

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
PRESENTATION TO THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON PERSONNEL
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
UNITED STATES SENATE

SUBJECT: FY20 PERSONNEL POSTURE STATEMENT

STATEMENT OF:

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INTRODUCTION

Chairman Tillis, Ranking Member Gillibrand, Distinguished Members of this Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before this committee to talk about our Airmen, Active, Guard, Reserve and Civilian. America's Airmen remain "Always There" providing Global Vigilance, Reach and Power to protect and defend our Nation.

BUILDING A LETHAL AND READY AIR FORCE

Great power competition provides the central challenges to U.S. prosperity and security. To face these challenges, the United States Air Force must compete, deter, and win across the five priority missions of the National Defense Strategy:

- Defend the homeland,
- Provide a safe, secure, and effective nuclear deterrent,
- Defeat a powerful conventional enemy, while we
- Deter opportunistic aggression, and
- Disrupt violent extremists in a cost-effective manner.

To accomplish this, we must continue to develop and build a lethal and ready Air Force. At its core building a lethal and ready Air Force is about people. Our Airmen (military and civilian) and their families are our most important asset.

End Strength

The Air Force appreciates the support for continued end strength growth to 690,500 Total Force Airmen in the FY19 National Defense Authorization Act. We are meeting our projections to reach the desired state across our Active and Reserve components. The growth you have authorized is accelerating our readiness recovery and will provide more lethal Airmen to protect and defend our Nation today and tomorrow. This past year we focused the resources Congress provided on our pacing squadrons, the 204 operational squadrons required in the opening days of

a peer fight. More than 90% of our pacing squadrons are ready to “fight tonight” with their lead force packages – the first Airmen to deploy at the beginning of a conflict. Overall resourcing within our pacing units is up 24%. When we include their follow-on forces, these pacing squadrons are on track to reach 80% readiness before the end of FY20, 6 years faster than originally projected. As our front-line squadrons meet their readiness goals, we are also working to ensure the remainder of our operational squadrons reach the 80% readiness mark by 2022. The National Military Strategy directs a balanced “boxer’s stance” of military readiness, and our operational pacing squadrons form the clenched fist of American resolve. But a fist is nothing without the power of the body – our supporting squadrons – behind it. While readiness indicators are moving in the right direction and active military manning in most squadrons averages 97%, manning across our supporting units and in some high demand areas remains at lower levels. Undermanned units create fragile readiness where units have single points of failure, higher operational tempos, and limit a commander’s ability to mitigate readiness impacts caused by periodic non-availability of Airmen. Without continued end strength growth, our gains in readiness will be slowed and the Air Force will find it increasingly difficult to compete, deter, and win against near-peer competitors and across a wide spectrum of priority missions.

The Budget Control Act still threatens to disrupt the progress we are making. A return to sequestration would erase the gains we made over the last three years and inflict substantial damage to our programs. In 2013, in the wake of sequestration, we were forced to stand-down one-third of our combat flying squadrons. We cancelled large-scale exercises and lost over one million work-hours of depot maintenance. To maintain operational capability, we also reduced our total force size by nearly thirty thousand Airmen resulting in the loss of valuable experience. Recovery from these actions is lengthy, but your support over the last three years has been extremely helpful. Any return to the Budget Control Act will not only arrest the gains we have made, but will also likely add to current readiness recovery timelines.

Recruiting and Accessing

Readiness is first and foremost about having the right number of capable Airmen within your Air Force. Today only 29% of 17 - 24 year old men and women in the United States are eligible to serve and only one in eight have a propensity to serve in the military. Despite this, the Regular

Air Force achieved its FY18 enlisted (29,450) and officer (Line – 4,039) accession goals. The Air National Guard achieved 92% of their enlisted goal (10,529), but met their end-strength target by exceeding their officer goal (968) and maintaining high retention. The Air Force Reserve achieved their combined enlisted and officer goal of 8,450.

