

**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION
FOR APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR
2014 AND THE FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE
PROGRAM**

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 24, 2013

U.S. SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON PERSONNEL,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC.

**CONTINUATION OF TESTIMONY ON THE ACTIVE,
GUARD, RESERVE, AND CIVILIAN PERSONNEL PRO-
GRAMS**

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:10 a.m. in room SR-222, Russell Senate Office Building, Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Committee members present: Senators Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Ayotte, and Graham.

Majority staff members present: Jonathan D. Clark, counsel; Gabriella E. Fahrner, counsel; Gerald J. Leeling, general counsel.

Minority staff members present: Steven M. Barney, minority counsel; and Allen M. Edwards, professional staff member.

Staff assistant present: Jennifer R. Knowles.

Committee members' assistants present: Kathryn Parker, assistant to Senator Gillibrand; Brad Bowman, assistant to Senator Ayotte; Craig Abele, assistant to Senator Graham; and Charles Prosch, assistant to Senator Blunt.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND,
CHAIRMAN**

Senator GILLIBRAND. The subcommittee meets today to receive testimony from the Military Services on military and civilian personnel programs contained in the administration's national defense authorization request for fiscal year 2014 and the Future Years Defense Program.

With us today are the senior leaders responsible for military and civilian personnel matters in each of the Services. In addition to discussing their plans and programs for fiscal year 2014, we will also look forward to hearing about specific budget items relevant to our subcommittee's oversight responsibilities.

Your statements and testimony today are extremely important as we prepare to mark up the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014, and to find a way ahead with respect to the

Budget Control Act (BCA) and the effects that sequestration is having on our Nation's military.

Our witnesses today are the Honorable Thomas R. Lamont, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs; the Honorable Juan M. Garcia III, Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Manpower and Reserve Affairs; the Honorable Daniel B. Ginsberg, Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Manpower and Reserve Affairs; Lieutenant General Howard B. Bromberg, Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1, U.S. Army; Vice Admiral Scott R. Van Buskirk, Chief of Naval Personnel, U.S. Navy; Lieutenant General Robert E. Milstead, Jr., Deputy Commandant for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, U.S. Marine Corps; and Lieutenant General Darrell D. Jones, Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower, Personnel and Services in the U.S. Air Force.

As I stated at our oversight hearing last week, there is no greater responsibility for Congress and military leaders than to support our courageous and dedicated servicemembers, their families, and the civilian employees who are a vital component of the military team. For more than a decade, Congress has ensured that our military personnel receive a pay raise that meets or exceeds the increase in private sector wages. We have also been able to substantially enhance health care benefits, though I would like to see us expand the benefit further to include coverage for autism therapy for all TRICARE beneficiaries.

However, this subcommittee faces a very clear challenge this year as we address the need to control the increasing costs of personnel programs. I am deeply committed and concerned about the rising costs of health care for both our Active Duty and retirees, and I believe we need to consider all other options before breaking faith with our servicemembers on this.

This challenge is made more difficult by the significant budgetary and programmatic pressures imposed by sequestration under the BCA. As the result of sequestration, the Department has told us that it already has taken extraordinary measures to cope with the across-the-board cuts of nearly 8 percent. The President's budget request for fiscal year 2014 does not account for any sequester of funding for that fiscal year, which, if it remains in effect, would reduce the Department's budget by yet another \$52 billion, further affecting morale and military readiness.

While military personnel pay accounts are exempt from sequestration, the funding to pay for the Department of Defense (DOD) civilian employees, family support programs, health care claims, and training, among other things, are not. I am particularly concerned about the effects that possible furloughs are already having on the morale of DOD's 800,000 civilian employees who are an integral component to the military's total force in crucial fields, such as cyber security and health care. I worry that breaking our commitment to our civilian workforce in this way will have devastating effects, not only on the morale, but the future propensity to continue their civil service, but on the critical services and support programs for servicemembers and their families, including DOD schools, child care centers, and access to health care.

Because of the tenuous budget environment, difficult choices had to be made by the President, DOD leadership, and the Services.

The subcommittee intends to carefully examine each of them as we begin consideration of the annual defense bill.

As you know by now, I am deeply committed to addressing the scourge of sexual assault of our men and women in uniform. At the hearing with the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) officials, I also discussed several other personnel issues that are important to me as we begin this budget cycle, in particular, hazing, DOD's proposed health care fee increases, and the provision of benefits to same sex partners.

The Army and Marine Corps continue to draw down their forces. The Army requested fiscal year 2014 Active Duty end strength of 520,000. That is 32,000 below the fiscal year 2013 authorized level. Moreover, we know that the Army will finish this fiscal year with 530,000 soldiers, primarily because of success in reducing the backlog of its wounded soldiers processing out of the military and back into civilian life, which is a good story.

