

# United States Air Force

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Presentation

Before the House Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Military Construction  
and Veterans Affairs

## ***Quality of Life in the Military***

Witness Statement of  
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Force

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## Introduction

Chairman Dent, Ranking Member Wasserman Schultz and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for your continued support and interest in the quality of life of our service men and women. I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to represent America's Airmen and their families. It is an honor to address you for the first time, express their needs and offer appreciation for your support on their behalf.

The ultimate source of air, space and cyberspace combat capability resides in the men and women of the U.S. Air Force. We owe it to our nation, our Airmen and our partners around the world to provide a ready and resilient force. The geopolitical environment has dramatically evolved over the last 25 years, and the unpredictable landscape we now operate in requires the Air Force to continually revisit, improve and evolve our personnel management processes to ensure we better recruit and retain our talented Airmen. The Air Force must meet the needs of the warfighter faster, more efficiently and more effectively.

Our Airmen and their families are the key to our success. Our job is to support and defend America's way of life, defend our country's borders and national interests and, when necessary, to fight and win our nation's wars. It's not an easy task, which is why focusing on our Airmen and their families is so important. It is imperative we put them first, inspire them and support them as they face the challenges inherent in serving in the Profession of Arms. Where we can, we must ease burdens and remove barriers. Eliminating barriers ensures we fully leverage our skilled Airmen and supports retaining ready, resilient Airmen and families.

We continue to explore opportunities to strengthen the force. While some initiatives are force-wide, others are more targeted, but all have the same objective. Taken together,

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these will strengthen our competitive position in the battle for top talent. We owe our commanders and enlisted leaders at all levels well trained, deliberately developed Airman, and Airman and families who are resilient.

Many of the initiatives you support allow us to strengthen the quality of life for our Airmen, even in difficult fiscal times. We rely on your efforts, actions and legislation to protect and support our service members' pay and benefits. We also appreciate your continued support of Airmen in the field, and hope you continue to travel to our installations to see first-hand the quality of our Airmen and families. Today's Airmen are the asymmetric advantage over every other Air Force in the world. Their continued commitment speaks to their character, passion and talent. We must always be thankful for their willingness to serve.

### **Growing the Force**

To meet global demands, resource emerging requirements, and repair and sustain the force, the Air Force must increase active duty end strength — up to 321,000 by the end of 2017. The Air Force will consider end strength increases as it works with the Secretary of Defense to develop the Fiscal Year's 2018 President's Budget request.

The Air Force continues to execute assigned missions, but nearly 25 years of combat — along with declining personnel numbers and aging equipment—have strained our readiness. Since 2001, the active Air Force has remained consistently engaged in military operations while reducing the active force by more than 11 percent. Most reductions came from the logistics and Agile Combat Support (ACS) communities without corresponding reductions in force structure or infrastructure. Although the Air Force took an 11 percent cut, ACS active duty manpower was

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cut 34 percent. Restoring the force allows us to meet the mission requirements of the joint force and the increased demand for air, space and cyber.

The Air Force started Fiscal Year 2017 with 317,000 active duty Airmen. To successfully grow our force to meet 2017 end strength requirements, we must address mission and readiness demands while shaping the workforce to meet current and future mission and skill requirements. The Air Force will continue to work with the Secretary of Defense to reassess our end strength needs based on overall mission requirements. If we need to increase accessions, our recruiters and military training infrastructure must be flexible enough to handle any increase in annual throughput. We must remain measured and cautious in how we change the force to ensure readiness and not hollow the force.

