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PREPARED STATEMENT

OF

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**REGARDING
PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION AND THE
NATIONAL DEFENSE STRATEGY**

BEFORE THE

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL

May 18, 2022

Good afternoon, Chairwoman Speier and Ranking Member Gallagher, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss matters related to Professional Military Education (PME) and the National Defense Strategy (NDS) in the Department of Defense (DoD).

I would like also to thank the Subcommittee for having initiated a series of consultations with DoD on PME through Congressional hearings and meetings, reports, and proposed legislation. We welcome this dialogue as it provides a much-needed venue to discuss Congressional ideas and concerns, as well as our DoD initiatives.

In December 2021, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Force Education and Training, Caroline Baxter, and Major General Daniel Tulley, Vice Director for Joint Force Development (J7) on the Joint Staff, briefed members of the subcommittee, including the Chairwoman and Ranking Member, on how the Department has addressed the shortcomings in PME and Joint Professional Military Education (JPME) as identified in the 2018 National Defense Strategy and assessments by the Government Accountability Office (GAO). As a follow up to that meeting, our staffs have been preparing a report that will address the Subcommittee's follow-up questions on topics that included programs, students, faculty, financial information, professional development opportunities, and return on investment. We plan to submit the report to Congress by June 15, 2022.

Last month, in accordance with the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021, the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD(P&R)) submitted on behalf of the Secretary of Defense a report to Congress that addressed three topics related to PME reform: (1) the status of the recommendations in the GAO Report on PME; (2) a review of recommended improvements to the PME enterprise in support of the National Defense Strategy; and (3) an assessment and value statement of the contributions of each of the senior Service colleges as it relates to JPME, Phase II education. As the first of a series of reports that DoD will be transmitting to the Congress this year, it responded directly to many of the questions that VADM Munsch and I expect to address today, such as how the PME enterprise is addressing strategic competition with a rising China and a revanchist Russia, how its programs are developing joint warfighters, and how the Department is reforming the enterprise to increase the return on investment.

PME as a DoD Priority

Since the start of the Biden-Harris Administration, Secretary of Defense Austin has made clear that DoD will invest in our greatest strategic advantage, our people. In the newly released 2022 National Defense Strategy, Secretary Austin emphasized three overarching ways in which we will ensure our national security -- integrated deterrence, campaigning, and building enduring advantage. Investing in the military education of our Service members supports all three initiatives and is particularly crucial for building enduring advantage for the future Joint Force. The cognitive edge that PME delivers for our warfighters is a strategic asset that pays dividends on the battlefield and has helped forge the most professional fighting force in the world.

The DoD relies on PME to prepare its military personnel, throughout their careers, for the intellectual demands of strengthening American national security during a period of strategic competition. The objective of the PME system is to create leaders who can achieve intellectual overmatch against adversaries— and that overmatch demands a system that prepares Service members to address all contingencies that may present themselves.

PME provides Service members with the skills and knowledge that enable them to make sound operational and management decisions in progressively more demanding command and staff positions within the national security environment. It is intended to provide our professional personnel with critical knowledge: the ethos, culture, and core values of their Service; the technical and tactical skills appropriate to how that Service wages war; and, most importantly, the wisdom and judgment to be applied in a multiplicity of situations—across domains, theaters, in both joint and combined operations with allies and partners—and, in taking care of their people.

PME provides officers with the opportunity to learn the state of the art in military strategy and operational planning that they can then apply in assignments throughout their careers. These areas have long been the critical substance of an officer's development in PME, and they will continue to stand as prerequisites to an understanding of the nature and conduct of warfare. PME also provides them with the opportunity to develop their understanding of the most up-to-date knowledge about important trends in geopolitics, international relations, economics, management practices, and technology—and their impact on the preparation for, and the conduct of, warfare.

The Department has recognized the extraordinary advantage that education offers and is developing and implementing workforce development policies and strategies that align with the needs to provide the Service member with the intellect and tools to overcome strategic challenges. These policies will enable greater understanding of these issues through continuous pursuit of knowledge and learning at all points of service and not just during assignments to staff and war colleges.