The FY19 Air Force Active Duty enlisted recruiting goal is 32,300. Thus far, we have met 21% of the overall goal and have identified recruits with projected future dates for basic military training that will take us to 51% of the goal. The FY19 Air Force Reserve combined officer and enlisted recruiting goal is 8,650 with 35% already met. The FY19 Air National Guard combined officer and enlisted recruiting goal is 10,378 with 32.6% already met. In summary, Active Duty, Reserve and Air National Guard are on track to meet overall FY19 recruiting goals.

While we have been able to meet most of our recruiting goals, we are keenly aware of a growing competition for talent and expect the recruiting environment to be more challenging. The Air Force is committed to improving how we recruit and prepare Airmen to succeed. With your support, we have added 159 new recruiters and our budget for operating, advertising and marketing has increased by 85% since FY17. To assist in predicting career interest for potential recruits, the Air Force uses a survey on its official website titled Air Force Work Interest Navigator (AF-WIN), which has generated over 50,000 leads to date — an average of 460 surveys per day.

We met and are on track to achieve our total recruiting goals, however, we have had challenges in some specific skill sets. For a number of years, we struggled to recruit significant numbers of Airmen qualified for special warfare programs. This past year we established a new training group and new recruiting squadrons focused on critical warfighting career fields such as special warfare Airmen, explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) and survival, evasion, resistance and escape (SERE). So far this year, we have seen early success in meeting our monthly goals for special warfare Airmen but have slightly missed our targets for EOD and SERE Airmen in three of the last four months. We expect to make those goals up later in the year.

We are fully committed to the integration of women into combat positions, have increased targeted marketing to further attract female recruits, and placed female cadre within these training units. Prior to 2016, 99% of our Air Force's positions were already open to women to include flying combat aircraft which opened in 1993. Since that time we have had multiple female fighter wing commanders, a female 4-star Combatant Commander, and currently have a female 4-star commander at Air Mobility Command. Since January 2016, when we opened the last eight special warfare related specialties, 100% of Air Force occupations and positions have been open to women, including removing previous gender based assignment restriction for 22 closed positions serving with the Army/Special Operation Forces (SOF). The percentage of active duty women serving in both combat-related and flying roles is 13.7% (9,027). Finding qualified volunteers for special warfare career fields, both males and females, continues to be challenging. The training programs are demanding and require higher and broader levels of physical fitness to meet the demands of the occupationally specific, operationally relevant tests. The average historical attrition rates for both males and females ranges from 40-90% depending on specialty; consequently, we do not foresee large numbers of females in operational units in the near term. To date, ten female Airmen have entered into special warfare training but none have yet to qualify and graduate. Currently, we have one female in Tactical Air Control Party (TACP) training with a potential graduation date later this spring.

We also appreciate the authority Congress provided allowing us to award constructive credit, which we are applying to recruit officers in very competitive cyber career fields. In our successful pilot program, we selected two highly skilled enlisted candidates who have cyber master's degrees. We recruited them from within the Air Force to expedite the assimilation of these candidates into the cyber warfare officer corps. Their experience, exemplary records, and top leadership recommendations all support use of constructive credit and allowed us to advance them to positions filling key holes in our officer inventory. We are working parallel efforts to recruit cyber talent from industry and academia using the same constructive credit provisions.

Funding for enlistment and accession bonuses as well as scholarships are also key when competing for top talent. In the FY19 President's Budget, Congress supported an increase of

\$18M in Reserve Officer Training Corps scholarship funding allowing us to offer additional scholarships for targeted skill sets in STEM related career fields.

Retaining Airmen and Families

While the Air Force is experiencing generally high retention rates in both the officer and enlisted corps — 90% of enlisted Air Force Specialty Codes (AFSC) are stable or trending up on retention over last 12 months with historical numbers closer to 80%, and 98% of officer AFSCs are stable or trending up versus a historical average of 90% — the aggregate success sometimes masks pockets of retention challenges. For our enlisted force, we have lower retention for cyber; space; nuclear security; maintenance in some mid-to-high skill levels; intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR); and special warfare among mid-to-high skill level Airmen. For our officer force, retention continues to be challenging among our pilots, combat systems officers, some medical specialties, and has begun emerging in our air battle managers. These trends are generally more acute in our mid-grade officer ranks.