Finally, I and the rest of Congress remain extremely troubled about the number of servicemembers who are committing suicide, both Active Duty and Reserve component members. Another facet to this issue that was brought to our attention at last week's hearing is the military dependent suicides, and whether the Services are tracking or even at this point whether they have the capability of tracking those tragic deaths.

I look forward to hearing about each of these issues from the Service perspective. We want to hear in your views what you believe your Service is doing well, what challenges remain, and how Congress can help so that we can best provide for our servicemembers, civilians, retirees, and families.

Now I would like to give the floor to Senator Graham.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR LINDSEY GRAHAM

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you, Madam Chairman. It has been a pleasure working with you on the subcommittee. This is, I think, the best one to have because we are in charge of the men and women who serve and their families. This is really a wonderful opportunity to make sure that Congress listens and we get it right.

Two areas: the sustainability of health care costs. They are just unsustainable. We are going to have to do something about TRICARE. We are going to have to make it more sustainable for those who are on it and for the military's budget. Second, sequestration seems to me one of the most ill-conceived ideas in a place that is known for ill-conceived ideas. That is pretty impressive. We can maybe top the list here.

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs said that sequestration was affecting morale, and it is detrimental to morale. So could you please focus on that? Tell us from a military personnel/family point of view what are we doing to our men and women in uniform and their families under sequestration.

Thank you all for your service.

Senator GILLIBRAND. In the interest of time, I will be calling only on the Assistant Secretaries to provide oral statements. I ask that each of you keep your oral statements to 3 to 5 minutes in length. Your complete prepared statements will be included in the record.

Following the opening statements, we will limit our questions to 7 minutes per round.

I am going to call on our witnesses by Service, starting with the Army. Mr. Lamont?

STATEMENT OF HON. THOMAS R. LAMONT, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE ARMY FOR MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS

Mr. LAMONT. Thank you. Chairman Gillibrand, Senator Graham, distinguished members of this committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am honored to represent the 1.1 million men and women serving in the U.S. Army in uniform, and our more than 260,000 army civilians.

This combat seasoned force has performed superbly over more than a decade of war and now faces the difficult task of reducing strength during this time of fiscal constraint. We will do this in a careful and deliberate manner, ensuring the future of the All-Volunteer Force while maintaining the best army in the world.

Our challenge is to ensure that we balance the congressional mandate, which I quote, "to fulfill the current and future operational requirements of combat and commands," with the need to maintain our All-Volunteer Force. We recognize our greatest moral obligation is to ensure that our Nation's sons and daughters are fully prepared and trained when called on to risk their lives for the defense of freedom, and then to ensure the service and capabilities exist to care for these brave Americans.

As we manage constrained resources, we look to ensure that soldier-focused programs, such as recruiting, compensation, educational opportunities, Sexual Harassment Assault Response and Prevention, suicide prevention, and transition assistance are balanced with the requirement to train and equip our Army to ensure its success on today's complex battlefields. We must ensure that however large the Army may be, we maintain its readiness, even as we sustain the All-Volunteer Force.

To ensure a force of the highest quality soldiers, the Army must likewise balance recruitment, retention, promotions, voluntary and involuntary separations, and natural losses. To assist our soldiers and civilians who will transition to employment in the private sector, we must equip them with the skills and knowledge to continue their professional growth. We must continue to keep faith with the soldiers and family members who sacrificed so much for our country.

We continue to work with the Veterans Administration (VA) to streamline the disability system and improve coordination for health care, compensation, and benefits for our medically-separated and retired soldiers. The Army must also maintain its focus on assisting our soldiers and family members struggling with depression, substance abuse, and other health of the force issues.

The American soldier is the centerpiece of everything we do in the Army. Our efforts must remain focused on the preservation of our most precious resource: our people. I can assure you that your Army will continue to meet the Nation's needs whenever and wherever it is called to serve.

Chairman Gillibrand, Senator Graham, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for your support, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared joint statement of Mr. Lamont and Lieutenant General Bromberg follows:]

JOINT PREPARED STATEMENT BY HON. THOMAS R. LAMONT AND LTG HOWARD B. BROMBERG, USA

INTRODUCTION

Chairman Gillibrand, Senator Graham, distinguished members of this subcommittee, we thank you for the opportunity to appear before you on behalf of America's Army. The U.S. Army is a values-based organization that exists to serve the American people, to defend the Nation, to protect vital national interests, and to fulfill national military responsibilities. We are now poised to execute a historic drawdown of both our military and civilian personnel, and we are proposing to do it in a deliberate, responsible, and careful manner. Thousands of individuals will transition out of military and civil service and deserve quality transition assistance.