### **Compensation**

Part of the Fiscal Year 2017 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) considers potential changes to our Airmen's compensation, specifically in the form of Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH). The regressive nature of the proposed legislation effectively removes BAH as part of Regular Military Compensation. This would reverse nearly 20 years of deliberate legislative action to ensure service members are appropriately compensated for their service, and that their salaries remain competitive with private-sector professionals. The Fiscal Year 2017 NDAA directs the Department of Defense (DoD) to provide a report on implementation of a single pay system no later than January 1, 2018, which represents an attempt to treat BAH as compensation rather than an allowance. The talented men and women of the Air Force are called upon each day to perform crucial missions around the world. In every one of those mission areas, Airmen are the key to our success. Our first priority must always be taking care

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of those Airmen; every one of them earn their current pay and compensation. While we remain mindful of current budget pressures across the DoD, cost savings must be tempered by the need to retain our talent, which is truly a national asset.

### **2017 Input Force Management**

With ever evolving geopolitical situations, retention of requisite force structure and the identified need to reinvigorate the nuclear enterprise, we determined Fiscal Year 2015 budget levels were too low to maintain readiness and operations supporting global warfighting requirements. With your help, the Air Force increased active duty personnel to 317,000 in Fiscal Year 2016 to address key capability gaps in the nuclear enterprise, maintenance, cyber, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, while matching manpower to force structure decisions.

As we grow the force in 2017, it's important we do so in an efficient, stable manner. By employing increased accession and expanded retention programs, the Air Force will preserve A-10 and EC-130 capabilities while continuing to build the F-35 force, increase maintenance capacity and retain critical experience to improve readiness. We are also investing in the underlying training enterprise in order to increase the end strength and develop the personnel that will enable the Air Force to transition and shape its workforce to meet current and future mission and skill requirements. Successful execution of our force management plan requires focused effort to ensure critical resources are available in a timely manner in the recruiting, accession, and training pipelines. We're increasing our advertising budget to bolster recruiting efforts and sourcing additional military training instructors at Air Force Basic Military Training

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(BMT) as well as additional technical training instructors for initial skills training to support increased accession targets.

In parallel with our recruiting uptick and training pipeline augmentation to meet the increased accession numbers, we are leveraging retention tools to preserve the knowledge and skill that our more experienced Airmen provide. Specifically, the number of eligible specialties for our Selective Retention Bonus program nearly tripled from 40 in Fiscal Year 2015 to 117 in Fiscal Year 2016 and we have settled in around 80 specialties for Fiscal Year 2017. Additionally, we will continue to allow eligible Airmen to participate in the High-Year Tenure extension program, extending their service for up to two years with respective commander concurrence. All of these efforts are focused on retaining experience in key career fields, like nuclear, maintenance, cyber and ISR, while we grow and train new recruits.

As we approach Fiscal Year 2018, we're confident our actions will enable a stronger, more efficient Air Force to secure our great nation. Our current growth plan brings us to 90 percent of the manning required for our current force structure and mission sets.

### **Recruiting and Retention**

The Air Force is on track to meet total force enlisted accession goals for the Active Duty, Reserve, and Air National Guard components. For this fiscal year, over 10,000 men and women have completed or are currently attending Air Force BMT. There are approximately 5,000 additional recruits contracted to attend BMT in Fiscal Year 2017 with an additional 16,000 needed to fully meet this year's goal of 31,000. Ninety-nine percent of our recruits are high school graduates and 19 percent have at least 15-semester hours of college.

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With an improving economy, we will face tough competition for recruits, especially those with highly technical or unique skills and capabilities. Furthermore, as military compensation and retirement changes are enacted, we must continue to assess the changes' potential impact to force retention.

It is imperative we invest in programs to attract the highest quality applicants the Air Force requires to meet the myriad of mission needs to include evolving career fields such as cyber and High-Demand/Low-Density career fields like our critical Battlefield Airmen. Our ability to meet recruitment goals and sustain the quality enlisted corps we require depends on a comprehensive approach, one that keeps military service attractive to potential recruits. A centerpiece of that appeal is a focus of this committee, our Air Force Quality of Life programs and initiatives, which have been strained by budget pressures in recent years. We offer our recruits much more than a profession; we offer them the opportunity to be part of our Air Force family. Quality of life programs and the support we offer to our Airmen and their families are essential for us to remain competitive in the recruiting arena.