This guidance will strengthen the ability of military education to assist the Services and future leaders to anticipate and lead rapid adaptation and innovation under the current conditions of strategic competition and the potential use of all types of disruptive technologies. Moreover, DoD is prioritizing active learning through exercises and wargaming to stimulate strategic and creative thinking and increasing the links between education and talent management, continuous learning, and professional development to enable intellectual overmatch against our competitors.

Finally, the Department must develop leaders that are responsible for taking care of our people, including tackling sexual assault and other harmful behaviors. We are working to implement the training and education recommendations of the Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military across the Department.

DoD Instruction on Military Education

In a major advance reflecting DoD's increased emphasis on PME, the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD(P&R)) last month approved DoD Instruction 1322.35, Volume 1, "Military Education: Program Management and Administration." This Instruction is the first-ever Department-wide policy for military education, and includes Service-governed PME, Chairman-guided Joint PME, the Service Academies, and professional development opportunities such as graduate education, fellowships, and training with industry. Additional guidance will follow to support implementation of the Instruction.

The new Instruction directs that military education programs move to better assess what graduates know and, more importantly, can do with that knowledge. Through this approach DoD will be assured that its personnel have the knowledge and skills they will need to succeed in future challenges. In terms of our national security, a focus on outcomes will produce warfighters with the intellectual acumen, critical thought, and strategic understanding to defend our Nation in the face of ever-changing threats.

This will enable more effective talent management and workforce development. The policy also lays the foundation to provide direction and guidance to the Services with regard to the topics to be covered and the outcomes that graduates of military education programs should achieve.

The policy establishes an oversight governance structure to enable the USD(P&R), through my office, to assess effectiveness and evaluate the return on investment that the Department makes in military education. Specifically, it does so through adopting an outcomes-based approach to assessing the effectiveness of PME. Professional education is about learning to do, to be able to apply even esoteric knowledge and techniques with skill to address the problems and challenges that will be encountered outside of the schoolhouse. Developing authentic assessments of what our officers and enlisted members can do with their knowledge will change the requirements for graduation from “attended and graduated” to performance above and beyond meaningful standards.

To support implementation of this approach, the Instruction requires procedures for data collection and reporting for all military education programs. Collection and analysis of this data will allow for assessments of return on investment across military educational programs and help ensure that these programs are delivering results with maximum efficiency.

The bedrock structure provided will allow for further adaptive improvements to the way military education is delivered. Under this policy, the Services and the Department have the latitude and authority to continue to align PME efforts to national security imperatives as the Department and the Nation adapt to the technological, social, and political change inherent in an era of strategic competition. Efforts already undertaken in anticipation of this policy include the direction given by the Secretary of Defense to develop and implement a rubric of minimum learning outcomes so that officers attending our command and staff and war colleges better understand the pacing threat for the Department.

This Instruction will enable the Services to develop talent management policies and develop better best practices in promotion, assignment, compensation, separation, and other relevant personnel decisions. Assessments of performance and the competencies developed in PME programs beyond “was selected and graduated” will provide better information for assignment and promotion decisions. Ultimately, more granular data will enable the personnel

management enterprise to assign the right personnel to the right assignments at the right time to ensure appropriate return on investment.

In addition, this Instruction ensures that diverse, capable, and talented warfighters are afforded learning opportunities provided by the finest educators and leaders available. The incorporation of diversity, equity, and inclusion considerations will further contribute to DoD actions and programs in PME.

Lastly, the Instruction also promotes the integration of wargaming into the military education curriculum. The use of wargaming exercises in PME advances the Secretary of Defense's call for enhanced strategic thinking across the force by providing avenues for military personnel to practice their leadership, creativity, and problem-solving skills in scenarios closely resembling the national security challenges facing the nation today.

Conclusion

Looking toward the future DoD will utilize its military education policies to strengthen the professional development of our personnel to:

1. Better foster the development of a force that can develop and implement globally-integrated, multi-instrument, all-domain strategies and plans that align with national security policies to compete effectively with strategic competitors.
2. Ensure that our military professionals develop and demonstrate an ability to effectively adapt to changing strategic and technological circumstances.
3. Perform effectively and ethically across the entire spectrum of DoD operations to achieve national security objectives—namely fighting and winning our Nation's wars and advancing the interests and values of the United States of America.

Madam Chairwoman, this concludes my statement. I am happy to answer any questions you or the Ranking Member may have at this time. Thank you for your continuing support for the men and women of the Armed Forces.