

Department of the Air Force

Presentation

Before the House Appropriations
Subcommittee on Military Construction and
Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies



Quality of Life in the Military

Witness Statement of
CMSAF JoAnne S. Bass
Chief Master Sergeant of the U.S. Air Force

April 28, 2022

Not for publication until released by the House Appropriations
Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related
Agencies



BIOGRAPHY



UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE JOANNE S. BASS

Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force JoAnne S. Bass represents the highest enlisted level of leadership, and as such, provides direction for the enlisted force and represents their interests, as appropriate, to the American public and to those in all levels of government. She serves as the personal adviser to the Chief of Staff and the Secretary of the Air Force on all issues regarding the welfare, readiness, morale, and proper utilization and progress of more than 600,000 Total Force Airmen. Chief Bass is the 19th chief master sergeant appointed to the highest noncommissioned officer position.



Chief Bass was raised as an Army dependent, living in several overseas and stateside locations, prior to entering the Air Force in 1993. Throughout her career, she has held a variety of leadership positions serving at the squadron, group, wing and major command levels. She has significant joint service and special operations experience and has participated in several operations and exercises as well as deployments in direct support of Operations SOUTHERN WATCH, ENDURING FREEDOM, and IRAQI FREEDOM.

Prior to this assignment, she served as the Command Chief Master Sergeant, Second Air Force, Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi.

EDUCATION

1997 Airman Leadership School, Pope Air Force Base (AFB), N.C.

2000 Associate Degree, Airport Resource Management, Community College of the Air Force

2004 Noncommissioned Officer Academy, Kapaun Air Station, Germany

2005 Bachelor of Science in Professional Aeronautics, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University

2006 Senior Noncommissioned Officer Academy, Course 12, by distance learning

2007 Senior Enlisted Joint Professional Military Education, by distance learning

Quality of Life in the Military

April 28, 2022

2009 Senior Noncommissioned Officer Academy, Maxwell AFB, Ala.

2013 Air Mobility Command Leadership Challenge Program, Ramstein Air Base (AB), Germany

2013 Chief Master Sergeant Leadership Seminar, Ramstein AB, Germany

2015 AFSSO21 Executive Leadership Seminar, University of Tennessee, Nashville

2015 USAF Enterprise Leadership Seminar, Kenan-Flagler Business School, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

2016 Senior Enlisted Joint Professional Military Education II, by distance learning

2017 Keystone Command Senior Enlisted Leader Course, National Defense University, Washington, D.C.

2018 Leading Strategically, Center for Creative Leadership, Colorado Spring, Colo.

2018 Coaching for Greater Effectiveness, Center for Creative Leadership, Greensboro, N.C.

ASSIGNMENTS

1. June 1993 – June 1996, Operations System Management Journeyman, 74th Fighter Squadron, Pope Air Force Base (AFB), N.C.
2. June 1996 – July 1998, Range Scheduling Specialist, 43rd Operations Support Squadron, Pope AFB, N.C.
3. July 1998 – November 2000, Noncommissioned Officer in Charge, Current Operations Scheduler, 24th Special Tactics Squadron, Fort Bragg, N.C.
4. November 2000 – March 2001, Current Operations Scheduler, 86th Operations Support Squadron, Ramstein Air Base (AB), Germany
5. March 2001 – January 2004, Noncommissioned Officer in Charge, Special Airlift Operations, Air Mobility Operations Control Center, Ramstein AB, Germany
6. January 2004 – November 2005, Noncommissioned Officer in Charge, Host Aviation Resource Management, 86th Operations Support Squadron, Ramstein AB, Germany
7. November 2005 – August 2010, Superintendent, Host Aviation Resource Management, Group Career Field Functional Manager, (Data Masked)
8. August 2010 – September 2012, Superintendent, Host Aviation Resource Management and Superintendent, 86th Operations Support Squadron, Ramstein AB, Germany
9. September 2012 – May 2015, Superintendent, 86th Operations Group, Ramstein AB, Germany
10. May 2015 – September 2016, Command Chief Master Sergeant, 17th Training Wing, Goodfellow AFB, Texas
11. September 2016 – July 2018, Chief, Air Force Enlisted Developmental Education, Pentagon, Washington, D.C.
12. July 2018 – August 2020, Command Chief Master Sergeant, Second Air Force, Keesler AFB, Miss.
13. August 2020 – Present, Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, Pentagon, Washington D.C.