### **Taking Care of Airmen**

We sincerely appreciate continued congressional support and funding for quality of life initiatives for our Airmen and families. Airmen, along with their families, overwhelmingly factor these support programs into their decision to continue serving our nation. As we continue to support a healthy lifestyle with a strong sense of community in and around our bases, we focus on four areas: health and wellness; Airmen and family support; education and development; and Airmen and family housing.

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The Secretary of the Air Force (SecAF) and Chief of Staff (CSAF) of the Air Force's focus of *Taking Care of People* is at the forefront of your Air Force's commitment to providing the best support possible to build and maintain ready, resilient Airmen and families. This ensures commanders have Airmen that are mentally, spiritually and physically fit to perform their required duties along with the support for their families to thrive during difficult times. Improving positive behaviors allows Airmen to focus more on the mission and creates a culture and climate of inclusiveness where every Airman feels like they are part of the team.

Budgetary constraints mean it is more challenging to maintain Airmen and family support programs at previous levels; however, this does not lessen our commitment to fully funding the most important Airmen and family support programs like Airman and Family Readiness Centers, Child Development Centers, Sexual Assault and Prevention Response Programs and Military Tuition Assistance. This commitment to strengthen our Airmen and families will better create a resilient Air Force and mission ready Airmen.

We build resiliency by developing Airmen who purposefully sustain fit lifestyles with Comprehensive Airmen Fitness (CAF). Our CAF's mission and goals are designed to bolster the men and women who support Air Force mission readiness. CAF is a holistic approach to strengthening the mental, physical, social and spiritual domains. We remain actively engaged in all aspects of CAF as an Air Force-wide means of improving our tremendous force.

### **Sexual Assault Prevention and Response**

Air Force leadership involvement at every level is critical to the prevention and reporting of sexual assault. Although we have made improvements over the past several years, we still have work to do to eliminate sexual assault from the Air Force. The Air Force Sexual Assault



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Prevention and Response Office is pursuing initiatives to improve education and training, policy, and programs ... ultimately to be more effective in preventing sexual assault. The Air Force has improved every aspect of our response system, building a solid foundation from which to launch new strategic prevention efforts.

In late 2015, Air Force leaders signed into effect a five-year Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Strategy. In addition to plans for improving our robust response system, the strategy presented the Air Force's first comprehensive plan to prevent future sexual assaults. Responding to and supporting victims of sexual assault is not enough to achieve our goal of eliminating sexual assault. We must act to prevent the perpetration of violence before it occurs.

Our prevention strategy uses a public health approach recognizing that policies and programs aren't enough to effect change. Our Airmen must take ownership of the problem and act if we want to continue to see sexual assaults decline across the force. The first step of this strategy is Green Dot training, which was introduced to the force last year. Green Dot gives Airmen the knowledge and skills to identify and engage to prevent multiple forms of violence, including sexual assault. The Green Dot approach is a paradigm shift for how the Air Force has been addressing sexual assault prevention. It provides innovative skills for Airmen to take action to prevent power-based violence. Training is not being conducted by leadership or Sexual Assault Response Coordinators (SARC). Instead, Airmen who are peer influencers within their units or installation are nominated by their leadership to conduct training and identify peer leaders to assist. In addition, the Air Force is in the process of hiring specialists for the primary prevention of violence for most installations. These specialists will oversee Green Dot in addition to building a data-driven local violence prevention strategy.

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While we are increasing our prevention efforts, we remain committed to responding to and supporting survivors of sexual assault. Over the past several years, we've seen an increase in reports from male sexual assault victims. This is a promising start, but we know there are victims out there not coming forward to report and receive help. We are working with DoD agencies to develop a strategy to understand the unique needs of male victims to better support and care for them.