While the future Army will be smaller, the Army is implementing a number of changes in force structure and other capabilities to ensure it remains the best led, best trained and best equipped land force in the world today and in the future. Our soldiers have performed superbly during more than a decade of war, displaying the values, character and competence that make our Army second to none. We must not waver on our commitment to support all those who have served with courage, pride, and honor.

Thank you for your steadfast commitment to ensuring that the needs of our soldiers, their families, and our civilian workforce are met by supporting our personnel initiatives to ensure the sustainment and well being of our All-Volunteer Force.

STRATEGIC OVERVIEW

The Army has been in a state of continuous war for nearly 12 years—the longest in our Nation's history. More than 4,800 soldiers have given their lives on behalf of this Nation. Today we have more than 81,000 soldiers committed to operations around the world with approximately 58,000 in Afghanistan. Nearly 1.5 million soldiers have deployed and more than half a million have deployed multiple times—some as many as six times. Additionally, Army civilians shoulder a majority of the Generating Force mission, and 30,000 civilians have deployed into harm's way. Our soldiers, civilians, and families remain vital to the strength of our Nation.

Now we will transition to a smaller force, while continuing to remain vigilant of new threats and prepare for new capabilities and requirements. To maintain an All-Volunteer Force of the highest quality soldiers and achieve our end-strength goal, the Army must responsibly balance force shaping across accessions, retention, promotions, voluntary and involuntary separations, and natural losses. We will leverage the Army Total Force Policy, for full integration of our Active and Reserve components, maximizing each component's strengths, in order to continue accomplishing our mission in a time of fiscal constraints. We will expand opportunities to women in the Army by opening up previously closed positions and career paths. We will ensure quality assistance to our soldiers and civilians who transition from their military and civil service careers to employment in the private sector.

We are currently working with the Veterans Administration to streamline the disability system and improve coordination for health care, compensation, and benefits for our medically separated and retired soldiers. The Army also continues to focus on assisting our soldiers and family members struggling with depression, substance abuse, and other Health of the Force issues. This year we have implemented "Ready and Resilient," a new comprehensive campaign—designed to enhance individual and collective resilience and improve readiness.

The American soldier is the centerpiece of everything we do in the Army. Our efforts must remain focused on the preservation of our most precious resource, our people.

DRAWDOWN/END STRENGTH

In keeping with the National Defense Strategy, the Army is building our future force to meet the Nation's requirements. The Army is reducing its Active component end strength to 490,000 soldiers by fiscal year 2017. The Army has already reduced the additional temporary end strength increase of 22,000 soldiers, approved in 2009

by the Secretary of Defense, and is on target to be at an Active component end strength of 530,000 by the end of fiscal year 2013. In fiscal year 2014, the Army will begin to take further steps to achieve the end state force of 490,000 by fiscal year 2017.

Based on Total Army Analysis of future requirements, the force structure effective in fiscal year 2017 requires an additional decrease of approximately 5,700 enlisted soldiers and 6,900 officers beyond our current rate of attrition over this same period. Our projected drawdown ramp allows for funding 490,000 of end strength in the base budget in fiscal year 2014 and beyond, with all other end strength resourced with Overseas Contingency Operations funding. This ramp allows for a steady enlisted annual accession mission of about 68,000 and an Active Army Competitive Category officer mission of about 4,600. Our strength projections also incorporates additional soldier inventory to mitigate the impact of nondeployable soldiers in the Integrated Disability Evaluation System. Temporary end strength Army medical is present in fiscal year 2013 and fiscal year 2014 and fully eliminated by the end of fiscal year 2015.

To maintain the highest quality All-Volunteer Army, we will execute the upcoming force reductions in a responsible and targeted fashion while maintaining a ready force. To achieve planned end strength reductions, the Army expects to use various types of separation authorities across all elements of the force (Officer and Enlisted). The National Defense Authorization Acts for Fiscal Year 2012 and Fiscal Year 2013 provided several incentive authorities to help the Army shape the force over the drawdown period, along with the flexibility to apply them to meet specific grade and skill requirements. Under normal loss rates, the Army will not be able to reach its end strength goal over the fiscal year 2013–fiscal year 2017 period. There is no single force shaping method among the choices of accessions, retention and separations that will achieve the Army's end strength goals, and there will be good soldiers who we cannot retain. Reduced accession levels, promotion selectivity and tightened retention standards will help shape our force naturally. Through these processes, we expect to lose some combat-seasoned soldiers and leaders, but our focus will be on retaining the best individuals in the right grades and skills. As soldiers depart our active duty formations, the Army is committed to assisting them and their families as they transition to the Army Reserve, National Guard, or civilian life.