Quality of Life in the Military

April 28, 2022

MAJOR AWARDS AND DECORATIONS

Legion of Merit

Defense Meritorious Service Medal

Meritorious Service Medal with four oak leaf clusters

Joint Service Commendation Medal

Air Force Commendation Medal with two oak leaf clusters

Air Force Achievement Medal with two oak leaf clusters

OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

1995 Airman of the Year, 74th Fighter Squadron

1997 John L. Levitow Award, Airman Leadership School

2004 Distinguished Graduate, Noncommissioned Officer Academy

2009 Distinguished Graduate, Senior Noncommissioned Officer Academy

2010 USAFE Senior Noncommissioned Officer Aviation Resource Manager of the Year

2011 Senior Noncommissioned Officer of the Year, 86th Operations Group

EFFECTIVE DATE OF PROMOTION

Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force August 2020

(Current as of August 2020)

Quality of Life in the Military

April 28, 2022

Introduction

Chair Wasserman Schultz, Ranking Member Carter, and distinguished members of this Subcommittee, thank your continued interest and support in the quality of life of the men and women who serve our great nation. I am again honored for this opportunity to address the needs of our Air Force, as well as speak with you on the issues impacting the lives of our Airmen and their families.

Despite the challenges of COVID-19, I've been able to continue meeting our Airmen and their families during my travels, listening to their stories, their concerns and the unique challenges they face as members of our Air Force family. I am honored to be their voice and leader, and do not take this responsibility lightly. They are America's sons and daughters, serving in challenging times, at the forward edge of an impending strategic competition, and we owe them our best. More than any platform, program, or piece of hardware, our Airmen are the greatest competitive advantage we have over any adversary. For the past 75 years, the United States Air Force has stepped up and answered our Nation's call, without hesitation, and without fail. And it falls on us to ensure they have the resources required to continue to serve in the best trained, best equipped, and best led Air Force this world has ever seen.

Recent events have shown us that the strategic competition is not some distant pondering. It is knocking at our door. In order to continuing being the Air Force our Nation needs, we must prioritize the quality of life of our service members. Our Air Force and Airmen must remain ready, willing and able to deliver airpower anytime, anywhere – enhancing the capabilities we need today to ensure we win tomorrow. And in an all-volunteer force we cannot take that for granted. The 689,000 Total Force Airmen, who I represent, have afforded me a unique perspective on the direction our Air Force needs to go. Over the past year, I have seen examples

Quality of Life in the Military

April 28, 2022

of our Airmen working tirelessly to accelerate the change our Air Force needs. They understand that rapidly-evolving challenges, new domains of warfare, and near-peer competitors will define future-state operations. We must continue to support them, as they faithfully support and defend our nation.

How we recruit, train, develop, retain, and transition our Airmen are key to readiness. The Air Force is smaller than we have been in years past; however, we have a strong strategy that will move us in the right direction, and we will need your assistance to help get us there. Every single Airman, from every career field, is responsible for generating the Airpower our sister services, partner nations and country expect. We are where we are because of their innovative spirit, devotion to duty, and love for this nation.

As we move forward in our strategy and focus on the Air Force of 2030 and beyond, there is much to be done. We must continue to focus on their development, and modernizing our training platforms, while creating an environment where every single one of them can thrive and be their very best. We must guarantee a culture of dignity, respect, and inclusion...and a culture and climate free of sexual assault, harassment, discrimination, bullying, violence, or anything that counters the values we hold dear. We must continue to find ways to build a resilient and fortified force, by getting after mental health issues that steal the lives of our brothers and sisters. Recently, the Chief Master Sergeant of the Space Force and I stood up the Fortify the Force Initiative Team to tackle any barriers that keep our Airmen from getting the help they need. This working group, and the Department of the Air Force are committed to dismantling any stigmas surrounding mental health treatment and creating a culture where seeking help is not shameful. These things are integral to who we are and imperative to our future success.