We also must address retaliation against survivors. Currently, our SARCs review incidents of retaliation, with consent of the victim, at monthly Case Management Group (CMG) meetings at each installation. These meetings are hosted by the installation or wing vice commander and include the SARC, a legal advisor, investigators, chaplains, the victim's advocate, special victim's counsel, medical advisors and unit commanders. The CMG monitors all reports of retaliation until each case has reached final disposition or the retaliation has been appropriately addressed. We've found that the predominance type of retaliation victims report is ostracism - being treated differently by their peers at work. We will continue to work with the DoD and our sister services to address this issue.

There is no quick fix to eliminate sexual assault from the Air Force. We must take the deliberate steps necessary to change our culture to one in which our Airmen's actions and words make it obvious to everyone that sexual assault will not be tolerated. We are steadfast in our commitment to eliminate sexual assault from our Air Force.

### **Suicide Prevention**

Suicide prevention is an Air Force priority at every level. As a major new initiative, annual suicide prevention and sexual assault prevention training have been combined to

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reinforce the importance of reducing interpersonal and self-directed violence across the Air Force. These two prevention programs are being integrated into one office to reflect state-of-the-art science in community prevention and emphasize the Air Force's overriding commitment to eliminating these sources of harm to Airmen. The end result is combined and integrated sexual assault and suicide prevention training which teaches critical prevention and intervention skills. Operating from similar prevention principles, this strategic response reinforces the community public-health approach that is essential to reducing all forms of interpersonal and self-directed violence. Simultaneously, we have developed new training materials for total force members and military dependents, and are focusing on tools and resources for squadron-level leadership in accordance with the CSAF's priorities. The Air Force Suicide Prevention Program is predicated on strong leadership and Airmen looking out for each other as Wingmen.

2016 saw a decrease in Active Duty and Reserve component suicides. We remain steadfast in efforts undertaken since the Air Force Summit to reinforce resilience, reduce stigma and prevent suicides. Current initiatives include the first military pilot of Zero Suicide, a prevention framework applied in health care settings which has achieved dramatic results. We are developing a curriculum for social problem solving skills to enhance resilient coping mechanisms for life stressors and challenges. We have also made progress in providing squadron commanders with flexible training and intervention tools, including a range of training options and resources which can be tailored to squadron risk factors, a commander's checklist for Airmen under investigation, and a mobile app. The Air Force approach, characterized by engaged senior leader oversight, innovative prevention and response options

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and empowered unit-level leaders, demonstrates our unwavering commitment to preventing suicides in our total force.

### **TRICARE**

Roughly 9.4 million Active Duty, Guard and Reserve members, their families, retirees, and survivors rely on the TRICARE health plan for wellness and peace of mind. Benefits provided under TRICARE have been generous and out-of-pocket costs low.

In October, a new generation of TRICARE contracts began, consolidating the current three geographical regions into two regions resulting in more standardized patient care. Our civilian partners overseeing these regions will collaborate with the Military Health System to provide coordinated and comprehensive care and improved integration between military treatment and civilian facilities to improve quality of care and patient safety.

The Fiscal Year 2017 NDAA created the path for more significant TRICARE reform. Notable reform measures directed by the NDAA were updated cost shares, improved access to urgent care, and the establishment of a TRICARE Select health plan to replace the current TRICARE Standard and Extra plans.

### **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)**

PTSD rates among Airmen, despite a sustained high operational tempo, have remained relatively low. It remained below 0.5 percent, even at the height of our involvement in the Middle East. We are proud to note greater than 80 percent of our mental health providers are trained in evidence-based PTSD treatments and proven state-of-the-art interventions are available to all Airmen. I attribute this to the excellent training Air Force providers receive and to their commitment to identify and employ the best science available to care for our wounded

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men and women. Although our overall PTSD rates have remained low, we are seeing a gradual increase in the number of Airmen with new diagnoses. This is not surprising given our Airmen's sustained involvement in conflicts coupled with a decreased stigma of seeking mental health treatment. Our leaders are doing an outstanding job breaking down barriers to ensure Airmen receive the services they need.

