Infantry and Armor occupations were placed into the Delayed Entry Program in support of the "Leaders First" strategy and Army Unit Fill Plan. Junior enlisted Soldiers will be assigned to companies in cohorts to prevent isolation and mitigate potential incidents of unprofessional behavior.

We are committed to treating all Soldiers with dignity and respect while ensuring good order and discipline. No otherwise qualified Soldier may be involuntarily separated, discharged, or denied

reenlistment or continuation of service solely on their gender identity, sexual preference, ethnicity, or religion.

Since early 2016, the Army has approved all requests for religious accommodations received at Headquarters, Department of the Army. More than 40 Soldiers are currently serving with uniform and grooming accommodations. As of January 3, 2017, wear and appearance standards for beards, turbans, and hijabs have been incorporated into Army policy. These requests can be approved by brigade-level commanders.

### **Soldier for Life**

We continue to invest in Soldiers with our *Soldier for Life* program. We attract quality recruits by offering credentialing opportunities to earn licenses for technical training. We work tirelessly to advocate for veterans throughout the country and in your communities with programs like our *Meet Your Army* initiative.

*Meet Your Army* bridges the gap between Soldiers and American communities where there is little Army or military presence. These engagements help to dispel misconceptions, provide education on the benefits of military service, and provides a platform to advocate the hiring of veterans.

Few programs have had more impact on the decline of veteran unemployment than the educational programs offered by the Army. I am confident that our programs – Tuition Assistance, Credentialing, Soldier for Life, and Transition Assistance – in combination with Defense and interagency initiatives with the Labor Department, Veterans Affairs Department, and the Small Business Administration have contributed to the decline of veteran unemployment.

Education supports the Army's goal to develop adaptive, agile Soldiers capable of responding to full spectrum operations across the world. The Army's Tuition Assistance program supports three of the seven leader development imperatives of the Army Leader Development Strategy: commitment to the Army profession, lifelong learning and development; a balance of the Army's commitment to training, education and experience components of leader development; and



management of the military/civilian talent to benefit the institution and individual. The Tuition Assistance program helps retain quality Soldiers by enhancing their career progression potential, increasing Army combat readiness, and preparing Soldiers for their eventual return to civilian careers.

In addition to Tuition Assistance, our Army is reviewing initiatives to expand certificate and licensing opportunities for Soldiers. Currently, there are 1,556 credentials, as identified by each of the Army career fields that are recommended through Army COOL (Credentialing Opportunities On-Line). Last year, about 23,000 certifications were earned by Soldiers through mandatory and voluntary credentialing opportunities.

Veteran unemployment is below the National average. At the close of calendar year 2016, overall veteran unemployment was 4.3%, and the non-veteran rate was 4.7%. As a result, Unemployment Compensation (UCX) during FY16 was the lowest amount recorded in 13 years. The Army pays UCX for up to 26 months for recently transitioned Veterans who are unemployed.

### **Preserving Benefits and Family Programs**

My biggest concern for the future of our Army is the cumulative effects of budgetary decisions that are designed to bring cost-savings to the military; cost savings are taking a toll on our Soldiers and Families. To maintain the trust of our Soldiers and Families, we must clearly define and differentiate between benefits and compensation. We must cautiously evaluate the impacts of any proposed cuts to benefits on sustaining the All-Volunteer Force.

The Army Family supports 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. We will continue to partner with our sister Services and local communities to fill service gaps. We will continue our work to provide alternatives to Army-provided programs, support geographically dispersed Soldiers and Families in hopes to reduce stress on our families.

We have statutory requirements, operational imperatives, and a moral obligation to provide programs and services to Soldiers, Army civilians, and their Families. Military life is unique and requires us to foster life-skill competencies, strengthen and sustain physical and mental fitness, build resiliency, and promote a strong and ready Army. We continuously conduct comprehensive reviews of all family programs to ensure we focus our critical resources on those services our families need.

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. 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, and procedures as well as in the conduct of the Army Profession and Ethic. We continue to evolve our *Not in My Squad* program to address the gaps our Soldiers may have in understanding the Army Profession and Ethics.