Quality of Life in the Military

April 28, 2022

We also realize and deeply appreciate the sacrifices of our military families. They give so much in their own right. And the same care and support we provide our Airmen MUST extend to every member of their family. The barriers of military spouse employment, improving the availability and affordability of childcare, ensuring that the quality of our schools remains high, and ensuring our families have the access and support they need, when they need it, are still prevalent. Taking these issues on demonstrates our commitment to our service members and their families, and ultimately builds their trust in our great institution. Our core values and need to maintain a ready, willing force do not afford us with the ability to ignore these issues. They are foundational to who we as Airmen are, and fundamental to institutional success.

As we work with you in developing actionable solutions to take care of our Airmen, and our families, we cannot turn a blind eye to our aging infrastructure. Our installations are not only key components of supporting our warfighting mission, but they are also where we call home. Years of competing priorities and fiscal constraints have forced us to manage risk in infrastructure and continue to create challenges and hardships for our Airmen. We must provide a safe place, whether it be in the dormitories or in privatized housing, or even their work places, that our Airmen can come together as a community.

The readiness of our Airmen, and of our Air Force, is inseparably linked to our quality of life and an investment we must continue to make. At your convenience, I am eager for an opportunity to show you the impact the current infrastructure and quality-of-life programs have on the Airmen in your districts. It's often easy to see the numbers and statistics behind a situation and miss the ground truth of the people impacted by it. As you are making the tough decisions concerning our defense budget, please bear in mind how vital it is to fund the programs that

Quality of Life in the Military

April 28, 2022

directly impact our people. In addition to modernizing and equipping our force to maintain our strategic advantage, it is absolutely essential we take care of our people with the same intensity.

Military Family Housing (MFH)

Ensuring the health and safety of our Airmen and their families living in government-owned housing is a leadership imperative for our Air Force.

The Department of the Air Force (DAF) family housing FY23 inventory contains approximately 15,200 homes. Approximately 23%, or 3,477 homes, fall below the facility condition standard set by the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense. Those assessed below this standard require divestiture, or some level of repair. Out of the 3,477 homes, only 256 are assessed below 60 on the 100-point Facility Condition Index. Facilities assessed below 60 generally require more robust repairs and increased maintenance to ensure they are safe and operable for occupants.

The DAF uses the Family Housing Master Plan to provide a comprehensive investment strategy to execute housing projects at the right time, scope, and cost. Within that plan, the Family Housing Construction Investment Program acquires, constructs, replaces, and improves housing units, housing support facilities and infrastructure.

The high cost of construction continues to present challenges to improvements of family housing and requires solutions within the housing construction program to include cancelling projects as a result of significant cost increases and using existing resources to achieve full scope on other projects. The DAF continues to focus investment in the housing inventory to provide adequate housing for all service members and their families.

The FY23 family housing construction program will fund planning studies and design for future construction projects on government-owned housing. It also supports three privatized

Quality of Life in the Military

April 28, 2022

housing restructures at Dover AFB, DE, Scott AFB, IL, and AETC Group 1, composed of Altus AFB, OK, Luke AFB, AZ, Sheppard AFB, TX, and Tyndall AFB, FL.

To help manage the condition of MFH, the Air Force Family Housing Operations and Maintenance program provides resources to keep homes available for occupancy and ensure they are adequately maintained. Operations funds are used to plan, manage, and execute functions for housing administration including civilian pay; municipal-type services such as entomology, refuse collection/disposal, and snow removal; and furnishings. Maintenance funds are utilized for day-to-day maintenance and repair of government-owned housing units facilitated by in-house or contracted personnel as well as design, alterations, and major repair projects to sustain and modernize inventory while improving adequacy ratings of the units.

