

RECORD VERSION

STATEMENT BY

**BRIGADIER GENERAL JAMES T. IACOCCA
THE ADJUTANT GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY**

BEFORE THE

**HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL**

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TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM – A UNITY OF EFFORT

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Introduction

Chairman Heck, Ranking Member Davis, and Distinguished Members of this Committee- Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you on behalf of America's Army.

The United States Army is committed to ensuring the lifelong success of our Soldiers. We know that preparing our Soldiers for transition through the re-engineered Transition Assistance Program, and beginning the transition process early, provides the greatest opportunity for post-military success.

The Army continues its commitment to support Soldiers throughout the military life-cycle and capitalizes on a Soldiers' training and professional development timeline. Our responsibility is to inspire "Soldiers for Life" by providing essential counseling and training throughout Soldiers' careers to ensure they are ready to succeed as they transition to citizens and Veterans in civilian society.

Strategic Overview

The Army began re-engineering the transition process five years ago by directing the United States Military Academy to provide a holistic assessment of the transition process in place at that time - The Army Career and Alumni Program. Results of this study laid the foundation for the Army's current Soldier for Life – Transition Assistance Program. The primary objectives that facilitate a Soldier's successful transition are beginning the transition process early, visiting the transition center often, and ensuring commanders provide encouragement and adequate time for Soldiers to attend and complete transition activities. Therefore, the Soldier for Life – Transition Assistance Program is a "commanders' program", enforcing and empowering Commanders to support their Soldiers during the transition process.

The current program incorporates these guiding principles and complies with the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 (VOW Act) and Defense Department policies. The Army participates at every echelon from the action officer, to the program director, to the GO/SES level in discussions concerning transition policy and resources across the services and interagency level in order to focus our transition efforts in assisting Soldiers. Installations engage all levels of garrison leadership and community stakeholders at quarterly transition council meetings. To ensure the unity of effort across the Army's program - the Army G1 oversees policy and reporting, while Installation Management Command oversees the execution of the Soldier for Life – Transition Assistance Program and Career Skills Programs. Commanders and all components enforce transition standards in accordance to policy. The Army will soon publish the first Army regulation that covers all aspects of transition assistance, and includes tasks throughout the Soldiers' lifecycle that will prepare him or her for eventual transition off active duty.

Today, the Soldier for Life – Transition Assistance Program is a fully comprehensive transition program servicing approximately 110,000 Soldiers annually (117,000 in Fiscal Year 2016 and 105,000 in Fiscal Year 2017). The Soldier for Life - Transition Assistance Program provides Soldiers with the counseling, employment and education workshops, career tracks, and career skills opportunities required to achieve the VOW Act and career readiness standards mandates. As a result, it assists Soldiers to make informed career decisions, be competitive in the workforce, and to continue to provide positive contributions to their community after completing their active-duty military service.

In the last five years, the Soldier for Life – Transition Assistance Program has grown from 54 to 75 centers worldwide, and from 225 to 700 transition, financial, and education counselors and staff. The program added a center in Kuwait, and established mobile transition teams to support the National Guard and Army Reserve at home and at demobilization stations. Additionally, the Army created a 24/7 Virtual Soldier for Life – Transition Assistance Program Center to meet the needs of remotely located Soldiers, those deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan, and for any Soldier that needed to receive transition services telephonically or virtually.

In order to demonstrate Soldier progress and compliance in the Army's transition program, the Army developed its own automated system of record, TAP XXI, with dynamic reporting features capturing Soldier transition activities. The system's Detailed Commander Reports are distributed monthly to company-level commanders and above. The Soldier for Life – Transition Assistance Program reporting mechanism encourages Commanders to assist Soldiers in career goal development during their transition process and reinforces the importance for Soldiers to reach their individual transition goals.

