

**RECORD VERSION STATEMENT BY
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**BEFORE THE
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Introduction

Chairman Carter, Ranking Member Wasserman Schultz, distinguished members of this panel, thank you for the invitation to speak on behalf of the Soldiers, their Families, and the Army Civilians who make up our all-volunteer force.

The reason we exist is to fight and win when called upon. We have Warfighters continuously deployed around the world, in every capacity. There are thousands of Soldiers working, training, and living alongside our Allies and Partners, increasing interoperability, growing capabilities, and exchanging knowledge to ensure that alongside our Sister Services, Allies, and Partners, we are ready to fight and win at every point in the future. More than 109,000 Soldiers are deployed across the globe, and we have 74,000 Soldiers serving as part of the Immediate or Crisis Response Forces. Critical to the success of our Soldiers are their Families.

Their dedication, sacrifice, and endurance through the stress of their Soldier being away from home or prepared to deploy at a moment's notice is unwavering. It does not go unnoticed. Thank you for all the work you have done to support your Army. It has been my honor to serve over the past 31 years but there is much more that needs to be done and we need Congress's help.

Our purpose, direction, and motivation remain aligned with the four focus areas: 1) maintain warfighting readiness through tough realistic training that bolsters deterrence and ensures that any potential aggressor is never left unchecked; 2) operationalize installations to deliver combat-ready formations; 3) empower our Soldiers, Noncommissioned Officers, and Leaders at echelon to drive continuous transformation and increase lethality at an unprecedented pace; and 4) strengthening the profession through enforcement of standards so we provide disciplined forces.

Warfighting

I am proud of everything our Soldiers have accomplished. They are focused on warfighting readiness, prepared to respond to their Nation's need in times of crisis to fight and win while defending enduring National interests. Our Soldiers remain engaged worldwide. We are a Total Army and are orienting the focus of the Force – Active, Guard, and Reserve – on being trained, fit, disciplined, expert, cohesive and a lethal team of teams.

Alongside the Secretary of the Army and the Chief of Staff of the Army, we are creating a culture focused on tough realistic training and adopting a warfighting mindset – where our focus is keeping the word near in front of the term peer when it comes to our adversaries. Our leaders are the foundation of that readiness, cultivating an environment where Soldiers are weaponizing their passion for the profession of warfighting.

Predictable Training

Preparation starts at home station right now. We have no time to be stagnant as there is no second place in conflict. We are the most lethal Army in the world. We will remain ready to fight tonight. Leaders at echelon carry the weight of this responsibility. They lead the outstanding men

and women who raise their hands in service of their country. They are responsible for training Soldiers to be ready when the nation calls. Alongside other Army Senior Leaders, when visiting Soldiers, from Poland to Korea, I reinforce the fact that Soldiers need stable and predictable training. It increases quality of life and enables Soldiers and Families to achieve their goals while simultaneously ensuring the Army maintains its warfighting readiness.

Holistic Health and Fitness

Increasing human performance is a priority to retain a ready force as operational demands grow more complex. Holistic Health and Fitness (H2F) has been foundational in optimizing improved total fitness, reducing injury rates, and improving rehabilitation after injury, contributing to an increased overall effectiveness of Soldier Athletes around the world.

H2F is about more than just physical fitness. There are five pillars: physical readiness, nutritional readiness, spiritual readiness, sleep readiness, and mental readiness. H2F supports physiological and psychological needs by integrating strength coaches, athletic trainers, therapists, dietitians, religious affairs specialists, and coordinators within units. This ensures expert guidance for injury recovery, proper training for new Soldiers, and science-backed methods to improve combat performance and long-term health. H2F currently supports 55% of the force. Ensuring implementation across the total Army, the next phase launches a two-year pilot at four Army National Guard and two Army Reserve locations while adding 91 H2F teams to the Active Component. Investing in Soldier health and wellness will improve the readiness and lethality of the Army.

The H2F System provides a unified and holistic strategy the force deserves. It has shifted Army culture. A holistic approach to health and fitness builds ready warfighters and resilient Families. It ensures sustainment of an agile and adaptive Army, ready to provide the Nation with a professional, lethal, and decisive force that will win against any adversary.

Deliver Ready Combat Formations

Our Army installations project power to fight and win the nations wars abroad and are pivotal to defense of our country. Effective base operations are integral to these efforts. Additionally, base protection measures are critical to ensuring the safety and security of Soldiers and Families that work, live, and play on our installations.

Housing

Barracks and privatized housing continue to be a priority for the Army. Soldiers' living conditions significantly influence their quality of life, performance, and capacity to concentrate on their mission. The Army aims to provide each type of barracks with comprehensive sustainment funding to support Soldier well-being. In FY24, investments were directed towards new construction and upgrades, resulting in the creation of 1,910 new bed spaces and

enhancements to nearly 7,500 existing accommodations, reinforcing our commitment to providing quality living environments and enabling combat readiness.