Department of the Air Force (DAF) Dormitories

The DAF dormitory FY23 inventory contains 674 permanent party dorms comprised of approximately 56,000 beds, and 149 training dorms with approximately 48,000 beds. The DAF exceeds the facility condition goal set by the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment with 99.6% of 56,000 beds assessing as adequate. Only 216 beds assess below the OSD standard. Despite the high overall dorm condition rating, the Department recognizes that, based on facility and system component life cycle, nearly 35% of the dormitory inventory is ready for repairs or replacement of major systems. Continued deliberate investment is required to sustain adequate dormitories. The DAF evaluates dormitories through the Dormitory Master Plan (DMP) by using a building systems approach that is based on the life cycle of system components. The DMP projects dormitory repair and renewal requirements based on system age and overall assessed condition of systems and components. Beginning in

Quality of Life in the Military

April 28, 2022

FY23, \$175M in total annual authority will be committed to Quality of Life facilities, comprised of dormitories and Child Development Centers, to maintain overall average inventory conditions and avoid further degradation.

Meeting the Military Childcare Need

Available, affordable and quality childcare programs are an essential workforce enabler for our Airmen. These programs ensure the care and support of family members, which allows our service members to clearly focus on training and mission accomplishment. We currently have 175 child development and 90 youth centers on our installations. We also offer expanded childcare programs, utilizing a variety of approaches to meet the needs of Airmen who require nontraditional care for irregular duty hours. Unfortunately, this still does not meet the demand for the care of today's modern military family. As of December 2021, there were 4,169 children, 5-years-old and younger, on a waiting list for on-base childcare – with an average wait time of 126 days. To combat this gap between needs and capability, we are working to maximize the spaces and childcare options currently available, pursuing initiatives to expand childcare options, and leveraging feedback from Airmen, and their families, to make the programs better. In June 2021, we published the Child & Youth Facility Master Plan, which synergizes project advocacy across the enterprise. Currently, there are actions underway to enable childcare facilities to compete better among mission priorities in military construction project processes. We also launched Kinderspot, a secure, communication platform, developed by Airmen for Airmen, to provide verified CDC spot holders a platform to advertise, match, and sublet their child's spot to eligible renters. This platform is currently available at 9 CDCs across the Air Force. We have also increased availability and affordability of the Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood

Quality of Life in the Military

April 28, 2022

(MCCYN) program, which subsidizes a portion of childcare fees. This program supports Airmen living in areas where on-base childcare is not available, or there is an extensive waitlist.

Recently, we added 200 spaces and raised the provider cap – allowing members to pay less out-of-pocket expenses that are above their local, on-base military childcare rate. Again, as we continue to leverage these programs, we must remain conscious of today’s modern military family, and the increasing demand for available, affordable and quality childcare. This directly impacts the readiness and retention of our Airmen and their families and is more than just a quality-of-life initiative, it is a force multiplier essential to mission success.

Suicide Prevention

Suicide prevention remains a DAF priority at every level and is a special interest item of mine personally. Between 2015 and 2018, DAF Active Component suicide rates remained relatively stable, roughly 18.5 per 100,000. Those rates increased in 2019 (24.8 per 100,000) and remained similar in 2020 (24.3 per 100,000). In 2020, the largest demographic of suicides among service members were single men, between the ages of 23-30, and in the rank of E1-E4. They predominantly used a firearm as the means of suicide. Data through quarter four of 2021 shows the DAF suicide counts are consistent with those prior to 2019 , as published by the Defense Suicide Prevention Office. We anticipate the 2021 DoD Annual Suicide Report release no later than Sep of 2022 and will be able to complete a more thorough analysis of 2021 suicide trends upon receipt of the report.

The DAF is focused on four strategic areas that align with those of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: building connections, detecting risk, promoting protective environments, and equipping our Air and Space Forces and families. Our intent is to take a

Quality of Life in the Military

April 28, 2022

leadership-driven public-health approach, informed by data and partnerships with academia, industry, and sister Services to leverage diverse ideas and innovative prevention activities.

Our 2022 DAF Suicide Prevention Priorities align with the White House Strategy for reducing Military and Veteran Suicides and build upon the DAF prevention strategies tied to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Our first priority is time-based prevention; increasing safe storage by encouraging “going SLO”, using Safes, Locks, or Outside the home storage options to prevent accidents and build time and space between personnel in distress and access to lethal means. In March, the time-based prevention implementation and evaluation plan was disseminated DAF-wide. It builds upon our earlier lethal means safety efforts such as the distribution of 202,000 cable-style locks.