The Air Force remains committed to helping Airmen through improvements in early symptom recognition and offering effective treatment. We continue to screen Airmen for PTSD symptoms at various points in the deployment cycle. We will continue to collaborate with the DoD and the Department of Veterans Affairs to advance research on prevention and treatment of combat related injuries, including PTSD. To support the growing needs of Airmen in uniquely stressed career fields, we have begun embedding mental health and primary care providers to select Explosive Ordnance Disposal units and several Remotely Piloted Aircraft and Intelligence units. To reduce the stigma of mental health care for service members, mental health clinicians have been placed in all Air Force primary care clinics. This ensures the right care at the right time in the right place.

### **Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)**

TBI rates in the Air Force remain relatively low. The vast majority of Air Force cases are concussions unrelated to combat. We are expanding our efforts to ensure Airmen seek medical care for any suspected TBI. We identify deployed individuals with TBI symptoms upon their return home through the Post Deployment Health Assessment and Reassessment, with referrals as appropriate. The Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury and Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center continue to serve as

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valuable partners in facilitating a combined effort between all services and developing clinical practice guidelines for our providers. Our clinical, research, and educational efforts are closely coordinated with the other services through the TBI Advisory Committee.

### **Resilient and Mission Ready Airmen and Families**

Recognizing resilience drives our readiness, the Air Force is enhancing its Resilience Skills Program. We updated our curriculum and even adapted a youth-centric version for instruction in our youth centers across the force. We continue to increase the number of Master Resilience Trainers (MRT). Selected by commanders, these Airmen provide peer-to-peer support and instruction to their units. We will achieve over 3,000 MRTs by summer of 2017. Additionally, the Air Force is expanding the Ramstein Air Base Deployment Transition Center (DTC). This highly praised facility offers valuable decompression services and reinforces resilience skills to Airmen before they return home from deployment. Currently, we target redeploying Airmen who have seen combat or traumatic events for inclusion in the DTC and are examining the feasibility of servicing more Airmen regardless of their deployed missions. This redeploying program is proven to disconnect the stress of war from the rhythm of normal life, easing reintegration back into home units and families.

### **Airman and Family Readiness Centers (A&FRC)**

Our A&FRCs serve as a crucial bridge between our families and military missions to ensure resiliency and readiness. In addition to A&FRC, our Key Spouse Program is the core of establishing a connection between squadrons and families. This program is made up of volunteer spouses trained on critical family-based programs and other aspects of family life. Recognizing the pivotal nature of this relationship, we continue to focus on specific roles and

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responsibilities for commanders, key spouse mentors and key spouses. This invaluable team dynamic exists at every Air Force installation.

Financial stresses can significantly impact the resilience of our Airmen and their families. To reduce this impact, our personal financial readiness program strives to improve the financial literacy and readiness of our Total Force. We are developing comprehensive financial literacy training across the Air Force to ensure Airmen can make educated financial decisions that meet their needs and circumstances. Our Personal Financial Managers (PFM) are available for individual counseling sessions, education and mandatory training, for our Airmen and families, including 440,000 Airmen eligible to decide on whether the Blended Retirement System (BRS) is right for them. Last year, PFMs assisted nearly 100,000 Airmen and families; we expect a significant increase over the next year as we implement financial literacy training and the BRS.

### **Wounded Warrior Support**

The Air Force Warrior and Survivor Care office leads our effort in orchestrating a comprehensive, continuum of care that synergizes DoD and Veterans Affairs programs to meet the medical and non-medical care of wounded, ill, and injured service members. Over the past year, our Air Force Wounded Warrior (AFW2) program increased enrollment by over 1,100 wounded, ill and injured Airmen through improved marketing with a focus on Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve units. We continue to work with units to identify Guard and Reserve Airmen who have returned home from deployment and are beginning to cope with the effects of post-traumatic stress. We strive to ensure affected Airmen are educated on professional resources available to help them when symptoms manifest themselves. Bringing healing and focus to their lives is an ongoing priority.