Investment in privatized housing plays a crucial role in family life, and directly impacts warfighters' ability to focus on their mission. Between 2020 & 2024, privatized housing providers dedicated over \$1.3 billion to construct 439 new residences and enhance over 14,000 existing ones. In FY24, the Army requested and was appropriated \$50 million each to Fort Eisenhower, GA, and Fort Leonard Wood, MO, to facilitate construction of 76 new homes and 22 significant renovations at Fort Eisenhower. Plans are underway at Fort Leonard Wood to replace 60 outdated homes. Furthermore, a new privatization project which began in 2024 will introduce 75 new homes at U.S. Army Garrison-Miami by Summer 2027, while 26 residences at Tobyhanna Army Depot are set for demolition and reconstruction, highlighting the critical link between housing quality, family well-being, and overall military readiness.

Childcare

The Army acknowledges and values Congress' initiatives aimed at enhancing childcare accessibility for Soldiers and their Families. Reliable and high-quality childcare services are essential to enabling Soldiers to focus on their duties and missions with peace of mind. However, childcare staffing remains a challenge. To combat staffing challenges, the Army uses Direct Hiring Authority to expedite hiring actions and exercise a provisional hiring method with direct oversight of provisional hires. In FY24, we received more than 25,000 applications to be a Direct Childcare employee at CDCs across Army installations. Of those, over 4,000 have been hired with average onboarding times less than 40 days. Minimizing delays by expediting the process, thoroughly and with appropriate adjudication, directly support warfighting readiness. Additionally, provisional hires working under direct supervision receive a 50% or 100% reduced child care fee for the first child and 15% discount for additional children.

To address gaps in care, the Army offers fee assistance to help offset the cost of community-based care. For School Year 24-25, the provider rate cap is \$1,800. Currently, there is no waitlist for child care Fee Assistance program and Army Families can explore options and request child care anytime at militarychildcare.com.

In addition, the Army has established three first of its kind Intergovernmental Service Agreements (IGSAs) in locations based on identified need to expand access to care during non-traditional work hours for Active, Guard, and Reserve service members.

Spouse Employment

Spouses have always and will continue to hold a crucial role in the Army's readiness. Enhancing spouse employment opportunities is critical to fostering military readiness and retention as it supports service members' families, strengthens community ties, and empowers military spouses to build fulfilling careers amidst the unique challenges of military life. In January 2025, we launched the Department of the Army Voluntary Reassignment Program (DAVRAP) expecting it

will impact upwards of 800 Army spouses. It is designed to provide direct support to Army spouses during permanent change of station (PCS) moves by reducing unemployment gaps and providing predictability when moving from one installation to another. Additionally, the program enables Army spouses who are Department of the Army Civilians to explore vacancies at future duty locations.

The Army provides Employment Readiness Programs (ERPs) at the installation level, providing face-to-face employment support and connections to local and state employment opportunities. In FY24, ERP staff assisted over 6,900 Family members with spouse education and career opportunities. Since its inception in 2018, the Army's Civilian Employee Assignment Tool (CEAT) has processed transfers for 649 spouses who are non-appropriated fund employees.

Exceptional Family Member Program

As of December 17, 2024, approximately 49,000 Active Soldiers, or roughly 11% of the Active, have 55,000 Exceptional Family members (EFMs) enrolled. We are continuing to listen to families when developing EFMP improvements including centralized oversight, legal assistance, and in the Enterprise-EFMP system to make enrollment, assignment coordination, and family support more effective.

Since its inception in 2022, we're continuously improving how the E-EFMP system interacts with our personnel systems. The Army established a central Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA) EFMP office, which drives process improvement, enhanced coordination, provides training and education, and improves communication to ensure appropriate medical and education services are available at home station to all EFMs assigned around the world.

Nutrition

Ensuring optimal nutrition to sustain warfighters in both garrison and field settings remains a top priority. Enhancing Soldier welfare and readiness involves providing consistent access to high-quality nutritious food choices that improve performance. In FY24, initiatives such as food kiosks, food trucks, and meal prep programs have been introduced to offer Soldiers convenient and healthy dining alternatives. The significant uptake of over one million meals from kiosks in FY24 underscores the demand for accessible and high-quality food solutions. Presently, installations host 26 food trucks and 23 kiosks, with plans to open five additional kiosks by September 2025. Installation commanders are also leveraging resources like their Morale, Welfare, and Recreation offices to offer Soldiers and Families education on healthy eating options, managing weekly meal plans, and cooking classes.