Our second priority is engaging, empowering and equipping families and bystanders. This effort includes marketing and training opportunities for those who may be optimally placed to intervene when they recognize Airmen and Guardians at risk. In the spring of 2020, the DAF began offering our first-ever suicide prevention training for family members. This training provides greater awareness about resources and programs available and equips family members to identify warning signs and act as another sensor in our detection and prevention methods. Since implementation in late CY20, more than 20 thousand family members have connected to the site and completed the training, with over 6.5 thousand certificates issued. Eighty-five percent indicated being more likely to intervene with someone in distress.

Third is reducing stigma and barriers to accessing care. As an extension of our communications and marketing messaging about resilience and prevention tools and resources, this renewed emphasis will be focused on positive outcomes that result from accessing the care

Quality of Life in the Military

April 28, 2022

available and streamlining processes to access that care, including making sure warm hand-offs occur between care providers.

Our fourth priority is to address upstream risk and protective factors. Seminal research by nationally-recognized experts in partnership with our team has created group-strength and peer-networking content that has proven impact in reducing suicide risk. Incorporating these facets into our resiliency training will have a far-upstream effect on both resilience and well-being of our force, which will then impact suicide prevention, affecting our Airmen and Guardians long before distress manifests into negative behaviors.

Lastly, we want to emphasize data sharing, evaluation and research. We will accelerate the identification and dissemination of those programs that are truly effective and share associated data with the field to amplify our results. We will implement rigorous evaluation of our existing programs - assessing implementation and effectiveness of all major resilience and prevention efforts in order to drive program improvements. We will establish priorities based on program self-assessment results, Suicide Analysis Board (SAB) results, and latest research within a continuous process improvement framework.

In addition to new priorities and innovations, we know it's important to continue learning from the suicide deaths that have occurred. Our Suicide Analysis Board policy was revamped to centralize and standardize suicide death analysis. We have partnered with the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences to analyze more than 1,000 variables for each of our suicide deaths. Our Major Commands will be provided results and recommendations that they will use to drive prevention activities that are tailored to the unique needs of their populations.

Quality of Life in the Military

April 28, 2022

Additionally, the new SAB process ensures objectivity in the review, dramatically enhancing our ability to identify gaps and equip leaders.

The recently established Fortify the Force Initiative Team is also examining this strategy, identifying the barriers in place that might limit the success of any initiatives, and recommending solutions to best help our Airmen, Guardians and families. Looking to the future, the continued funding for expansion of suicide prevention programs is essential to ensuring our Airmen, Guardians and families have direct access to the care they need, when they need it.

Resiliency

The DAF has a robust Resiliency Program, with resources available to help with physical, mental, social, and spiritual needs. The DAF is committed to forming solid partnerships with supporting organizations based on individual installation needs and expanding support options to bolster all pillars of resilience for our Airmen, Guardians and their families.

Our Airmen, Guardians and family members must be provided with the tools and techniques to help them adapt to changing conditions and prepare for, withstand, and rapidly recover from stress, disruption, or adversity. We have worked to improve the community action planning process to help our personnel in the field provide the resilience programs and services that Airmen, Guardians and families need at the base level. The DAF also worked with RAND to streamline some of our processes and tools for community action planning, resulting in a new guide, training videos, and resources to our Airmen and families.

In addition to the proactive efforts taken to strengthen our Airmen and Guardians, it is also imperative we build a culture where help seeking is encouraged and easily accessible.

Based on recommendations from the Independent Review Commission (IRC), we've brought

Quality of Life in the Military

April 28, 2022

together the 32 agencies to develop a “Warm Hand-off” approach strategy. The Warm Hand-off approach will ensure individuals seeking assistance are referred to the appropriate services in ways that focus on the client, ensure there is no break in support and have minimal requirements for individuals to need to re-request help. In support of the Warm Hand-off approach, a tool kit will be delivered across the force to provide training, skills, and resources for leaders at all levels, command teams, and service providers (medical and non-medical) to standardize the process for conducting customer-focused transitions to the right support (i.e., person-to-person referral).

