

PAIRS CASE 2026-C-0076 United States  
Space Force

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Testimony Before the  
Subcommittee on Personnel of the  
Senate Armed Services Committee

***Quality of Life in the  
Military***

Witness Statement of  
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February 11, 2026

## Quality of Life in the Military

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Chairman Tuberville, Ranking Member Warren, and distinguished members of this Subcommittee, thank you for your steadfast dedication to the well-being of our Guardians and their families. Your commitment is integral to the strength of the Space Force. By prioritizing their needs, you directly contribute to our ability to scout, retain, and empower the talent required to ensure our nation's military readiness remains unparalleled.

These investments directly impact the well-being and readiness of our Guardians, which is why I am deeply grateful for the critical provisions Congress has provided, including the 3.8% military pay raise, the 4.2% increase in Basic Allowance for Housing, and the 2.4% rise in Basic Allowance for Subsistence. These measures are powerful investments in the resilience and readiness of our force, representing a concrete commitment to those who serve.

While these provisions provide much-needed support, the challenges we face in the rapidly evolving and contested global security environment that extends into the space domain. China remains the pacing challenge. The People's Liberation Army has expanded its space presence exponentially, with more than 1,300 satellites in orbit and a rapidly growing arsenal of space weapons designed to deny the America's ability to leverage space and to target Joint Forces. Russia, though facing its own challenges, continues to field advanced systems such as anti-satellite missiles and ground-based lasers that target U.S. assets. These threats demand that we not only protect our current capabilities but deny competitors from using space capabilities that endanger U.S. forces.

In response to these growing threats, 2025 marked a year of tremendous achievement for the Space Force, as we adapted and strengthened our capabilities. A pivotal moment occurred with the graduation of our first class of officers from the newly established Officer Training

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Course. Furthermore, more than 700 Guardians participated in the inaugural Resolute Space exercise, demonstrating the effectiveness of our operations in a contested environment. Our Guardians supported critical national security objectives, as evidenced by the success of Operation Midnight Hammer, where we provided precision navigation, critical intelligence, and life-saving missile warning.

As we navigated these evolving challenges, the Space Force itself underwent a historic transformation to better position us for success in the future. We made a historic transition from the legacy Space Operations Command to the newly established Combat Forces Command, fundamentally enhancing our ability to field integrated combat units. Our operational tempo also reached a remarkable milestone, with Space Launch Delta 45 and the Eastern Range executing 109 launches, marking the first time we've crossed the triple-digit threshold in a single year. Alongside these milestones, we delivered the Advanced Tracking and Launch Analysis System, replacing a 30-year-old legacy system, and rolled out Tranche 1 of our Proliferated Warfighter Space Architecture, significantly expanding our ability to provide low-latency communication links to support the warfighter with a resilient network of integrated capabilities, including tracking of advanced missile threats, enabled by beyond-line-of-sight tactical data links from low-Earth orbit.

While our achievements are a testament to our commitment today, we must continually look to the future to maintain our strategic advantage. A critical component of this future is the Space Force Personnel Management Act, which will play a significant role in enabling our talent resiliency. The Personnel Management Act streamlines participation, reduces barriers to service, and integrates full- and part-time billets directly into Space Force units, allowing us to create a

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more flexible and adaptive force. We are on track to begin transitioning to Personnel Management Act authorities in the summer of 2026, setting the stage for continued evolution.

The transition to Personnel Management Act authorities is already well underway. To date, 299 Air Force Reserve members have been selected for full-time transfers, with 192 of these transfers already completed. We anticipate all transfers will be finished by May 2026. Additionally, 104 Air National Guard members have applied to move into full-time positions, with transfers expected to begin in Spring 2026. Furthermore, 357 members of the Air National Guard have applied for part-time positions, with these transfers slated to begin in Summer 2026.

This shift to integrating full- and part-time billets is vital to maintaining a flexible, highly skilled force. Guardians will no longer only have the option to leave the Space Force due to personal or family reasons; they will have the option to take a break from full-time service, address their needs, and return to full-time when ready. This flexibility is crucial to keeping our force agile and ensuring we retain the talent needed for tomorrow's challenges.

In parallel with our growth, ensuring the well-being of our Guardians and their families remains a cornerstone of our readiness. Access to affordable, high-quality childcare is not a convenience; it is a readiness imperative. We are actively addressing long-standing challenges like waiting lists and staffing shortages through innovative solutions. For example, the Colorado Springs Contracted Care Pilot program at Peterson Space Force Base provides 150 off-base care spaces managed by our Child & Youth Program, giving members vital flexibility.

In addition to these immediate initiatives, we are also building for the long-term future of our Guardians and their families. I want to sincerely thank Congress for the crucial funding that enables projects like the new Child Development Center at Eglin North. This FY26 Department

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of the Air Force-funded project is already 65% designed and will provide 256 additional childcare spaces, directly benefiting the 87 Guardians and their families stationed there. These initiatives not only support our service members but also strengthen the communities they call home by providing options and stability. Your support for these programs is a direct investment in the well-being of our people and the security of the space domain.

Equally critical for our Guardians' well-being is ensuring their access to food security, which is an essential element of overall readiness. The Space Force is a primarily an employed-in-place force, where Guardians serve from their home stations, which are power projection platforms. While they operate in a deployed-like status, fulfilling critical national missions 24/7, 365 days a year, they still manage the responsibilities of daily life, such as caring for children, supporting spouses, and maintaining households. Unlike other services, most Guardians are not stationed overseas, and the last thing they should have to worry about is access to healthy, convenient, and nutritious food. I appreciate Congress's advocacy for cost-of-living adjustments to basic pay, Basic Allowance for Housing, and Basic Allowance for Subsistence, which have been essential steps toward improving economic security. However, food security for our Guardians is not just about preventing hunger; it's about ensuring they have meaningful access to a variety of convenient and healthy food options that directly impact their ability to stay mission-ready.

To address these challenges, the Department of the Air Force is modernizing its food service system with a data-driven approach to improve efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and accessibility. The Department of the Air Force is currently assessing its food service operations to better understand patron demographics and usage patterns. This ongoing evaluation will

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inform the development of a strategic roadmap to ensure high-quality, nutritious meals are accessible across a variety of locations, from base dining facilities to more remote or austere assignments. By leveraging industry best practices and innovative solutions, the Department of the Air Force is creating a sustainable, mission-aligned food service program that balances operational readiness with quality of life, ensuring our Guardians are always fueled and ready for the tasks ahead.

This brings us to another critical challenge for our growing force: our infrastructure. While our budget has funded the missions we have assumed, our facilities and support structures are not keeping pace. A significant and growing concern is that we are placing 21st-century missions and a growing, highly skilled force into 20th-century facilities. This is a vulnerability that threatens to undermine our long-term effectiveness and the investments we have made in people and technology. To ensure our Guardians can continue to meet the demands our nation places upon them, we need a robust and dedicated resources to build the modern, resilient infrastructure required to support them.

As we continue to navigate these evolving challenges, we must look ahead and ensure our Guardians are equipped with everything they need to succeed. Our Guardians are entrusted with protecting our nation's interests in an increasingly complex and contested environment. Their dedication ensures our nation and its allies can succeed. The decisions we make today will determine our success for decades to come. We must prioritize the needs of our Guardians by providing the resources they require, which include not just weaponry and systems, but also the family support that ensures their focus and the modern infrastructure that enables their mission.

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I look forward to collaborating with Congress to ensure the U.S. Space Force has the tools, the people, and the support needed to build a future where space power underpins our national prosperity and security.