RECRUITING AND RETENTION (OFFICER AND ENLISTED)

Our soldiers are the Army's most important resource, and our ability to meet the challenges of the current and future operational environment depends on our ability to sustain the All-Volunteer Force. Even as we drawdown the Army, we must continue to bring high quality men and women into the force to grow our future leaders. We must also retain the most talented soldiers with the experience and skills necessary to meet our future needs.

Despite the challenges of an ongoing conflict, future drawdown plans, and budgetary constraints, the active Army and the Army Reserve once again exceeded their enlisted retention missions in fiscal year 2012. Focusing on required grades and skills, the Army National Guard reduced their retention mission in fiscal year 2012 to avoid exceeding their congressionally mandated end strength limits. The active component achieved its fiscal year 2012 recruiting mission and accessed over 96 percent high school diploma graduates, with the lowest number of waivers and test category IV enlistments ever. The Total Army's percentage of new enlisted soldiers with a high school diploma was well above historic rates. Additionally, the Army achieved over 99 percent Military Occupational Specialty requirements. In addition, recruits scoring 50–99 percent on the Armed Forces Qualification Test exceeded the DOD standard of 60 percent, while recruits who scored in the lower range (30 percent and below) were at a record low in fiscal year 2012. We are currently on track to achieve the fiscal year 2013 recruiting mission, with the exception of the U.S. Army Reserve mission. However, a tougher recruiting environment and impacts of sequestration have already caused a decline in the fiscal year 2014 entry pool.

Upcoming reductions in Army operating budgets will likely have significant impact on recruiting operations. While the Army can mitigate many of the fiscal constraints by focusing cuts to preserve operational capabilities at the tactical level, the impact of reductions across multiple funding lines poses the greatest threat to the Army's ability to sustain the All-Volunteer Force.

In fiscal year 2012, Combined Active Army (AC) and Army Reserve component (RC) enlistment and reenlistment incentives totaled slightly over \$1.03 billion compared to \$1.23 billion in fiscal year 2011. Entering fiscal year 2013, the combined Active and Reserve components will spend slightly over \$1.009 billion: AC recruiting (\$237 million), AC retention (\$237 million); Army National Guard recruiting and re-

tention (\$348 million); USAR recruiting and retention (\$187 million). A large part of the fiscal year 2013 incentives budget is a result of obligations for enlistment bonuses occurring from fiscal years 2008–2011. As a result of lower recruiting missions and prior year success, the percentage of Army recruits receiving a bonus dropped from over 62 percent of all recruits in fiscal year 2009 to 3 percent in fiscal year 2013. Enlistment and reenlistment bonuses are only used to incentivize longer-term enlistments in a small percentage of critical skills. These incentives ensure the success of the total Army recruiting and retention missions and shape the force to meet specific grade and skill requirements. The amount budgeted for contractual payments is anticipated to decrease until at least fiscal year 2015.

Recruiting is expected to be more difficult in fiscal year 2014. The Army and the Nation still face challenges such as rising obesity rates as we recruit the All-Volunteer Force. In today's environment, fewer than one in four 17- to 24-year-olds are eligible to serve in the Army without a waiver. One in five youths age 12–19 are currently overweight, compared to 1 in 20 in the 1960s, and this trend is projected to grow to one in four by 2015. More than 20 percent of high school students fail to graduate, a critical milestone in becoming competitive to serve in highly skilled positions.

In fiscal year 2012, the Active Army reenlisted 64,012 soldiers. The Army Reserve reenlisted 14,377 soldiers, exceeding their annual goal by 9 percent. The Army National Guard fell short of their mission, achieving 93 percent of their assigned mission, reenlisting 49,272 soldiers, again purposely under producing to avoid exceeding end strength limits.

During fiscal year 2012 and into fiscal year 2013, retention bonuses were carefully monitored and adjusted to ensure that the Army met its retention goals while remaining fiscally responsible. During fiscal year 2013, the Active component retention program is on track to successfully retain a quality force that supports Army end strength and readiness requirements. As we posture for future reductions in the size of our force, the Army is using lessons learned from past reductions to ensure that today's decisions maintain the viability of tomorrow's All-Volunteer Force. Retention policies will emphasize retention of soldiers with high potential coupled with appropriate force alignment and structure.

TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Our Nation entrusts its best and brightest to the Army to support the All-Volunteer Force. Therefore, the Army has a responsibility to help our transitioning personnel prepare for post-active duty life by providing the training and tools to enable their success. We must help them use their Army training, education and experience to successfully return to civilian life and to become gainfully employed. With thousands of soldiers possessing diverse skills, and scheduled to depart over the next few years, the Nation has a motivated, disciplined and work-ready force to employ. The redesigned Transition Assistance Program (TAP)—entitled “Transition GPS” (Goals, Plans, Succeed)—will assist our soldiers in understanding and communicating what great skills and abilities they do bring to our Nation's workforce. To be successful in their transition, we must provide the assistance, curriculum, training, skills building and tools our members need so they are prepared and most importantly, career ready to achieve their goals in civilian life. Transition GPS includes the following elements:

- **Pre-Separation Assessment and Individual Counseling:** Through the new transition program, separating servicemembers will have a one-on-one counseling session to discuss their transition needs and goals. Each servicemember will develop an Individual Transition Plan that documents their personal transition, as well as the deliverables they must attain to meet the new transition program's Career Readiness Standards.
- **5-Day Core Curriculum:** The 5-day Transition GPS Core Curriculum will include a financial planning seminar, a workshop offered by the Department of Veterans Affairs on the available veterans' benefits, and a redesigned employment workshop offered by the Department of Labor. Transitioning servicemembers will also undertake a Military Occupational Code Crosswalk to translate their military skills, training, and experience into civilian occupations and credentials.
- **Career-Specific Additional Curriculum:** In addition to completing the Transition GPS Core Curriculum, transitioning servicemembers will also have the option of participating in a series of 2 day tailored tracks within the Transition GPS curriculum: (1) an Education track, for those pursuing college education; (2) a Technical Training track, for those seeking to attend

technical school or earn a credential; and (3) an Entrepreneurship track, for those wanting to start a business.

- **CAPSTONE Event:** At least 90 days before their separation from Military Service, servicemembers will participate in a CAPSTONE event, which will verify that transitioning servicemembers completed the Transition GPS curriculum and achieved Career Readiness Standards. Servicemembers who require additional assistance will be referred to additional or remedial training opportunities. In addition, through the CAPSTONE event, all servicemembers will be offered a “warm handover” to government agencies and organizations that will be able to provide them continued benefits, services, and support as veterans.
- **Military Life Cycle Transition Model:** The new transition program will incorporate career readiness and transition preparation into the entire span of a servicemember’s career. In the past, transition and preparation for the civilian workforce occurred late in a servicemember’s lifecycle—near the point of separation. Under this new program, these concepts will be incorporated earlier as a way to ensure that the counseling, assessments, and access to resources to build skills or credentials occur at earlier stages.

In December 2011, the Army published an execution order for transition policy which changed our program to a “Commander’s program” to ensure soldiers have their commander’s support and take advantage of transition services. We have established a Transition Strategic Outreach Office to synchronize job connection efforts between soldiers and industry. In November 2012, the Army implemented the “Veterans’ Opportunity to Work (VOW) to Hire Heroes Act” and has begun efforts to implement recommendations from the Veterans’ Employment Initiative Task Force. As part of this effort, the Army increased its ACAP counselor support within the Warrior Transition Command from 30 to 41 counselors. Through the revamped Transition Assistance Program, the Army is working to maximize job opportunities by leveraging private industry contacts and local governments to remove barriers to job-related licenses and certifications wherever possible.

To support these recent changes in legislation and policy, we reinforced the Army Career and Alumni Program (ACAP) and demobilization platforms with a total of nearly 700 contractors and civilian personnel comprised of transition and finance counselors, administrative support staff, and information technology support team. We established a new ACAP center in Kuwait. We have created 25 regionally-located transition support teams to support the USAR and ARNG in the soldiers’ hometowns. We plan to add 65 education counselors at the end of fiscal year 2013. The legislative and policy mandates present a 300 percent increase in participation and focus our program on compliance.

CIVILIAN WORKFORCE/END STRENGTH

Consistent with the reductions of our authorized end strength for active duty and the Army National Guard, we expect to reduce the civilian workforce from 272,000 to 255,000 by the end of fiscal year 2017. The rate of reductions for the civilian workforce will be based on the understanding that it will take 2–3 years after our troops redeploy from Afghanistan to adequately reset our personnel, families, and equipment.

To help mitigate the Army’s budget execution risks, on January 22, 2013, a hiring freeze went into effect. The memorandum that established the freeze also directed commanders to terminate temporary employees and to let the appointments of term employees lapse upon the expiration of their current appointments. To date, we have released over 1,800 temporary and term employees and expect to release a total of 3,100 by the end of this fiscal year.