Sexual Assault Prevention and Response

Sexual assault is a crime that undermines force lethality, readiness, and mission success. Despite significant efforts, we recognize we have more work to do to prevent or reduce the prevalence of sexual assault. Sexual assault reporting across the DAF has increased since 2010. For example, the number of Service members reporting incidents that occurred during service rose from 1,388 in 2019 to 1,390 in 2020. This is in line with the Department seeking greater reporting of sexual assault to connect victims with restorative care and to hold offenders appropriately accountable.

Our overall aim of fostering an environment of trust and support in the system to reduce the prevalence of sexual assault is of special interest to me. Our strategy to achieve this aim focuses on prevention, response, and accountability. Our prevention framework includes assessing unit climate risk and protective factors. Once we identify risk factors, such as sexist attitudes and beliefs that can lead to an environment that tolerates unethical behavior, we will take mitigating actions. When we find protective factors, we will reinforce these positive

Quality of Life in the Military

April 28, 2022

behaviors with leaders at all levels. We also will grow Wingman intervention skills. Combined, these will help work toward achievement of our goal.

Several ongoing training initiatives lead our prevention efforts. The DAF requires annual, DAF-wide training consisting of three components: Bystander Intervention, Wingman Intervention Training, and Total Force Sexual Assault and Prevention Training. Bystander Intervention Training provides foundational concepts of safe and desired bystander behavior to all Airmen and Guardians across the total force. Wingman Intervention Training in Technical School and at the First Term Airman Center targets the most at risk age group population for sexual assault. The Total Force Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Training is refreshed annually to ensure continual engagement of this critical issue.

The Sexual Communication and Consent (SCC) Program is an innovative, evidence-informed sexual assault prevention training developed specifically for delivery during Basic Military Training; it includes both universal and tailored content. Over 8,000 trainees went through the SCC Program Pilot between September 2019 and April 2020. At the end of the pilot, we found increased knowledge of sexual assault (4.4%), knowledge of consent (1.8%), and self-efficacy to resist sexual assault (6.8%), along with decreases in date rape myth attitudes (-4.2%), dating risk behaviors (-3.9%), and social risk behaviors (-4.5%).

Based on the 2019-2020 pilot, the SCC curriculum was revised and over 1200 Basic Military Training trainees completed this tablet-based training. Results from this phase showed trainees had a 9.3% increase in knowledge of sexual assault, a 4.2% increase in consent knowledge and an 8.5% increase in self-efficacy to resist sexual assault. Additionally, risky dating behaviors decreased 10%. The study also found the training appeared to be reaching

Quality of Life in the Military

April 28, 2022

sexual assault survivors and potential victims with content that may reduce their future risk for victimization, while improving knowledge and attitudes that may prevent harmful behaviors among potential perpetrators. The Air Force Academy is building on these Basic Military Training efforts and initiated a three-year pilot study that began with the incoming class of 2025.

Air Force Academy sexual assault reporting was consistent from academic program year (APY) 2016-2017 to 2017-2018 with 23 reports each year involving actively-enrolled cadets as either the victim or the subject, but rose to 40 reports in APY 2018-2019, 41 reports APY 2019-2020, and 55 reports APY 2020-2021. We have yet to attribute any causality to this increase, but the initiation of the “Teal Ropes” Cadet program and a “Safe To Report” policy change have been linked to reducing barriers to reporting. In APY 2021-2022, the “Safe to Report” policy was cited by 22 cadets as an influence on their decision to report. As previously mentioned, greater reporting of sexual assault is in line with the Department’s priority to connect victims with restorative care and to hold offenders appropriately accountable. At the same time, the Department also prioritizes prevention. We continue efforts to monitor and reduce incidents across the force to include the Air Force Academy.

As part of the DAF’s ongoing prevention efforts and IRC recommendations, we have established 175 installation-level, prevention experts with direct access to command leadership charged with targeting local risk factors based upon collected data to implement tailored prevention strategies at the tactical level. The dedicated personnel will provide the installation command leadership with added support and activities to specifically address the prevention of all forms of interpersonal and self-directed violence, address local risk factors, and enhance protective factors of our Airmen and Guardians.

