

United States Space Force



Testimony Before the
House Appropriations
Subcommittee on Military Construction,
Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies

Quality of Life in the Military

Witness Statement of
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COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

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Chairman Carter, Ranking Member Wasserman Schultz, and distinguished members of this Subcommittee, thank you for your unwavering commitment to the well-being of our Guardians and their families. Your dedication to their quality of life and service is crucial to the success of the Space Force and directly contributes to our ability to attract and retain the very best, ensuring our nation maintains joint lethality. I deeply appreciate the provisions provided by Congress, particularly the pay raises for our junior enlisted personnel, expanded access to critical medical care, and strengthened support systems for spouses. These initiatives are tangible investments in the overall readiness and resilience of our force, reflecting our promise to those who serve.

While grateful for this progress on quality-of-life initiatives, the Space Force also recognizes that ensuring the well-being of our Guardians is not only the right thing to do but also essential to our ability to adapt and maintain *Space Superiority* in a rapidly evolving and increasingly contested domain. This demands a fundamental shift in how we train, equip, and develop Guardians, honing their character and commitment to meet 21st-century challenges. Space Superiority, essential for Joint Force success, requires maintaining control of space, allowing our forces to operate freely while denying adversaries the same. This necessitates robust *Space Control* capabilities, ranging from reversible to non-reversible effects, utilizing both kinetic and non-kinetic means across all segments of our space architecture to contest and control the domain.

These evolving requirements are driven by the escalating and very real threats posed by nations like China and Russia, who are actively developing space-based capabilities designed to challenge U.S. space dominance. China's expanding satellite network and development of

Quality of Life in the Military

April 8, 2025

counterspace weapons, alongside Russia's pursuit of an on-orbit nuclear anti-satellite weapon, pose serious risks. Both nations view space as a critical warfighting domain and aim to disrupt U.S. access and undermine its military superiority. The Space Force remains dedicated to deterring and defeating these threats to protect US space control. It is with unwavering courage that our Guardians, *the invisible front line* of this nation, stand ready to deter and, if necessary, defeat these threats.

However, ensuring our Guardians are equipped to confront these evolving challenges demands that we provide them with a service experience commensurate with their dedication and the critical nature of their mission. To truly unleash the potential of our Guardians, we must provide them with a service experience worthy of their dedication and sacrifice. That's why my office is committed to elevating *The Guardian Experience* across three key initiatives: *Elevate the Journey*, *Cultivate the Warfighter*, and *Create the Future*. These initiatives are not merely aspirational; they represent a concrete plan to invest in the well-being, development, and legacy of every Guardian, whether they serve in uniform or as part of our exceptional civilian workforce.

Our Guardians face evolving threats and require the highest caliber training. The Vosler Academy, our sole enlisted training institution, is crucial. Investing in modernized infrastructure, support contracts, and academic partnerships is essential to provide our Guardians with the quality training they deserve.

Simultaneously, the Space Force Personnel Management Act is key to transforming our personnel system. This act enables flexible career paths, integration of part-time expertise, and

Quality of Life in the Military

April 8, 2025

prioritization of critical competencies – all vital for developing Guardians who can outmaneuver our adversaries.

We are fully committed to implementing this act by FY28, creating a 21st-century talent management system that attracts and retains the best talent. This requires developing new policies and procedures, and close coordination with the Air Force Reserve for a smooth transition.

Already, we've seen significant progress. The first round of Selection Boards has concluded, identifying over 250 highly qualified Air Force Reserve professionals for transfer into full-time Space Force roles. This process, along with the planned transfer of part-time personnel beginning in FY26, will be crucial in building the foundation of our new personnel system. We are committed to finding innovative solutions that address immediate needs while paving the way for long-term sustainability. Our priority is to ensure a seamless transition that prioritizes our Guardians and their families while equipping the Space Force to meet future challenges.

The value our Guardians bring to the Nation, our Joint Force, and our Partners and Allies cannot be overstated. That's why we are grateful to Congress for your interest in understanding how our service members are compensated and cared for, including looking at quality-of-life issues beyond compensation, such as housing, childcare access and cost, and military spouse unemployment.

It is vital to recognize that the majority of our Space Force Guardians are “employed-in-place”. According to the Office of People Analytics 2023 Status of Forces Survey of Active Duty Member (2023 SFS-A), Guardians are less likely to respond that they are currently deployed and

Quality of Life in the Military

April 8, 2025

more likely to indicate they have not been deployed in the past 5 years. Unlike their counterparts in other Services who primarily deploy downrange, our Guardians primarily provide critical, war-winning space effects from their power projection platforms. This creates a unique challenge: they must simultaneously execute their mission and manage the responsibilities of family and home life. While their dedication is unwavering, the lack of respite and constant juggling act can take a toll, impacting morale, retention, and ultimately, readiness.

Quality of life programs are essential force multipliers. Access to affordable childcare, spousal employment opportunities, quality education, and reliable healthcare are not just about comfort and convenience; they are fundamental to a Guardian's ability to focus on the mission. When our Guardians are free from worry about their families' well-being, they can better dedicate themselves to protecting our nation's interests in space. Supporting our Guardians means supporting their families, and that is an investment in the very foundation of our Space Force's strength. It also reflects our profound Connection to these families and our understanding of their vital role in our collective success.

To ensure the U.S. Space Force continues to thrive, Congressional support for our Guardians and their families is paramount. This means championing competitive pay and compensation, bolstering critical support programs and resources, and providing world-class training and education opportunities that cultivate the world's finest space warfighters. Investing in the future of the Space Force through innovation will cement the service's legacy for generations to come. By working together, we can build a Space Force where every Guardian is empowered to thrive and reach their full potential in service to our nation.

Quality of Life in the Military

April 8, 2025

Our Guardians are entrusted with protecting our nation's interests in an increasingly complex and contested space domain. Their dedication ensures our nation, and our allies can thrive. As we move into the fifth year of the Space Force, with the urgency of *Securing Our Nation's Interests In, From, and To Space* clearer than ever, the decisions we make today will determine our success for decades to come. We must prioritize the needs of our Guardians and provide the resources they require to keep our space domain secure and accessible. We look forward to collaborating with Congress to enact the FY26 appropriations and ensure the U.S. Space Force has the tools and support needed to build a future where space power underpins national prosperity and security.