Recognizing the inevitable risks of decreased civilian employee productivity and morale, we may need to furlough up to 250,000 civilian employees this fiscal year. In addition to the hardship the pay loss poses to our dedicated workforce, this furlough will have an immediate trickle-down effect as the majority of these civilians are located throughout the United States on our posts and stations, and their spending directly impacts local economies and contributes towards State and local taxes. Although we will endeavor to protect critical services as much as possible, any furlough will have an immediate impact on important Army services.

IMPLEMENTING THE ARMY TOTAL FORCE POLICY

Approved by the Secretary of the Army in September 2012, the Army Total Force Policy is an important milestone in our Army’s history because it lays out a roadmap for the full integration of our Active and Reserve component forces. The Active Army, the Army National Guard (ARNG), and the Army Reserve (USAR) each serve

vital roles in our National Security Strategy, and it is imperative that we use each component's strengths to accomplish the Army's missions in a time of fiscal constraint. The essence of the Total Force Policy is to manage risks by maintaining appropriate levels of readiness while balancing immediate response capabilities with operational and strategic depth.

The Total Force Policy establishes formal guidance for integrating the diverse regulations that govern how the Army mans, trains, equips, and sustains Active Army, Army National Guard, and Army Reserve Forces. To employ Active and Reserve component forces most efficiently, the Army will establish common standards for unit training and readiness validation; a common deployment period policy; standard procedures for mobilizing and deploying Reserve component forces using new activation authorities under title 10, 12304b, and will complete fielding of the Integrated Pay and Personnel System. The Army Total Force Policy will reshape the Army and ensure the Total Force provides the Nation the best balance of readiness and depth.

WOMEN IN THE ARMY

On January 24, 2013, the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) eliminated the Direct Ground Combat Assignment Rule. While this resulted in all positions being opened to women, the Army must notify Congress through the CJCS and Office of the Secretary of Defense and complete the congressional notification period prior to recruiting, reclassifying or assigning women to these positions. There are significant documentation requirements as the Army proposes opening further positions and completes the required validation of occupational standards prior to January 1, 2016.

Female soldiers have demonstrated their ability to excel in combat over the last 10 years. The Army is committed to ensuring all soldiers have career opportunities that enable them to reach their highest potential without regard to gender. The expansion of opportunities for women will improve overall Army capability and readiness. With the removal of the collocation restrictions in fiscal year 2012, this enabled the Army to open an additional 13,139 positions and 6 additional military occupational specialties previously closed to women. Women may now serve in leadership positions previously closed to them; allowing them to be competitive with their male peers as they gain new experiences.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

The diversity of our Army is a continuous source of strength as we recruit soldiers and Army civilians from an increasingly diverse America. We must take full advantage of opportunities to bring new ideas and expanded capabilities to the mission by reaching out to diverse communities and building relationships that will support the Army's human resource requirements. To this end, we have developed and fully implemented a strategy for conducting outreach activities to our Nation's diverse communities on an Army-wide basis. In the first year of execution, 9 commands and the Army Staff coordinated 35 outreach events for the Total Army. We will continue to build on this strategy in the future.

Our ability to be inclusive of the Nation's diverse citizenry while sustaining a high performance Army requires the engagement of senior leaders and continuous diversity education throughout the Force. The Army Diversity Roadmap outlines a unique approach to an enterprise-wide diversity and inclusion initiative over the coming years and guides our actions in the areas of leadership, people, structure and resources, training and education, and inclusive work environments. Within the Roadmap, we are implementing an intra-Army council of senior leaders to advise the Secretary and provide a forum for collaboration and sharing ideas in connection with implementation of the Army Diversity Roadmap and execution of components of our strategy. In addition, the Council will facilitate delivering the diversity and inclusion message throughout the Army, while receiving direct feedback from senior leaders on recommended priorities and areas of emphasis.

Our initial diversity training and education efforts have focused on practitioners who support our commanders and other leaders. We continue to ensure high quality initial training for Military Equal Opportunity and Equal Employment Opportunity professionals. Over the past 4 years, over 600 general officers and civilian senior executives have completed a diversity education program that emphasizes inclusive leadership, self-awareness, leading change, and other topics that ensure a successful diversity and inclusion strategy for the Army. In this program senior leaders are presented with challenges and opportunities and participate in experiential exercises that enhance understanding and perspective.

We will continue to invest in diversity education and inclusive leadership by seamlessly integrating the training for senior leaders into their initial leader development programs. Ultimately, we will also reach every soldier and Army civilian through the Army's institutional professional development system.

