

**STATEMENT BY DR. MAURICE L. TODD**

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**Before the Senate Armed Services Committee**

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Chairman Tuberville, Ranking Member Warren, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee: thank you for the opportunity to testify today alongside Under Secretary Tata and my fellow Assistant Secretaries. As we navigate a strategic landscape defined by persistent competition and accelerating technological change, the partnership between the Department and this Committee has never been more vital to our national defense.

Our National Defense Strategy demands a joint force that is lethal, agile, and decisively superior – ensuring our warfighters can fight and win any conflict. My office is committed to translating that strategic imperative into tactical reality by modernizing and innovating our training and education enterprise, integrating advanced analytics into all our efforts, and embedding an uncompromising culture of safety and occupational readiness across the Total Force.

**Transforming Readiness with Advanced Analytics**

We are fundamentally modernizing how we view, measure, and sustain preparedness. In the modern battlespace, data is just as critical a capability as munitions or fuel. The integration of artificial intelligence, machine learning, and advanced analytics is not just an administrative upgrade: it is the cornerstone of modern readiness for the Total Force. It allows us to shift from reactive reporting to predictive force generation, enabling commanders to foresee and mitigate readiness shortfalls before they materialize.

Recognizing this transformative value, we are aggressively investing in state-of-the-art analytic tools and models. We are seeing significant returns on this investment as we have rapidly developed and delivered automated dashboards enhanced through advanced analytics that provide decision-makers with real-time, high-fidelity impact forecasting. Through active industry partnerships, we are integrating these tools and models into our readiness systems to deliver decision advantage at the speed of relevance, lift the cognitive burden off our warfighters, and translate data into lives saved on and off the battlefield.

### **Modernizing and Innovating Training and Education**

The foundation of our military advantage does not rest solely on advanced technology or superior platforms; it is built upon the unmatched skill, intellect, and resilience of our Service members. Rigorous training and world-class education underpin the strength of our Total Force, transforming individual recruits into a cohesive, lethal Total Force capable of outthinking and outfighting any adversary. To maintain our competitive edge, we must continuously evolve how we prepare our personnel for the complexities of tomorrow's battlefield in a changing strategic environment.

To forge the intellectual and tactical readiness of the Total Force, we are actively aligning our education and training standards to restore the Warrior Ethos. Having just recently completed our intensive 60-day comprehensive review, we are fundamentally refocusing Professional Military Education on mission-relevant curricula grounded in American ideals and geopolitical realism. Beyond the classroom, we have taken decisive action to reduce onerous, legacy mandatory training requirements that consume valuable time but do not directly contribute to warfighter readiness and lethality. In one specific and highly successful instance,

reducing the frequency of a single, redundant course is anticipated to save our Service members over 2 million man-hours annually.

To guarantee decisive overmatch in future conflicts, we must elevate our joint training enterprise to reflect the rigorous and integrated nature of modern, multi-domain operations. My office is prioritizing the expansion and integration of realistic joint training by formally linking multiservice doctrine development, training assessments, and joint exercises so that our forces are able to train as they will fight, leveraging innovative capabilities into the Department from best-in-class industry providers. Through these efforts, we are building a more cohesive and prepared joint force, capable of meeting any challenge with overwhelming and integrated combat power.

### **Promoting a Culture of Safety and Occupational Readiness**

We are actively promoting a culture of safety across the enterprise by tackling systemic risks head-on to protect our most valuable asset—our people. We are shifting from a reactive medical model to a proactive, pre-clinical readiness model that treats human performance as a foundational operational requirement. We are working to institutionalize the Warfighter Performance Optimization (WPO) function by modernizing the Total Force Fitness (TFF) framework and aligning it with the Department's readiness, resilience, and sustained lethality priorities. We are investing now in a rapid validation pipeline that tests targeted performance initiatives before scaling them, ensuring every program is measured against hard readiness outcomes for our Service members: peak performance, sustained deployability, reduced injuries, and lower attrition. We deeply appreciate this Subcommittee's partnership in advancing these initiatives and look forward to continued collaboration to safeguard the health of our Total Force, ensuring it remains mission-ready and fully supported throughout their service.

A core mission of the Military Health System is to generate a medically ready force. To optimize this function, we are developing a Medical Readiness Predictive Analytic tool. We are modernizing the process of identifying injured and non-recovered Service members, and rapidly triage those service members into cohorts who can recover and those who cannot, initiate treatments, and generate dispositions (i.e., treatment with return to duty, or a medical board fitness for fitness for duty review). We have previous experience in this area, including the JAIC's Medical Readiness Information Tool (MERIT), a tool leveraging Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning and data integration to improve predictive medical readiness analytics.

In the aviation safety domain, strengthening airmanship and reducing mishaps remains a top priority. We recognize the interest of our Congressional and public stakeholders, and we are taking aggressive action to instill confidence in the Department's commitment to mishap prevention. Through the newly established Aviation Mishap Task Force, we are reinforcing maintenance discipline, strengthening aircrew training, and tightening operational risk controls across the fleet. We appreciate the partnership on the requirements from the ALERT Act, including expanded aviation safety reporting for close proximity encounters and closer coordination with the Federal Aviation Administration.

My office is also aggressively addressing the critical importance of brain health and Blast Overpressure (BOP) mitigation. We are protecting the force through a comprehensive program that identifies, assesses, and manages head injury risks across training and operations. We now require Components to identify at-risk personnel and document their exposures in the Defense Occupational and Environmental Readiness System (DOEHRS), which feeds the Individual Longitudinal Exposure Record (ILER), ensuring lifelong access for Service members, clinicians

and the Department of Veterans Affairs. We have successfully established cognitive monitoring at all Initial Military Training sites to baseline every new accession, remain on track to complete all required baselines for high-risk personnel this year, and are fielding a modernized cognitive monitoring capability that replaces the legacy system. This will give commanders earlier, more reliable insight into cognitive changes to support timely, risk-informed decisions. Furthermore, in close coordination with the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, we are developing a brain-health specific safety threshold for BOP in accordance with Section 735 of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 National Defense Authorization Act. Crucially, we are also actively implementing the new Blast Safety Officer requirements, a testament to the exceptional collaboration between the Department and this legislative body that will tangibly improve the safety and well-being of our Service members.

### **Conclusion**

In all aspects of our mission, we are leveraging innovation. Our efforts are deliberately aligned to resource these initiatives, ensuring we can continue to expand readiness gains; aggressively reduce operational risk; and ensure the health, safety, and well-being of our Total Force, ensuring every Service member is ready and prepared to accomplish their missions throughout their careers in order to fulfill our sacred duty to ensure the security of the American people.

Thank you for your enduring support for our warfighters and their families. I look forward to your questions.