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Care of our Airmen is a holistic endeavor. While we are committed to providing world-class treatment for their wounds, illnesses or injuries, we are also dedicated to treating the whole person and, as an extension of the Airmen, their families and caregivers as well. We help each Airman identify a path to normalcy whether that is through continuing their Air Force career or, if their circumstances so dictate, to develop goals for a future beyond the uniform. Pivotal to the Airman's success is the involvement of his or her family and caregiver, so we include these people in every step of the Airman's recovery.

We connect spouses to employment and educational opportunities as well as support resources for everything from marital counseling to financial support to housing assistance. We also have developed Caregiver Peer Support Forums, as a collaborative effort with the Secretary of Defense and the other Services' Wounded Warrior programs. The Air Force also hosts several regional events each year including caregiver support, adaptive and rehabilitative sports, Recovering Airman Mentorship Program and employment and career readiness. Through these events, wounded warriors and their caregivers lean on one another for strength and compassion as we continuously work to ensure our wounded, ill and injured are provided the tools necessary to reach self-sufficiency.

### **Morale, Welfare and Recreation**

Our Air Force Morale, Welfare and Recreation programs are a critical Air Force resiliency capability and a cornerstone support for Comprehensive Airman Fitness. Programs such as outdoor recreation, libraries, community activities centers, fitness centers and a host of other recreational activities provide the options needed to foster a healthy lifestyle, key to the resiliency and readiness of our Airmen and families



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The Air Force is fully committed to improving our capabilities to advance Airmen resiliency through new and innovative initiatives. Our Recharge for Resiliency (R4R) program provides targeted support to deployed or recently returned Airmen and their families as well as single Airmen. Such programming provides participants relief from the unique challenges of military life through recreational, cultural, educational, outdoor and high adrenaline programs. R4R programs also build unit cohesion and a strong sense of community, both critical to the sustainment of a resilient, ready force. Last year, 95 installations participated in the Air Force Recharge for Resiliency programming.

Fitness centers across the Air Force continue to offer access to authorized customers at all hours of the day through the Fitness Access Program. This program allows Airmen the ability to develop and execute a personal fitness routine consistent with their schedules. In addition, the Air Force executes a capital improvement program to replace worn cardio and strength training equipment. The Air Force also offers personalized fitness specialist training to sports and fitness staff members to improve the fitness and sports program for our Airmen and families.

Libraries remain an important part of Air Force life. New library delivery models were approved for installation commanders' consideration based on the mission and customer needs. Air Force libraries now operate under one of three approved models: traditional, modified or digital. These three models preserve library capabilities but allow commanders to tailor delivery at the installation level based on several factors, including the number of on-base residents and transient personnel, daily attendance, and distance to off-base libraries.

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### **Child and Youth Development Programs**

Air Force Child and Youth Programs take pride in assisting military and civilian personnel in balancing the Air Force mission and family life by delivering a system of quality, available and affordable services for children and youth from birth to 18 years of age. Our Child Development Programs continue to maintain 100 percent national accreditation, ensuring only the safest, quality care for our youngest family members. Our School Age Programs equal that mark, which is remarkable when compared to the less than 10 percent national accreditation rate of civilian child care programs.

Through the Force of the Future initiative, we have identified 11 installations with a need to expand child care operating hours to meet mission requirements and are working with these installations to determine the necessary resources required to support the expansion. In addition, our Expanded Child Care Program provided a diverse array of approaches to support active and reserve component families with specialized child care needs and with nontraditional child care outside of the typical duty schedule. Two new programs, Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) Mission Care and RPA2 Care, were implemented to assist the RPA community with unique and extended child care needs. We extended Expanded Child Care Program services to Airmen at 13 Army installations and continue to explore needs in other non-AF locations. And, we increased respite child care benefits to children with special needs from 12 to 40 hours per month.