We must position the Army to recruit, develop and retain the most talented people our Nation has to offer. Critical to our global mission is an understanding of the cultures, languages and social norms of the people in locations where we deploy as well as in our own ranks. This diversity and inclusion initiative is integral to the Army's long-term vision for human capital and our understanding of the human dimension of leadership and global engagements.

THE ARMY DISABILITY EVALUATION SYSTEM

Fiscal year 2012 was the first full year in which the Army used the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES) Army-wide. Under IDES, the Department of Defense (DOD) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) use a single set of general and specialty medical examinations and a single-source disability rating to execute their respective responsibilities. This results in more consistent, less contentious evaluations, faster fitness determinations, and timely benefits delivery for our medically retired or separated soldiers. As a result, the VA can deliver benefits in the shortest period allowed by law following discharge, thus reducing the "benefit gap" that previously existed under the legacy process. IDES also provides assistance to soldiers as they transition from the military to the services and benefits the VA offers, and has eliminated many of the sequential and duplicative processes found in our respective legacy systems.

The IDES has been strategically successful in reducing the post-separation benefit gap; however expansion of IDES across the Army has been challenging. Historically, several factors have hindered the processing of soldiers through the IDES, including: ineffective governance structure, inadequate capacity to meet demands, lack of standardization, and a lack of compliance with established policies and guidance.

Over the last year, the Army has devoted an extraordinary amount of time, attention, resources, and leadership to improve the IDES. In addition to adding staff to our Medical and Physical Evaluation Boards to support current operational demands, the VA and the Army have implemented a number of initiatives to improve the performance of IDES. These improvements have resulted in the following:

- Since February 2012, the Army has reduced the number of cases over 400 days by 24 percent.
- Over the last year, the Army increased its capacity from 1,200 to 3,000 cases per month. Consequently, Medical Evaluation Board (MEB) output has exceeded input for the last 8 months, and the MEDCOM reduced its inventory of MEB from over 5,000 to 2,300 cases.
- MEB output has exceeded input for the last 8 months; the average days to complete the MEB Phase have improved 46 percent from 146 days in March 2012 to 112 days at the end of February 2013. Time to complete the Narrative Summary (NARSUM) has improved from 51 days in March 2012 to 22 days in February 2013 (56 percent improvement).
- The Physical Evaluation Boards (PEBs) achieved DOD's 120-day goal for the last 4 months. The average number of days to complete the PEB Phase has also decreased from 126 days in March 2012 to 104 days at the end of February 2013, an 18 percent improvement.

Soldiers starting IDES today will complete the process in less than 295 days. With the added capacity and process improvements in place, the Army expects to meet the DOD's goal of completing 70 percent of AC cases in 295 days and RC cases in 305 days by January 2014. More importantly, we remain committed to making this process more accessible to our soldiers and their families.

READY AND RESILIENT CAMPAIGN

For the Army to continue to improve, and increase capability and performance, we must continue to build resilience in our total force. We have a historic opportunity to understand the lessons of the last 12 years and make our force even stronger. Thus on February 4, 2013, the Secretary of the Army issued a Directive requiring the Army to move forward with its Ready and Resilient Campaign (R2C) plan. The R2C will address the challenges that stress the Force, and integrate and synchronize the multiple efforts and programs designed to improve the readiness and resilience of soldiers (Active, Reserve, and National Guard), Army civilians, and their families.

The R2C is a far-reaching, comprehensive campaign, designed to enhance individual and collective resilience and improve readiness. This initiative will integrate

and synchronize existing and emerging Army programs that focus on improving physical, psychological and emotional health. The goal is to ensure that individuals understand and have access to effective programs and feel empowered to seek help if and when they need it; free from stigma related barriers.

The success of the Ready and Resilient Campaign depends on commanders and leaders at all levels acting with unity of effort and emphasizing the campaign's importance to sustaining Army readiness in the future. This campaign will guide the Army's efforts to build and maintain resilience across the Total Army to improve unit readiness and further reinforce the Army Profession. The Ready and Resilient Campaign Execution Order (EXORD) will follow the Campaign Plan with specific tasks and details for the execution of the campaign. We expect every leader to fully support the campaign by incorporating resilience training into all educational and professional development programs. Soldiers of all ranks must practice the skills that build resilience as part of our collective effort to build a strong Army team. Success will come from a cultural change in the Army by directly linking personal resilience to readiness and emphasizing the responsibility of personnel at all levels to build and maintain resilience.

HEALTH PROMOTION RISK REDUCTION AND SUICIDE PREVENTION

The Army continues to institute a multi-disciplinary, holistic approach to readiness and resilience and suicide prevention. Increased emphasis remains on developing and implementing targeted training programs as well as funding for support programs that impact the entire Army Family. This approach is also reflected in the various senior leader forums that are conducted throughout the Army: the Army Vice Chief of Staff-led Senior Suicide Review Group; the Health Promotion Risk Reduction Council; and the Community Health Promotion Councils at posts, camps, and stations.