We appreciate Congress' support of special and incentive pays which are a critical component, complimented with other non-monetary incentives, to maintaining and improving retention. The FY19 President's Budget included \$1.2 billion for special and incentive pays allowing the Air Force to target critical skill shortages. These special and incentive pays assist in compensating Airmen for hazardous duty or high demand skill sets critical to our warfighting excellence. With the existing competitive recruiting market, retention becomes even more essential to having a lethal and ready force.

We are particularly grateful for Congress' support of aviation incentive and bonus pays. To ensure we are making the best use of our aviation bonus authorities, we continue to use a business case model targeting payments based on four main criteria: manning levels, retention trends, cost to train for a particular weapons system, and the length of time to train.

The Air Force ended FY18 with a total force pilot shortage of 1,937. Shortfalls in the fighter pilot inventory are the most acute. Aviation bonus take rates are important leading indicators of future retention rates. After four straight years of steady decline, the overall take rate for the aviation bonus stabilized and went up slightly from 44% in 2017 to 45% in 2018. The take rate

for fighter pilots increased by 9%, from 35% to 44%, and bomber pilots went up 7%, from 46% to 53%. Unfortunately we saw a decrease in our largest category, mobility pilots, where the take rate went down from 44% to 38%. Overall we are below the retention target of 65% needed each year and within each pilot category to sustain a healthy inventory.

Monetary incentives are one small piece of our retention portfolio. The majority of the retention portfolio is in fact non-monetary and is focused on improving quality of life, quality of service, and mitigating operational tempo. Earlier this year we expanded the high year of tenure limits for Senior Airmen, Staff Sergeants and Technical Sergeants to retain technical skills and experience. We also reduced the number of forward deployed 365-day assignments by 20% from the last fiscal year and are projecting to reduce that number an additional 38% in FY20, utilizing reach back or shortening tours to help stabilize the operational tempo for our Airmen. We are also adding flexibility into the officer assignment process by leveraging technology to improve our assignment matching system.

After researching industry best practices, we implemented an information technology solution known as “Talent Marketplace.” Talent Marketplace uses an algorithm, based on the Nobel-Prize winning National Medical Residency Matching Program, to assist in matching officers to available assignments. This algorithm takes into account the officer’s assignment preferences and the hiring manager’s ranking of officers being considered to produce a preliminary match.

While Talent Marketplace provides an automated “scientific” match at the beginning of the process, it then assists the Air Force Personnel Center assignment teams in applying the “art” to finalize the process. This two-pronged process approach of “science” and “art” assists with transparency in the assignment process and enables improved talent management. We are working Talent Marketplace expansions into our enlisted force, joint assignments, and for advertising and filling 365-day extended deployments. We believe the increased transparency and improved member input will be a positive retention influence.

Having a lethal, agile and flexible force, capable of winning in any environment, goes beyond solely the overall size of the force. It also encompasses looking after Airmen's mental and physical wellbeing and ensuring we take care of their families so they can focus on the mission. Airmen must be able to withstand, recover, and grow in the face of stressors and changing demands.

Exceptional Family Member Programs

More than 34,000 Total Force Airmen have dependents enrolled in the Exceptional Family Member Program. Because retention of these skilled Airmen is critical to readiness, we are improving support to our program. We increased monthly respite care hours from 12 to 40 hours per child for more than 2.9K children. To help educate and provide information, we established a quarterly Facebook Live webcast connecting to more than 100K family members. We also formally trained 57 of 99 installation-level family support coordinators in FY18 and will train the remaining coordinators in FY19, all with an eye toward improving the quality of life and service among this population.

Child and Youth Programs

Airmen cannot be ready and effective if they are worried about their children. In FY19, with Congress' support, we increased Child and Youth funding by \$39.6M for a total of \$100.2M to help ensure we continuously recognize and resource the child and youth program's impact on readiness and retention. With this additional funding, we are (1) expanding child care for those needing childcare outside of normal duty hours, (2) providing fees to support 4,500 children annually who must use off-base child care, and (3) funding youth resiliency camps. The funding increase also includes 119 additional civilian child care positions across the Air Force, supplies, closed circuit television repairs, and national youth partnerships such as Boys and Girls Clubs and 4-H. We still have a gap between available on-base child care demand and capacity but have improved our ability to provide suitable alternate accommodation.

