

Not for publication until released by the Committee

**PREPARED STATEMENT
OF
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OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF WAR FOR PERSONNEL AND
READINESS
REGARDING
THE FISCAL YEAR 2027 DEPARTMENT OF WAR PERSONNEL POSTURE
BEFORE
THE SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON PERSONNEL
MAY 20, 2026**

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Chairman Tuberville, Ranking Member Warren, and distinguished members of this subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to speak about the heartbeat of the Department of War – our men and women in uniform, their civilian colleagues, and each of the wives, husbands, daughters, and sons who support them.

I am honored to serve in this important role. I am fully committed to ensuring our Service members have the resources they need to fight and win in any environment, our civilian workforce is prepared to support them in those efforts, and that we continue to provide the essential support for their families to thrive. I look forward to discussing this crucial work.

As a former Green Beret, I understand the challenging nature of our military's mission, and as a proud father of two young children, I deeply appreciate who our military defends. I thank President Trump, Secretary Hegseth, and Under Secretary Tata for strongly supporting this critical portfolio, which includes military and civilian personnel policy; military community and family policy; integration of the Reserve Components, who have advanced critical missions defending our southern border and provided the backbone for Operation Epic Fury; the Department's Pre-K to 12 school system; and our commissary system.

My team is focused on the three pillars Secretary Hegseth outlined: (1) Restoring the warrior ethos, (2) rebuilding our military, and (3) re-establishing deterrence. These priorities are also promises: to reignite a spirit of excellence in our Armed Forces and restore the clarity of purpose that defines our warfighting mission. We have leaned into that guidance. The Department is attracting and retaining the finest talent by offering purposeful service, national impact, and long-term stability. A career within the Department—whether in uniform or as a civilian—pairs an unmatched mission with a comprehensive support system for our personnel and those they love. For those who invest their talents here, the professional potential is limitless—and for their families, we ensure that same standard of opportunity.

We have seen positive results since January 2025: In Fiscal Year 2025, the military's recruiting efforts broke records, returning to levels not reached in more than a decade. All active-duty services reached their goals, as did nearly all Reserve components. The five services recruited 103 percent of their combined total. Retention similarly remained high. That momentum has continued into Fiscal Year 2026, with the Air Force and Space Force already having met their goals.

The young American men and women who comprise our All-Volunteer Force are drawn to serve in our mission-focused, unparalleled military; they leverage unparalleled professional opportunities; and they trust we will take care of them and their families. The 14th Quadrennial

Review of Military Compensation confirms our total military compensation package is “strongly competitive” with the private sector labor market. On the civilian compensation front, we recently processed more than 90,000 cash awards, averaging \$13,273 for our top civilian performers. This not only incentivizes productive work in our entire civilian workforce, but it adds to the overall compensation earned for those top performers.

Operation Epic Fury provides a powerful case study: our M&RA team rapidly surged to provide special entitlements and hazard pays for our uniformed and civilian personnel to appropriately recognize their operational risks, ensure educational stability for Department of War Education Activity (DoWEA) students, and maximize availability of needed resources through Military OneSource. Most importantly, we supported the dignified transfer of our fallen Active and Reserve members.

We recognize that family economic security is also a critical readiness issue. To substantially reduce military spouse unemployment, we are expanding the SECO (Spouse Education and Career Opportunities) and MyCAA (My Career Advancement Account Scholarship) programs, aggressively leveraging spouse talent pools for hiring, and advocating for greater license portability. Because a service member’s focus also relies on the well-being of his or her children, we are simultaneously tackling childcare shortages by increasing CDC capacity and reducing waitlists. Furthermore, we are refocusing our 161 DoWEA schools on core academic excellence, ensuring our students receive a world-class education free from distracting or divisive concepts.

In closing, I am reminded of a foundational Special Operations Forces axiom: *Humans are more important than hardware*. As we work to restore the warrior ethos, rebuild the military, and re-establish deterrence, I never forget whom we serve. I have witnessed firsthand the quiet bravery and resilience of our brave men and women in uniform, our patriotic civilian personnel, and their patriotic families, both inside of the Pentagon and across the world. God bless them all, and God bless the United States.