The Army is introducing a key effort to modernize dining for our warfighters with Campus-Style Dining Venues (CSDVs) pilots at Fort Bragg, North Carolina; Fort Stewart, Georgia; Fort Cavazos, Texas; Fort Drum, New York; and Fort Carson, Colorado. This innovative approach shifts away from traditional dining setups towards contemporary food service concepts like

university campuses. We must ensure that Soldiers have the right fuel to excel in their missions, increase their performance, and, when needed, accelerates their recovery.

The Army is utilizing a balanced scorecard framework to measure the success of the Campus Style Dining Venue (CSDV) pilot across four categories of Satisfaction, Utilization, Health, and Financials. The balanced scorecard key performance indicators (KPIs) will be informed by existing authoritative Army data sources and additional data sources collected throughout the pilot (e.g. survey/interview data).

Installations

Quality of life is more than just barracks, housing, CDCs, and DFACs. They are each a pillar of quality of life for Soldiers and Families, but where Soldiers work – ranges, ammunition supply points, motor pools, company operations facilities (COFs), and maintenance facilities – must be part of the conversation. A Soldier performing maintenance on an M1 Abrams tank on a concrete pad in the middle of a motor pool in July at Fort Cavazos, Texas, because the tank won't fit in the maintenance bay is a safety issue, impacts quality of life, and affects warfighting readiness.

Army installations require the right capabilities, and capacity, to support our formations. We are making tough decisions with our budget to ensure that we transform at the speed of need, but scale is our challenge. It requires our installations to transform alongside the formations that call them home. New technology, new kit, and new equipment all matter, but if the infrastructure doesn't support our transformation efforts, it will negatively affect our readiness.

Continuous Transformation

Our Soldiers and Noncommissioned Officers are forging an imprinted feedback loop that is driving the Army's continuous transformation efforts. We are taking lessons observed from ongoing conflicts around the globe and turning them into lessons learned through implementation at combat training center (CTC) rotations. Each rotational unit operates under near constant sensing and targeting, is learning to use commercial technology, is dispersing over large areas, and is masking communications with false networks to appear unimportant rather than invisible in the electromagnetic spectrum – hiding in the noise.

Transformation in Contact

Each of our three Transform in Contact (TiC) brigades have entered the crucible of a CTC rotation – the most recent being 3rd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Hohenfels, Germany. Our other two TiC brigades, 2nd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, and 2nd Brigade, 25th Infantry Division also went through CTC rotations at the Joint Readiness Training Center, Louisiana, and out in the Indo-Pacific Theater during Joint Pacific Multinational Readiness Center rotations in Hawaii, respectively.

Soldier mindset is changing – in reality, led by new recruits. We are leveraging the incredible talent and intelligence of new recruits, infusing formations with new technology and allowing

them to experiment and innovate. Warfighters are determining solutions, and we are listening. Their feedback is driving acquisition recommendations to Army Senior Leaders. For the first time in our Army's history, this is our new normal. It creates buy-in. It creates a sense of purpose anchored to the calling to serve. This improves quality of life.

Retention

In two of these TiC brigades, we've seen an increase in retention rates. Between FY23 and FY24, 2BCT, 101st Airborne Division achieved over a 10% increase in reenlistment rates and 2BCT, 25th Infantry Division also achieved a more than 10% increased reenlistment rate. In FY24, across the Army, we retained 52,289 Soldiers in the regular Army and transitioned 7,490 Soldiers from the Regular Army into the Army Reserves or Army National Guard. We are laser focused on retaining the talent we need to maintain our warfighting advantage. With a retention target of 54,800, the Army anticipates reaching an end strength of 451,000.

Strengthening the Profession

We are on a great recruiting glide path for FY25. The Army is recruiting and investing in those who volunteer to take the Oath to serve their Nation. We take great pride and faith in our recruiting enterprise in their efforts to achieve our goals this year, just as they surpassed the FY24 recruiting goal of 55,000 with 55,150 new Soldiers. Looking at FY25, the Army has set a higher target of 61,000 new accessions with at least 10,000 in the DEP. These objectives require sustained dedication, but they build upon a robust foundation. The successes of FY24 and the anticipated outcomes for FY25 are the result of transformative initiatives within the Recruiting Enterprise, with enhancements in recruitment processes, training, leadership, marketing, medical support at MEPS, and improvements in Recruiter quality of life.