Recharge for Resiliency

Increasing the resiliency of our Airmen and families is another key component to having lethal and ready Airmen. Our Recharge for Resiliency Program, which provides Airmen and families

an outlet to decompress and adjust after returning home from deployment, continues to grow. In FY19, we expanded Recharge for Resiliency to support the Chief of Staff's initiative to improve squadron vitality. The expansion program provides unit leaders the ability to deliberately plan activities designed to improve unit cohesion, resilience and readiness using Morale, Welfare, and Recreation capabilities specifically linked to desired cohesion effects. We will phase this program in across the total force over the next several years. In FY19, installations began hiring staff to lead this resilience charge. Our first 40 of 77 Community Cohesion Coordinators (C3) received initial training in January and are now starting their local programs.

FOUNDATIONAL READINESS IMPERATIVES

The Air Force's core values--*Integrity First, Service before Self, and Excellence in All We Do*--are the foundation of all Airmen performance. They define our culture, who we are as a force, and are the basis of the Care Solutions we consider foundational readiness imperatives.

Personal Violence Prevention and Response

Interpersonal violence and suicide are counter to our culture and our core values. These actions negatively impact victims, the bereaved, and their units. As a result, unit cohesion, mission effectiveness, and ultimately Air Force readiness are threatened. We are deeply committed to the prevention of interpersonal violence on all fronts from sexual assault, child maltreatment, domestic violence, and workplace violence. We are dedicated to a strategy with the ultimate goal of never losing another Airman to suicide. Should these acts of violence occur despite our prevention efforts, we are committed to providing victims of violence the care they need as well as caring for individuals and units left grieving after a suicide death.

Suicide Prevention

Suicide is the leading cause of death for active duty Airmen. Suicide has devastating effects on individuals, families, units, communities, our readiness and our nation. Statistically, both individuals and units that experience the loss of an Airman to suicide are at higher risk for suicide themselves. While total force suicide rates in the Air Force have remained constant over the past 5 years, about 110 total force suicides per year, we are not satisfied. One suicide death is too many. The Air Force is dedicated to a comprehensive, leadership-driven strategy with the ultimate goal of supporting Airmen and their families early with a robust support network and never losing another Airman to suicide.

The Air Force is pursuing bold immediate, mid-term, and long-range suicide prevention initiatives for the total force that focus on connections between individuals, units and Air Force family; protections in environments, services and policies; detection of risk in individuals and units; and equipping total force and family members to mitigate risk and increase resilience. These initiatives highlight cutting edge suicide prevention efforts, such as computer-based learning for suicide risk detection, the most current suicide treatments, a dashboard with suicide prevention tools for leaders and time-based prevention, an initiative designed to separate someone who is thinking about committing suicide from the most lethal means (i.e. free volunteer storage of personally owned firearms). Taken together, we believe these innovations have the potential to decrease the number of Airmen who commit suicide.

We need leaders at all levels to help reinforce the notion that seeking help is a sign of strength and Airmen need not go it alone. One such effort is Task Force True North which increases connections and help-seeking in higher risk units. While suicide is a difficult and complex issue and requires complex solutions, it is preventable and the Air Force remains committed to achieving ZERO suicides.

Task Force True North

We are continuing our evaluation of Task Force True North at four bases, under a beta test for initiatives that bring resources closer to our Airmen and drive a culture that accepts, embraces, and normalizes help-seeking behavior. Through a comprehensive approach that includes embedding mental and physical health resources directly into units where our Airmen work, live, and interact, we believe we can improve readiness and optimize Airman performance by engaging our Airmen and their families early, increasing help seeking behavior and decreasing negative behavior outcomes. We continue to analyze data from our beta test and will be working to scale the successful approaches across the force.

Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR)

Sexual assault remains a serious national problem. It is a crime that negatively affects Airmen and their families, erodes unit trust and cohesion, and ultimately undermines the Air Force's lethality and mission success. It is counter to our core values and goes against our culture of dignity and respect. The Air Force remains steadfast in innovating, evolving, and strengthening our sexual assault prevention and response efforts, including refining and expanding access to victim advocacy services, engaging leadership, and holding offenders appropriately accountable. Any occurrence of sexual harassment and assault is corrosive to our ability to train the leaders of character that our Air Force and our nation need.

The Air Force is committed to advancing victim care throughout the Department of Defense. We continue to collaborate with the Department of Defense and our Sister Services on policies and resources that enhance victim support. Of note is the upcoming implementation of the Catch a Serial Offender Program (CATCH), offering victims who opt for a restricted report, an opportunity to provide information on the accused and/or incident for potential identification of serial offenders. Implementation of CATCH is expected Department-wide in 2019.

Last month, the Department provided Congress with the Annual Report on Sexual Harassment and Violence at the Military Service Academies, academic program year 2017-2018. As already discussed by the Superintendents and Service leadership, the most recent survey found the overall estimate of past-year prevalence of unwanted sexual contact increased for cadets and midshipmen compared to rates measured in 2016. At the Air Force Academy, sexual assault reports have gone down from 33 to 29 since the 2016-2017 report, while the estimated past-year prevalence of sexual assault against women increased from 11.2% to 15.1%. Estimated prevalence of sexual assault against men did not change statistically. The survey also showed that 46% of women at the Academy have experienced sexual harassment. These findings are unacceptable, and the fact that they exist despite many efforts is disheartening and frustrating. We must do more at both the Academy and throughout our Air Force to change the culture and eradicate this unacceptable behavior. These results are not reflective of the standards to which we hold ourselves, nor do they exemplify our core values. The overwhelming majority of our Academy cadets and the Airmen within the force adhere to our expectations for professional and ethical behavior. But for those who do not, there is no place for them in our Academies or our

Air Force. Again, the findings from this year's report are not acceptable. We will continue to search for solutions, increase our review of over a decade's worth of data, and make positive progress in this ever-changing mission space.

BUILDING OUR NATION'S AIR FORCE FASTER AND SMARTER

In this era of near-peer competition and the rapidly evolving technological and multi-domain environment in which the Air Force operates, we realize our Talent Management system, must also evolve to be more agile, responsive, transparent and effective at empowering and driving performance. These attributes are the bedrock for increasing lethality and developing exceptional leaders. They are also the filters we use to evaluate the effectiveness of new reforms or initiatives.

Performance Management

Hiring, developing, retaining and managing workforce talent is a top priority. We need agile, responsive military and civilian personnel management systems to ensure that the Air Force wins the war for top talent. Ultimately, Air Force readiness depends on having the right total force team — military and civilian — in place.

Enlisted

Over the last several years, we have evolved our enlisted performance system incorporating feedback from the field and garnering trends from industry. Our evolution has focused on making the system more agile, more transparent and simple, to focus on and drive performance as we strengthen the readiness and professionalism of our vital enlisted force. One recent example is our initiative to go to a "board only" process, removing the Weighted Airmen Promotion System (WAPS) test for promotion to the grades of Master Sergeant, Senior Master Sergeant, and Chief Master Sergeant. This change ensures duty performance is the most important factor in evaluating promotion to the next higher grade. Another significant policy allows senior noncommissioned officers who complete an associate's degree or "higher level degree from a nationally or regionally accredited academic institution" to be eligible for promotion and senior rater stratification or endorsement consideration. This adds agility for

our Airmen freeing them up to advance their skills and education in ways that best suit their needs and personal time.

