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SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY CONSTRUCTION
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

**STATEMENT OF
JOHN PERRYMAN IV
MASTER CHIEF PETTY OFFICER OF THE NAVY
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY CONSTRUCTION,
VETERANS AFFAIRS AND RELATED AGENCIES OF THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS QUALITY OF LIFE
MARCH 25, 2026**

Chairman Carter, Ranking Member Wasserman-Schultz, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee thank you for the opportunity to provide this statement for the record. It is the honor of my lifetime to serve as the 17th Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy, representing over 402,000 Sailors—Active and Reserve—and the families who serve alongside them around the world. Every day, those Sailors operate forward, maintain complex warfighting systems, and stand the watch in defense of our Nation. Their professionalism and commitment are extraordinary. Our shared responsibility is to ensure the conditions in which they serve reflect the seriousness of that calling.

I believe firmly that quality of service is readiness. By quality of service, I mean the combination of quality of life and quality of work; how Sailors live, how their families are supported, and how effectively they can perform the mission entrusted to them. When Sailors have safe housing, accessible childcare, reliable healthcare, resilient installations, and workplaces that enable, rather than frustrate performance, readiness increases. When those conditions erode, readiness, retention, and trust follow.

Although this Subcommittee's focus is military construction and Veterans' Affairs, the outcomes of your decisions extend well beyond bricks and mortar. Appropriations shape the lived experience of military service. They determine whether a junior Sailor's first barracks room is a source of pride or a source of frustration: whether a military family can find childcare that allows both parents to pursue their careers. Whether an installation's infrastructure can support operations; whether training facilities reflect modern warfighting demands; and whether maintenance backlogs compound risk over time.

Sailors and their families are candid about what matters most. In official surveys, town halls, and across social media, they consistently raise concerns about housing conditions: mold,

HVAC failures, plumbing issues, pests, and slow response times for repairs. These are not matters of comfort; they are matters of health, dignity, and trust. The Government Accountability Office has noted the risk posed by unreliable condition assessments and inconsistent oversight in military barracks, warning that inadequate data and accountability can undermine effective investment decisions and, ultimately, readiness. When Sailors perceive that facilities are allowed to deteriorate without urgency or transparency, confidence in the institution suffers.

Similarly, childcare access remains one of the most discussed issues among Navy families. Child development centers are not peripheral support services; they are operational enablers. When childcare is unavailable, families face untenable choices that directly affect retention. Congressional attention in recent years to planning and design for child development centers reflects recognition that capacity must keep pace with force demands. Investment in these facilities is not merely about square footage; it is about sustaining a modern, dual-income force that we rely upon in every community.

Quality of service also demands quality of work. Sailors expect, and deserve, training spaces, maintenance facilities, and digital infrastructure that allow them to develop technical mastery and execute their duties efficiently. When classrooms lack modern equipment, when maintenance shops are constrained by aging infrastructure, or when networks are unreliable, time and energy are diverted from mission focus. But quality of work extends beyond buildings and classrooms. It includes whether Sailors have the spare parts, tools, pier space, hangars, and maintenance capacity required to do their jobs correctly and on schedule.

Today's Navy operates globally with a fleet that is significantly smaller than in past decades, yet our ships and aircraft deploy just as often, and in many cases, more persistently. That reality means our margin for error is thinner. When critical spare parts are unavailable,

maintenance is deferred, equipment reliability declines, and operational risk compounds. When pier capacity is constrained or lacks modern shore power and support infrastructure, ships cannot efficiently reset between deployments. When aviation units lack adequate hangar space or modern facilities, aircraft readiness and safe maintenance execution are directly affected.

In a high-tempo force, infrastructure and logistics performance are not background functions *they are pacing functions*. The ability to surge, to sustain presence, and to respond to crisis depends not only on the courage and competence of Sailors, but on whether the industrial base, supply system, and installation infrastructure can keep up with the demand signal. When those systems lag, the burden shifts downward to the deckplates. Sailors absorb the friction through longer hours, deferred maintenance, and compressed training cycles. That is not a sustainable model for a force expected to deter peer competitors over time.

Quality of work is therefore inseparable from readiness and retention. It determines whether a ship leaves the pier on schedule with full mission capability or carries forward accumulated risk. It determines whether a squadron maintains aircraft to standard or stretches manpower to close supply gaps. Investments in spare parts inventories, industrial capacity, piers, hangars, and enabling infrastructure to protect the operational endurance of the force. They ensure that the extraordinary output we ask of today's Sailors does not come at the expense of long-term resilience.

Recent public reporting on efforts to reduce the number of Sailors living aboard ships while in homeport highlights both progress and challenge. Moving Sailors ashore improves recovery, morale, and long-term retention but only if shore infrastructure can absorb the demand. The signal from the deckplates is clear: temporary solutions cannot become permanent

conditions. Investments in unaccompanied housing must be sustained and paired with strong maintenance funding and enforceable standards so that recapitalization today does not become deferred maintenance tomorrow.

At the same time, installations must be resilient. Energy reliability, water infrastructure, and hardened facilities are mission assurance requirements. Investments in microgrids, backup power, and resilient utilities are not theoretical improvements; they ensure that operational units can train, deploy, and sustain operations without interruption.

Across all these areas – barracks, family housing, childcare, training facilities, and infrastructure resilience – appropriations are most powerful when paired with transparent outcomes. We should measure whether facilities meet enforceable health and safety standards, whether time-to-repair for critical issues is decreasing, whether capacity meets demand without unreasonable delay, and whether complaint resolution mechanisms are credible and timely. Coupled with measurement and accountability, we need to restore trust and ensure that resources produce tangible improvements in the daily lives of Sailors and families.

The Navy asks much of its people. On any given day, our ships operate around the globe, our aviation squadrons deploy from sea and shore, and our submarines remain forward in silent service. The ability to sustain that operational tempo with a fleet roughly half the size of the 1980s is a testament to the professionalism of today's Sailors and the support of their families. But dedication cannot compensate indefinitely for infrastructure shortfalls. Quality of service must keep pace with mission demands.

I am grateful for this Subcommittee's continued commitment to improving the conditions under which our Sailors serve. Your oversight and appropriations decisions send a clear signal about national priorities. When you invest in military construction and installation resilience, you

invest directly in readiness, retention, and the moral contract between the Nation and those who volunteer to serve it.

Thank you for your steadfast support of our Sailors and their families. I look forward to working with you to ensure that every dollar appropriated translates into measurable improvements in quality of service – quality of life and quality of work – across the Navy enterprise.