Our commitment to families does not end with child care. Air Force Youth Programs had an impressive 23 Air Force teens winning state Military Youth of the Year honors, five of those garnered regional titles, and one Air Force teen was selected as the National Military Youth of

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the Year. In total, Air Force Youth Program members earned more than \$335,000 in scholarships through the Military Youth of the Year program. Our youth programs focused on expanding Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) opportunities with regional STEM camps for youth, a centralized purchase of STEM materials for installation youth programs and targeted staff training for implementing and enhancing STEM programming.

### **Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA)**

Serving the nation for over 145 years, DeCA is a core military family support element and key component of our military pay and compensation. Our Air Force leadership partners well with DeCA in exercising the level of stewardship needed to foster innovation to help drive costs down while continuing to be an efficient method for delivering the benefit. Commissary shoppers save an average of 24 percent on groceries compared to commercial stores. In addition, commissaries are a major employer of military spouses, dependents, retirees, Guard and Reserve, and other veterans, who comprise 66 percent of the DeCA workforce. These benefits combined help the Air Force recruit and retain the best and brightest Airmen.

### **Housing**

Quality unaccompanied dormitories and accompanied housing ensures our Airmen and families have a strong supporting foundation. We provide dormitories for our single Airmen in the ranks of E-1 through E-4 with less than three years of service through military construction (MILCON), and homes for our families through family housing construction (FHCON) and housing privatization. We have completed privatization of more than 99 percent of the housing inventory across our 63 Air Force installations in the continental United States, Alaska, and Hawaii for an end state of over 53,000 housing units. Housing privatization continues to

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transform our installations and create efficient, modern communities where our Air Force families choose to live. We have eliminated over 34,000 inadequate homes since the program started in 1998, with another 1,100 privatized homes to be replaced or renovated by the end of Fiscal Year 2020. In this constrained fiscal environment, we continue to invest in sustaining and modernizing government-owned family housing overseas. In Fiscal Year 2017, \$61.4 million will improve 216 housing units at Okinawa, Japan, and two family housing units at Moron Air Base, Spain. Another \$274.4 million is programmed this year for leases, family housing operations and maintenance for government-owned homes, and for privatized housing oversight.

We are also deeply committed to providing quality dormitories for our first-term unaccompanied Airmen. Our focus remains on providing an environment of care, development, and mentorship for our Airmen. Our dormitory campuses are not just a place to sleep; they are a place for young Airmen to adjust to military life and build a strong sense of community. As with family housing, we are making great strides in eliminating inadequate dormitories from our inventory of 804 dormitories. In 2017, Congress generously supported \$94 million to build new training dormitories at Joint Base San Antonio – Lackland, Texas, and Fairchild Air Force Base, Washington.

### **Military Construction**

Ready and resilient installations are a critical component of Air Force operations. Unfortunately fifteen years of continuous combat, a fiscal environment constrained by the Budget Control Act, and a complex security environment have limited our ability to sufficiently invest in our infrastructure – we have simply had no choice but to invest in vital modernization efforts. We continue to prioritize our program to cover our most critical MILCON requirements

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to enable core Air Force capabilities and take care of our people – for it is our people who make the mission possible. In this environment, our MILCON program focuses on our most critical requirements to take care of our people, balance today’s readiness with tomorrow’s modernization, and making every dollar count.

Since 2000, and with the generous support of Congress, the Air Force funded 125 military construction projects totaling \$855 million for child development centers and fitness centers. This represents a significant investment to improve readiness and the quality of life for our Airmen.

### **Conclusion**

Chairman Dent, Ranking Member Wasserman Schultz and members of the Subcommittee, thank you again for this opportunity to represent our incredible Airmen and their families. Despite the many challenges we face, your Airmen, supported by some of the strongest families our nation will ever know, stand ready. They fully understand the joint force depends on their ability to employ and enable airpower around the world.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide insight into the quality of life of our Airmen affecting our force. We appreciate your continued support for our brave Airmen and their selfless families, and for your commitment to protect the quality of life initiatives they need to confidently defend our nation. We’re counting on each of you to lead our nation and ensure we have the resources to remain the world’s greatest Air Force.