Officer

Air Force success in carrying out the National Defense Strategy requires us to have an officer corps which can adapt, innovate, and demonstrate agility in dealing with today's complex security environment. The Air Force is committed to transforming the way we develop, promote and retain our Officer Corps in order to meet that task head-on. We appreciate the additional Defense Officer Personnel Management Act (DOPMA) authorities given to us in the FY19 National Defense Authorization Act. We are planning to utilize several, including "early promotion" and "lateral entry" to fill inventory gaps. We are also looking at incorporating other authorities such as promoting officers based on order of merit, permitting officers to opt out of promotion consideration, and alternative promotion for designated career fields as part of our overall talent management transformation. Our officer evaluation system has not seen significant changes since 1988 and our current Line of the Air Force promotion competitive category structure has not changed since the founding of our Air Force in 1947. We are currently working to make adjustments to the Line of the Air Force competitive category structure, including holding a recent mock board to explore options. This restructure, coupled with the increased flexibilities provided by Congress give us the ability to create more agile development paths and better match the officer inventory to actual requirements which is vital to increasing readiness and lethality.

Civilian

Another key component of our force are the more than 204,000 Department of the Air Force civilian employees stationed across the globe. The civilian workforce shares the same responsibility to our nation as the men and women in uniform. Working in over 600 occupations and professions, the civilian workforce underpins the Air Force. Civilian engineers work in research labs and social workers help children acclimate to new environments. Civilians are physicians treating Airmen and their families. They are cyber security experts on the front line guarding against hackers, police officers, aircraft mechanics, nuclear physicists, mathematicians, human resources professionals, electricians, and rocket scientists among many other occupations. At home and abroad, to include deploying to combat zones, our civilian members work shoulder

to shoulder with their military counterparts. Having a high quality force and being able to recruit and compete for top civilian talent is an essential aspect of our total force and critical to our readiness. As such, we are thankful for all the previously granted Congressional authorities for civilian hiring. They have recently enabled us to bring on talent in critical career fields much faster than before. However, legislative relief has resulted in 66 different civilian personnel systems within the Department of Defense, more than 60 classification systems, and more than 45 new hiring and related authorities since FY10. This complexity drives administrative burdens and costs. It forces the Air Force to focus too much on being compliant instead of focusing on winning the war for civilian talent. We are partnering with our Sister Services and the Department of Defense to identify legislative proposals which will enhance the civilian personnel system.

Digital Transformation of the Air Force Talent Management Portfolio

The Air Force has made great strides in modernizing our Talent Management Portfolio to provide Airmen a cutting edge digital experience. We have transitioned applications to our new cloud environment. This will allow us to consolidate 120 independent systems into eight cloud platforms. We have migrated all Talent Management applications to the cloud from the Langley Data Center and are scheduled to close the San Antonio Data Center in September 2019, sending over 30 systems into the cloud — two years ahead of schedule, saving money. We are the first in the Department of Defense to establish a rapid prototyping process for new human resource capabilities, allowing us to fast-track software development for the cloud using agile methods. We acquired OKTA for identity and access management enabling secure login using mobile devices without a Common Access Card (CAC) — another first in the Department of Defense. We will not stop until we empower our Airmen with a mobile user experience, with seamless access, transparent processes, self-service, and autonomous support.

Air Force Integrated Personnel and Pay System

The Air Force Integrated Personnel and Pay System (AFIPPS) will enhance our already fully operational personnel system for all three components, Active, Reserve and Guard, by integrating payroll. We are currently in the development phase of AFIPPS. Full development is on schedule to be completed in February 2020. This timeline will give the Air Force the opportunity to test the new system and train Airmen on the new procedures to ensure the

transition to AFIPPS will be seamless for the total force. In January 2021, the Air Force will have a fully integrated personnel and pay system, auditable and regulatory compliant, which will resolve existing pay issues Airmen experience today.

CONCLUSION

Resilient and ready Airmen, both military and civilian, are the bedrock of the Air Force's readiness and lethality. Your Air Force is evolving to *compete, deter, and win* with unmatched power through the air, space and cyber domains. We must ensure our Airmen have the resources, training and tools to meet these demands. We are committed to prioritizing and resourcing what is most important and look forward to partnering with Congress in our endeavors to protect and defend our great Nation. I thank you for your continued support of your Air Force — those in uniform, our civilian professionals and the families that support them.