Army Career Skills Program

The Army's Career Skills Program under the Department of Defense SkillBridge program, which is overseen by DoD's Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Readiness, affords transitioning Soldiers the opportunity to obtain industry-recognized credentials, the opportunity to participate in first-class apprenticeships, on-the-job training, job shadowing, and employment skills training up to 180 days prior to separation from the Army. The Army uses Credentialing Opportunities On-Line (COOL) as the single source solution to navigate credentialing opportunities.

In Fiscal Year 2014, the Army coordinated Career Skills Program events for more than 800 Soldiers at multiple installations. The Career Skills Program continues to grow, and in Fiscal Year 2015 more than 1200 Soldiers participated in Army sponsored events at multiple installations.

By developing partnerships with supporting industry, successful Career Skills Program training events are being expanded to offer Soldiers increased credentialing opportunities. For example, The United Association of Veterans in Piping (UAVIP) program provides training in the fields of pipe welding and heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC).

Veterans In Piping is an 18-week full-time training program and, upon successful completion, Soldiers are placed as a second year apprentice in a five year

apprenticeship program with guaranteed job placement. Since its first pilot three years ago at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, the highly successful program boasts a 98% retention rate and more than 1,100 Soldiers have received jobs through the program. Forts Carson, Hood, Campbell, and Sill also have successfully executed the UAVIP career skill program with Fort Stewart starting its program mid Fiscal Year 2016.

Another successful Career Skills Program is the Veterans Education Training and Transition (VET2) with Georgia Institute of Technology at Fort Stewart, Georgia. After a success pilot program in March 2015, Fort Stewart expanded the VET2 Career Skills Program and completed additional classes with two more scheduled for later this year. The VET2 program consists of one week of classroom training, followed by a three week internship with a participating sponsor. Current sponsors include Gulfstream, Coca Cola, Polcase Ammo, Presidio, and Red River IT. The program is designed for transitioning Soldiers to attend training customized to the corporate sponsor, and receive job experience through internships for positions that are currently available. The program is offered at no cost for Soldiers and has achieved a 100% job placement rate.

Army Transition Research Findings

Recently, the Army implemented an iterative feedback system from Soldiers at the beginning of their transition process, the end of their transition process, and three to six months after they have transitioned from active duty.

From this feedback, we have learned that many younger Soldiers have an unrealistic expectation of civilian salaries and that most do not want to continue in their current military skills as a civilian. Additionally, we have learned the breakout numbers of career and education interests of Soldiers. This type of detailed data allows us to focus our resources on the most “at-risk” Soldiers and will help us shape future initiatives within the Soldier for Life – Transition Assistance Program.

Army Transition Compliance

The Army is meeting the requirements of the VOW Act with Active Component at 90% compliance through third quarter Fiscal Year 2015. Compliance for Fiscal Year 2014 Active Component was 83%, an 18% increase from Fiscal Year 2013.

In addition to the VOW Act, we are also supporting the Office of the Secretary of Defense's policy on transition assistance. For example in Fiscal Year 2015 (through the third quarter), 87% of transitioning active component Soldiers completed the job application package consisting of a resume of choice, references, and submission of two job applications, and 89% have a 12-month post-transition budget.

Army Inspector General Inspection of Transition Assistance Program

Another key point the Army emphasizes is its commitment to the continuous improvement of the Soldier for Life – Transition Assistance Program. As a result of this pledge, the Army Inspector General is currently engaged at installations world-wide, evaluating the program's effectiveness.

Conclusion

The Army continues to invest a tremendous amount of resources and deliberate planning to preserve the quality of the All-Volunteer Force. We are committed to ensuring the Soldiers who have sacrificed so much in service to America's defense are taken care of as they begin the next chapter of their lives.

To conclude, I wish to thank all of you for your continued support. The Army is committed to being the leader of the Department of Defense transition efforts by preparing and connecting our Soldiers and our Veterans to career and education opportunities. Chairman Heck, and members of the sub-committee, I thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you, and I look forward to your questions.