Future Soldier Prep Course

The Army is meeting Americans where they are at, enabling them to become Soldiers in the world's premiere land-based fighting force. We recognize that some citizens who desire to serve, may lack access to foundational educational or physical fitness opportunities. In this effort, the establishment of the Future Soldier Prep Course in 2022, has facilitated 33,560 trainees in overcoming academic and fitness obstacles to progress towards basic training, enhancing overall readiness. The FSPC helps young Americans get ready for the Army by offering special classes in academics and fitness. This program helps recruits meet the Army's standards for body fat and academic tests before starting basic training. The FSPC continues to prove effective in expanding the Army's recruitment pool while maintaining high standards of Soldier performance. In FY24, the FSPC has achieved an academic graduation rate of 91.9% and a 14.47-point increase in the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT). Also, the FSPC has achieved a graduation rate of 95% and average weekly body fat loss of 1.25%. In the dual-track program of FSPC, it achieved a graduation rate of 87.3%. We will not, and cannot, lower or change our service entry standards if we are to maintain our warfighting advantage.

Preventing Harmful Behaviors

The Army is taking a systematic approach to reduce and prevent harmful behaviors. To date, 52 installations had approved hiring actions for the Integrated Prevention Advisory Group (I-PAG). In the Active Component, 17% of the 668 positions have been on-boarded.

The Army's Integrated Primary Prevention Workforce, known as the I-PAG, works with leaders to build healthy climates and create environments free from abuse and harm by doing the following: (1) engaging the military community; (2) empowering leaders with data and research; (3) implementing prevention activities; and (4) sustaining progress over time. The I-PAG develops existing human resources, leverages collaborative relationships, and provides the infrastructure necessary to support the primary prevention of harmful behaviors like sexual assault, sexual harassment, child abuse and neglect, suicide, domestic violence, and retaliation.

The I-PAG will partner with existing prevention system partners, to include programs like Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP), Family Advocacy Program personnel, Suicide Prevention personnel, Military Equal Opportunity Advisors, and Chaplains, to include those in and around the military community to provide annual community needs assessments, annual comprehensive integrated primary prevention plans (CIPPPs) that include command climate assessments, and continual prevention activity evaluation through the Commander's Ready and Resilient Council (CR2C). We are committed to strengthening the profession by advancing research informed, data-driven, and integrated prevention efforts to support healthier command climates, enhance mission readiness, and foster a culture inhospitable to harmful behaviors so the Army's people can thrive.

Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention

Sexual harassment and sexual assault have no place in our Army. It divides cohesive teams, and it will not be tolerated. The recent policy changes outlined in the new Army Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP) regulation enhance prevention and implement the SHARP workforce model to reduce barriers to reporting and strengthen victim advocacy. To date, the Army has hired 51% of the civilian SHARP workforce needed for the transition. Additionally, we are focused on hiring special assignment military Sexual Assault Response Coordinators (SARCs) and Victim Advocates (VAs) in select deployed or operational environments.

Suicide Prevention

One suicide is one too many. Upstream prevention starts with command emphasis at the local level and pairing Soldiers with the right resources for the challenges they are facing to prevent suicides. The Army understands that not every stressor that Soldiers face is related to a behavioral health issue and a "one size fits all" approach will not work. We are committed to significantly reducing Soldier suicide by improving Soldier reception and sponsorship efforts, modernizing training capabilities, and improving prevention and response efforts within

communities and units. Currently, the Suicide Prevention, Resilience, and Squad Leader Development Course is provided at 33 Ready and Resilient Performance Centers across the force. We've added a Lethal Means safety module to Ask, Care, Escort Suicide Prevention Training to further increase awareness and emphasize the importance of engaged Soldiers and Leaders intervening when a teammate may be at risk.

The Army published an updated Suicide Prevention and Response Policy, AR 600-92, in October 2024. This regulation represents the Army's efforts to operationalize Suicide Prevention Response Incident Review Committee findings and guidance. Additionally, we are modernizing suicide prevention data sets to assist Senior and Installation Commanders with understanding prevalence and local risk trends over time. We recognize that there is still work to be done. We will continue every effort in this area with the goal of reducing these incidents.

Conclusion

In my 31 years of service to our Nation, and now as the Sergeant Major of the Army, I am proud and confident that the talented and intelligent Soldiers of today's Army will be ready when the Nation calls. I'd like to recognize the efforts of the Total Army – all three components – for their incredible work in defending our homeland, working alongside our Allies and Partners, and protecting our Nations interests. Our Soldiers are motivated and focused on transforming to meet the threats of today and the threats of the future, as the backbone of the Joint Force – with warfighting advantage at the core of it all.

Warfighting readiness relies on the fortitude and resolve of our Soldiers, and the power projection of our installation-specific infrastructure. Your continued support will ensure that your Army will continue to be the profession of choice for present and future generations, as we continue to build disciplined and cohesive teams, maintain tactical and strategic readiness, and sustain the momentum of transformation. The opportunity to deliver this testimony and your ongoing support of our Soldiers, their Families, and our Civilians is greatly appreciated. The Army's platform is its people, and your support signifies an investment in them as they fulfill their military obligations and then transition to become leaders within their communities.