

**DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
PRESENTATION TO THE SUBCOMMITTEE
ON
MILITARY PERSONNEL
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON MILITARY REVIEW BOARD AGENCIES

STATEMENT OF: MR. JOHN A. FEDRIGO

**DIRECTOR, AIR FORCE REVIEW BOARDS
AGENCY**

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Good morning Chairman Coffman, Ranking Member Speier. On behalf of the men and women of the Air Force Review Boards Agency, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

The Air Force Review Boards Agency is responsible for the administration, oversight, leadership, and operations of ten appellate level administrative review boards, eight on behalf of the Secretary of the Air Force and two on behalf of the Secretary of Defense. Two of the boards are statutory, the Discharge Review Board and the Board for Correction of Military Records (BCMR). The non-statutory Air Force boards adjudicate a wide variety of decisions on behalf of the Secretary, and include the Personnel Board, the Decorations Board, the Remissions Board, the Clemency and Parole Board, and the Personnel Security Appeal Board, which were directed by executive order. The Agency receives approximately 15,000 cases annually from actively serving Airmen, veterans, and their families.

In September of 2017, the BCMR reported 2% compliance for the congressionally mandated requirement of processing 90% of all cases within ten months. At the end of FY17, the BCMR had a case inventory of 7,000 with substantial backlogs. Largely, this was due to a surge in applications. Other causes included the increasing complexity of cases (e.g., mental health related contentions), additional processing requirements (e.g., having a mental health professional review all cases with a mental health related aspect), IT challenges associated with replacing a legacy case management system, and a significant Agency manpower shortfall. Process improvement efforts generated some additional capacity, but was not sufficient to overcome the vast backlog of cases or to keep pace with incoming cases.

The BCMR conducted a large-scale process overhaul, examining how and why the organization does business the way it does and looking for a more efficient method. The

redesigned process standardized work and eliminated non value-added work. Additionally, to support the reengineered process, the BCMR executed an organizational redesign to ensure the right structure was in place to most effectively support the new business processes. By realigning personnel with higher levels of expertise where they could be leveraged most effectively, the BCMR created a process that ensured cases were analyzed and adjudicated more efficiently without sacrificing high quality analysis and adjudication. To reinforce the changes and ensure the organization was set up for success, the BCMR trained personnel on the new process and work standard, creating a clear expectation of performance.

The Air Force also provided funds in late FY18 for one year of contractor surge support. This provided the BCMR with flexibility to manage their large case backlog without sacrificing the timeliness requirement for incoming cases.

The efficiencies the BCMR realized were a step in improving performance. However, as the BCMR advanced in their operations, it became apparent that this new level of production was in danger of overwhelming the external organizations they rely on for critical case input. Having optimized for the legacy production levels, these partner organizations found it increasingly difficult to keep pace with the increased level of work the BCMR required of them. BCMR leadership partnered with those organizations and helped conduct mini process improvement efforts. Leadership used the same creative, collaborative problem solving skills employed in the BCMR to identify efficiencies in each external organizations' processes. This helped increase case processing and reduction of inventory.

All of the improvement efforts have led to significant operational advances. BCMR production capacity has increased 50%. Total inventory has been reduced 30%, from an all-time high of 7,000 cases at the end of FY17 to 4,915 cases as of 1 Sep 18. By the end of the surge

contract, the BCMR projects that the entire backlog of noncompliant cases will be eliminated and aging cases that would otherwise have reached noncompliance will be processed within the required timeline. The new organizational structure ensures every team member contributes to case processing, including leadership. It also adds the benefit of providing a career ladder for the civilian workforce, incentivizing high performing individuals and keeping valuable knowledge within the organization. Relationships between the BCMR and the external organizations they rely on is stronger than ever, resulting in greater collaboration, best practice sharing, and communication.

If the current performance trend lines continue, the BCMR will be compliant with the mandatory completion date statutory requirement for FY18 cases.

Finally, we would like to thank you for Title 10 U.S. Code, Section 1559 statutory protections for the Review Boards Agencies' personnel remain in place. This restriction on reducing the number of employees in the Agency expires on 31 December 2019.

Throughout all of the improvement efforts and successes achieved, the BCMR continues to assess their performance, look for ways to improve, and push the envelope on innovative business practices that maintain or improve high quality analysis and decisions. At the end of day, we will never abandon our commitment to the current and former Airmen who are awaiting resolution of errors and injustices in their military records. They deserve – and we shall continue to provide – due process, justice, equity, and fairness. Thanks to the transformative efforts of the past year, and the support of the Secretary of the Air Force, we are once again doing so within the required congressional timeframe.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you again for the opportunity to appear before this committee and look forward to your questions.