Not in My Squad is an initiative, not a budget-line program of record. It is resourced with existing personnel from the Center for the Army Profession and Ethic and the Army Research Institute. The initiative focuses on empowering squad leaders and junior leaders to build mutual trust and cohesion at their level. We want squad leaders to accept responsibility for the discipline and standards of their Soldiers and resolve issues at the lowest level. The initiative includes a website with a basic self-assessment tool and resources as well as facilitated workshops with squad leaders to help them share best practices and challenges.

In calendar year 2016, the Army conducted nine workshops, which included 440 junior NCOs who back-briefed 19 command sergeants major on recommendations from the squad leader level. There have been more than 3,300 submissions on the squad leader self-assessment tool,

and the “In My Squad” virtual simulator is the most used resource by those who take the self-assessment. The Army plans to conduct at least four more workshops in the remainder of calendar year 2017.

Several units have embraced the initiative and are applying its concepts across their units. 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. Cohesive teams are built on trust and 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.

Sexual assault, sexual harassment, and retaliation of reporting incidents have no place in our Army. Army data shows that reports have increased. We credit the changing culture in our units for making victims more comfortable in filing reports. Training and assistance to command teams from Sexual Assault Response Coordinators and Victim Advocates are paying dividends in reducing the stigma and providing support to victims.

Sexual Assault Response Coordinators are the single point of contact at an installation or within a geographic area who oversee sexual assault awareness, prevention and response training. They coordinate medical treatment, including emergency care for victims of sexual assault, and they track the services provided to a victim from the initial report through final disposition and resolution. Victim Advocates provides non-clinical crisis intervention, referral and ongoing non-clinical support to adult sexual assault victims. Support includes providing information on available options and resources available to victims. The Victim Advocate, on behalf of the sexual assault victim, provides liaison assistance with other organizations and agencies on victim care matters and reports directly to the Sexual Assault Response Coordinator when performing victim advocacy duties.

The Army’s ongoing Sexual Harassment/ Assault Response Prevention (SHARP) efforts include shaping the installations to identify community and installation risk factors for sexual assault and the development of mitigating strategies. We are also fielding the Emergent Leader Immersive

Training Environment SHARP Command Team Trainer, and the Prevention and Outreach Simulation Trainer. We continuously learn from our experiences and challenge our commanders and leaders at all levels to maintain a zero tolerance.

### **Professional Development**

Military and civilian professionals are our decisive advantage. The Army is committed to building 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 units into combat. Leader development starts with a framework of formal professional education coupled with operational assignments and self-study. Professional Military Education serves as the principal 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.

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. With the full implementation of the STEP (Select, Train, Educate, and Promote) program and the onset of the Master Leader's Course in FY18, the future of our NCO Corps is bright. We are ensuring continuous education for our Soldiers at almost every rank.

The Army projects that it will train approximately 40,500 leaders through the various levels of the Noncommissioned Officer Education System courses from all three components using resident instructions in FY17, and approximately 40,000 leaders in FY18. 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 Soldiers are equipped with the appropriate knowledge, skills and abilities to fight and win in complex security environments.

### **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 – know that these decisions impact people.

Budget and appropriations for the near and long term remain a concern. We need to continue this year's recruitment and retention trends to sustain quality in the all-volunteer force. If we revert to Budget Control Act levels of funding, the Army will be forced to make hard choices that will compromise the quality of our All-Volunteer Force and the Army's ability to meet the challenges of a complex and uncertain national security environment.

The enduring quality of the American Soldier and the Army Family is that despite these challenges, fears and frustrations – they stand tall in defense of our Nation. Throughout the recent years of force structure cuts and working within fiscal constraints, our Soldiers have demonstrated their professionalism. 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.

In closing, I want to take this opportunity to reinforce the need to sustain our Soldiers benefits. My position is firm. Any further degradation of benefits and services to our Soldiers and Families significantly degrades our ability to maintain readiness. With such comes added, significant risk to sustaining a professional all-volunteer force of quality.

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