

RECORD VERSION

STATEMENT BY

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SERGEANT MAJOR OF THE ARMY**

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Introduction

Chairman Webb, Senator Graham, and members of this committee, thank you for your invitation to testify today on our Army's quality of life. I truly appreciate this committee's commitment to the 1.1 million Soldiers, their Families and the Department of Army Civilians. I am still relatively new in this job, but after being around the Army for almost 30 years, I have seen first-hand the important decisions this committee makes on behalf of our military every day.

This sub-committee has a tremendous responsibility, ensuring we have the correct end strength and policies in place for our Soldiers today and in the foreseeable future. I pledge to always be a point of contact should you ever have any questions or comments about our Soldiers, training, or quality of life programs.

The Army recognizes that it is our responsibility to serve as good stewards of the financial resources we receive from our Nation. As part of our efficiencies review, we are currently looking at removing redundant or underperforming programs while streamlining those that serve a vital purpose and we welcome your ideas on this process.

The Army continues to prevail against insurgents around the world while protecting our country and the rights of our citizens. We have completed combat operations in Iraq by transitioning to Operation New Dawn, continuing to provide much needed support to the people and government of Iraq. We have also surged Soldiers into Afghanistan to support a new strategic direction. We have reshaped our Army to better

align ourselves for the challenges of tomorrow. We have accomplished much over the last year, but there is still much to do.

Our top priorities will be to continue to maintain our combat edge while reconstituting our force and building resilience in our Soldiers and Families. During the last several years, we have made significant progress in restoring balance through our four imperatives: sustain, prepare, reset, and transform.

Increasing the dwell time between deployments is the single most important component of restoring balance. A recent study said that Soldiers require at least two to three years to fully recover mentally and physically from the stresses of a one-year deployment. As we continue to draw down our forces in Iraq, we have been able to continually increase our dwell time. Soldiers deploying in October 2011 have the expectation that after one year of deployment they will be home for two years in the Active component. After October, our ARNG and USAR Soldiers can expect to see one year deployed and four years at home.

In order to meet the demands of today's strategic environment, we had to responsibly grow the Army, which we accomplished ahead of schedule in 2009. But even with this growth, we were not able to meet the high demands during this era of persistent conflict. As a result, Congress and the Secretary of Defense approved an additional 22,000, with the last 7,000 added during 2010. The Army's goal is to return to our approved active strength of 547,400 by the end of FY 13. It is imperative that as we begin to draw down, we do not sacrifice our combat experience and unit cohesion by cutting large numbers of Soldiers. The Army is in the planning phase of this deliberate process.

I truly appreciate all the work Congress has done for our Soldiers in the areas of Behavioral Health, Wounded Warrior Care and TRICARE. With your help, we have provided our Soldiers, Families and Civilians the

best possible care, support and services. Our focus continues to be improving access to and predictability of services. We continue to enhance support for our wounded, Families of our Fallen, victims of sexual assault and those with mental health issues.

The Army continues to provide top care for our Wounded Warriors and their Families through 29 Warrior Transition Units across the United States and Europe. Currently, WTUs provide healing, rehabilitation, and reintegration to more than 10,000 wounded, ill or injured Soldiers, up about 11.5% from last year. In addition to the WTUs, nine Community Based Warrior Transition Units (CBWTU) allow recuperating Soldiers to utilize health care facilities in their home communities, while working at local U.S. Army armories and reserve centers. To better support the housing of our Wounded Warriors, the Army has completed six Warrior Transition Complexes with 18 currently under construction.

Through the U.S. Army Wounded Warrior Program (AW2), the most severely wounded, ill and injured Soldiers receive personalized support, regardless of location or length of care. More than just medical care, AW2 advocates assist Warriors and their Families with career and education opportunities, benefit information, and local resources. There are more than 8,000 Soldiers enrolled in the program, up 24% from last year.

Our Army Medical Command continues to meet the increased behavioral health demand of our Soldiers and Families. Even with the influx of behavioral health providers, the Army has seen a range of operational-related stress reactions including post-traumatic stress (PTS) disorder, depression, anxiety, alcohol and substance abuse, Family and relationship problems, increased risk taking behavior, compassion fatigue and suicide behaviors.

Our Soldiers receive top-notch behavioral health care, but access to this care is impacted by shortages of behavioral health professionals.

Since 2005, the number of behavioral health visits has doubled, from 900,000 to more than 1.8 million. We continue to maximize the use of authorities that Congress has provided us to attract both military and civilian behavioral health providers to the Army. We have had some success hiring behavioral health professionals, increasing our staff by 65%, but we are still about 400 professionals short of our goal. Between FY 12-17, we aim to hire 1,000 additional behavioral health care providers.

Finally, the Army has lacked a standardized resiliency promotion program, which is a key component of psychological health. Through three key plans, the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness, the Army's Campaign Plan for Health Promotion, Risk Reduction and Suicide Prevention, and Warrior and Community resiliency training, the Army is closer than ever to standardizing resiliency for Soldiers from all three components.

Overall, the Army has implemented over 45 initiatives to fix or change access to care, resiliency, quality of care and surveillance. We have shifted our focus to providing care and support for those serving in Operational Enduring Freedom and have expanded our tele-behavioral health and automated behavioral health clinics. We are working hard to increase our behavioral health care providers for all components by approximately 1,000 across all components between 2012 and 2017.