Quality of Life in the Military

April 28, 2022

We continue to make progress in implementing the IRC's recommendations on sexual assault response. Our programs currently include Sexual Assault Response Coordinators, Victim Advocates, restricted and unrestricted reporting processes, and medical care for victims. To address the Commission's recommendations, we are increasing our full-time advocates to strengthen the response workforce to ensure the support and care of victims. We are also elevating the SARC functional chain of command to provide additional oversight and empowerment to support victims. Further, we are expanding our capability to provide advocacy and support to sexual harassment victims. We are strengthening our response actions by ensuring individuals who seek response and resilience assistance are provided a "Warm Handoff" to ensure they get help from the most appropriate team. Service providers will assist individuals with accessing appropriate resources and will ensure a warm hand-off to make necessary connections for our Airmen and Guardians. We are implementing the Safe-to-Report policy to remove barriers to reporting by eliminating punishment for minor collateral misconduct, like underage drinking or fraternization.

We are implementing several IRC recommended Military Justice reform actions. Sexual harassment is now a punitive article in the UCMJ. We are establishing an Office of the Special Trial Counsel with exclusive jurisdiction for "covered offenses" including most sexual offenses, murder, and domestic violence. Military judges will be responsible for determining court-martial sentences using sentencing criteria/parameters. We are also collaborating with the AF Office of Special Investigations on a Convicted Sex Offender Behavior Study to better understand predatory behaviors.

We will never lose our focus on and commitment to combatting sexual assault and harassment in the ranks. We will continue to use effective, research-informed preventive and

April 28, 2022

response strategies to ensure comprehensive support and response for sexual assault and sexual harassment victims.

Diversity & Inclusion

The Air Force understands that planning for our next generation workforce is just as critical as planning for our next generation weapon systems. To defeat our adversaries we must continue to operationalize and optimize diversity and inclusion to fully leverage the nation's greatest strength – our people – for a decisive, lethal advantage.

In recognition of this, the Air Force's foundational competencies now contain the principle of "fostering inclusion". We recognize that while we have a diverse force, we need to continue to make strides in how inclusive we are. Within the efforts to improve the culture, the department has implemented court-ordered child custody assignment or deferment, established unconscious bias training, charged developmental teams to conduct an analysis to identify and address barriers preventing members from reaching their highest potential, and looked at policies across the board that may unfairly disadvantage Airmen based on their demographics. We have established a policy on filling key military developmental slates of qualified, diverse candidates, designed to address diversity gaps impacting key deliberate development experiences.

Additionally, the DAF initiated civilian hiring panels to increase transparency of selection process which includes the mandatory use of hiring panels for GS-14 and GS-15 fill actions.

As part of an effort to measure the effectiveness of these initiatives, Air Force Equal Opportunity Advisors conduct organizational climate assessments. They rely on the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute for research, training and tools to assist commanders in creating action plans to improve the unit's culture and increase inclusion. We have implemented four strategic imperatives in order to achieve our mission to attract, recruit, develop and retain a

Quality of Life in the Military

April 28, 2022

high-quality, diverse Total Force. As an Air Force, we have to look at diversity and inclusion as warfighting imperatives that enhance leader's abilities to make decisions at speed, scale, and with the added benefit of unique perspectives.

Looking ahead, the DAF will utilize working groups to identify and address barriers, as well as expand the member resource group concept to grow and develop diverse talent through professional development, mentoring, coaching and networking. Ultimately, we need to promote and advance a culture that celebrates our diversity and allows every Airman and Guardian to achieve their full measure of success in an environment free from barriers and bias.

Conclusion

Chair Wasserman Schultz, Ranking Member Carter, and members of this Subcommittee, thank you again for this opportunity to represent our incredible Airmen and their families. Our Airmen, supported by some of the strongest families our nation will ever know, stand ready and willing to defend our Nation and they fully understand the role they play in employing and enabling Airpower around the world.

I am honored for the opportunity to provide insight into the quality of life of our Airmen which directly impacts our force. We appreciate your continued support for America's sons and daughters, their selfless families, and for your commitment to protect their quality of life. In an era of contested domains, our Airmen have to accelerate the change, and modernize our Air Force to deter our adversaries. They are the key to securing a future where American dominance is assured. We appreciate each of you to lead our nation and ensure we have the resources to remain the world's greatest Air Force.