TRICARE is the health care program for active duty service members, ARNG, USAR, retirees, Family members, survivors, and certain former spouses worldwide. This program is a network of military and civilian health care professionals working together to foster, protect, sustain, and restore health for those entrusted to their care. Over the last year, TRICARE has introduced several new programs to provide care to those Soldiers and Families who need it most.

The TRICARE Reserve Select (TRS) program continues to be a huge success for our ARNG and USAR Soldiers and Families. TRS gives

these citizen-Soldiers and their Families access to an affordable benefit while serving in part-time status. TRS offers a health care plan similar to the TRICARE Standard and TRICARE Extra programs with a monthly premium. These rates did rise a little for FY11. Single Soldier rates increased from \$49.62 to \$53.16 and the Family rate from \$197.65 to \$197.76. In addition to the TRS program, eligible ARNG and USAR Soldiers and Families can begin receiving TRICARE benefits up to 180 days before activating for a contingency operation. Under the Transitional Assistance Management Program, Soldiers from all three components can receive an extra 180 days of TRICARE health benefits after separating from the Army.

The TRICARE Retired Reserve (TRR) is a premium-based, worldwide health plan that provides care for USAR and USARNG Soldiers and their Families who have retired but are not yet eligible for TRICARE for Life coverage. TRR offers comprehensive health coverage from any TRICARE-authorized provider. Costs for TRR Member-Only coverage is \$408.01 and TRR Member and Family coverage runs \$1,020.05.

TRICARE plans to roll out its new Young Adult Program this spring to extend parent's health care benefits to their children up to the age of 26. This program is for young adults who do not have access to employer-sponsored health care coverage. TRICARE is still working out the details for the Young Adult program including eligibility, coverage criteria, costs, etc.

We are in our final year of our five-year effort to improve work and training facilities for our Soldiers and Civilians, as well as new or improved housing, medical, and child care facilities for our Families. Under the base realignment and closure program, we have disposed of more than 24,000 acres and closed three active installations and five U.S. Army Reserve Centers. We are on track to complete BRAC in FY 11.

The Army's Child, Youth and School Services program supports the readiness and well-being of Army Families by reducing the conflict between on-the-job military missions and parental responsibilities. Generally, Army Families are younger than the average American Family and more geographically dispersed from extended Families in their home town and communities.

The Army has added 128 Child Development Centers and 24 Youth Centers since FY08. Last year, we were able to meet and maintain the DOD standard of 80% of the child care demand and 35% of the youth program demand.

The modernization of Army Family Housing and Soldier Barracks is critical to maintaining our All Volunteer Force. The Army continues to make huge strides for both, expanding housing services and creating a secure and affordable environment for all of our Soldiers and Families.

As part of the FY12 budget, the Army has asked for \$681.8 million for Army Family Housing. With this funding, the Army hopes to eliminate all inadequate Family housing worldwide by replacing inadequate homes, improving existing homes and leasing where appropriate. This funding will be used to construct 128 new homes, renovate 276 homes, and operate and maintain the government-owned homes.

We are on schedule to finish our barracks modernization plan for the 35% of our single Soldiers by the end of FY 13. The Army is planning to fund 14 projects to construct 3,880 spaces at nine garrison locations for FY12.

The Army continues to fix and build all Army Initial Entry and Advanced Individual Training Barracks by 2015. Many of our outdated training barracks range in age from 40 to 100 years old. By the end of

FY11, the Army will only have funded 55.2% of the required spaces. During FY12, we are planning to fund three military construction projects and 14 OMA funded modernization projects. We also plan to allocate funding to eliminate inadequate training barracks by FY15 and complete new barracks by FY17. We ask for your continued support to help us complete this important program.

One of the main reasons are Soldiers are so successful around the world is our diversity. The Army offers opportunities to men and women of all backgrounds to be an integral part of our All-Volunteer Force. In this time of globalization, our Army needs diverse leaders in order to successfully interact with different cultural groups from across the world.

Women in the Army continue to serve this Nation with honor and distinction in the roles, positions, units, and specialties in which we allow them to serve. Since 2002, more than 100 women have been killed in combat due to enemy contact and more than 14,000 are currently serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is no secret that women are an integral part of our force. They are on the front line, engaging the enemy, and making a difference.

The Army has reviewed our assignment policies and regulations to ensure they are relevant and meet the needs of current conditions and emerging requirements. This ensures all Soldiers, regardless of gender, are afforded the opportunity to reach their highest potential.

Our Soldiers have also begun chain-teaching to prepare for the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." The Secretary of Defense has said that certification and the repeal must be accomplished across the entire Department at the same time. He added that this should be done consistent with the standards of military readiness, military effectiveness, unit cohesion, and recruiting and retention.

For the Army, the guiding principles for implementation are: leadership matters most; minimize management; communicate and educate; and implement consistent with Army Core values. These principles have been instituted in our training and education efforts. The training and education has been implemented in three tiers beginning last month with Tier 1. We are currently conducting chain teaching classes with our Tier 2 and Tier 3 Soldiers. Our goal is to have all three tiers complete by mid to late August.

In closing, I want to stress the amazing work being done every day by our Army Team. As the Sergeant Major of the Army, the best part of my job is visiting our Soldiers, Families and Civilians across the world. The professionalism, dedication and sacrifice they display every day is the reason our Army is the envy of every other in the world. Our Soldiers are the best trained, best manned, best equipped and best led force in our history. I appreciate this opportunity to speak before you today to tell the Army story. I welcome your questions at this time. Thank you and Army Strong.