Key elements of the Army's approach are: (1) Prompt access by soldiers to quality behavioral health care; (2) Multi-point screening and documentation of mild Traumatic Brain Injuries/Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders; (3) Improved leader and soldier awareness of high-risk behavior and intervention programs; and (4) Increased emphasis on programs that support Total Force (soldiers, Army civilians, and family members) readiness and resilience.

The Army had 324 potential suicides during 2012—the highest annual total on record. Of those, 184 deaths occurred within the AC and RC (Army National Guard [ARNG]/U.S. Army Reserve [USAR]) on Active Duty. This total exceeds the previous Active Duty high of 166 in 2009 and 2011. The RC not on Active Duty total of 140 is the second highest on record, exceeded only by the 2010 not on Active Duty total of 146. While most Army suicides continue to be among junior enlisted soldiers, the number of suicides by noncommissioned officers has increased over each of the last 3 years. By far, most Army suicides were in the 21–30 age range, a trend that held each year from 2010 to 2012.

In November 2012, the Army published the “2020 Army Strategy for Suicide Prevention” as Annex C of the “Headquarters Department of the Army (HQDA) EXORD 037–13, Ready and Resilient Quick Wins.” It is deliberately and closely synchronized with the “2012 National Strategy for Suicide Prevention” in order to promote coordinated implementation. It features four major lines of Effort: (1) Healthy and Empowered Individuals, Families, and Communities-Prevention; (2) Clinical and Community Support Services—Intervention; (3) Treatment and Recovery Services—Postvention; and (4) Surveillance, Research, and Evaluation. The references to Prevention, Intervention and Postvention tie the 2020 Army Strategy back to extensive work done over many preceding years, while at the same time it presents a forward-looking way-ahead in step with the National Strategy.

ARMY SUBSTANCE ABUSE PROGRAM

The Army Substance Abuse Program (ASAP) is a commander's program that uses prevention, education, deterrence, detection, and rehabilitation, to reduce and eliminate alcohol and drug abuse. It is based on the expectations of readiness and personal responsibility.

In March 2010, the Army conducted a counselor requirements analysis based on each installation's average daily client census with a ratio of one counselor for 30 patients. Patient caseload was as high as 60 patients per counselor at some installations. The Army has shifted to a 1:30 ratio as an acceptable ratio based on literature and counselor input. Applying this ratio yielded a requirement of 563 counselors assuming a 20 percent growth in number of patients over a 5 year period.

An Army priority in this area includes the hiring of more counselors. There is a finite pool of qualified substance abuse counselors nationwide and the Army is com-

peting for this scarce talent with private industry, the Veteran's Administration and State and local governments. As of March 20, 2013, the Army has hired 436 of the 563 counselors needed. The Army is increasing the use of recruiting, relocation, and student loan reimbursement incentives to attract more qualified candidates, and is developing a ASAP Counselor Internship Program which will allow students with Master's degrees to work in a supervised internship for up to 2 years as they obtain their licenses and substance abuse counselor certifications.

The Confidential Alcohol Treatment and Education Pilot began in July 2009 and offers confidential alcohol treatment and education to eligible soldiers. This pilot was initially offered at Fort Lewis, Fort Richardson, and Schofield Barracks. The Secretary of the Army directed that the pilot be expanded to include Forts Carson, Riley, and Leonard Wood with successful treatment outcomes at these sites.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT/ASSAULT RESPONSE AND PREVENTION PROGRAM

Over the last year, the Army made great strides to institutionalize our Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP) Program to enable Army readiness, combat sexual violence and reinforce the Army's commitment to create a climate where soldiers live the Army Values, thereby eliminating sexual assault and sexual harassment.

As we assess our efforts, results from our recent Operational Troop Survey indicate a significant increase (28 percent in 2009 to 42 percent in 2012) of female soldier survey respondents who indicated they experienced a sexual assault and reported the crime. This increase in soldiers propensity to report this crime is critical to ensure commanders can provide support to survivors, take appropriate action against offenders, and effectively address command safety issues.

The Army's goal is to eliminate sexual violence through cultural change, thereby, creating a professional climate where every member of the Army family (soldiers, civilians, and family members) trusts their leaders to treat them with dignity and respect. The Army is aggressively pursuing this goal through the integration of policies, training, communication and a unity-of-command approach to our sexual harassment and sexual assault response and prevention efforts.

Highly trained SHARP staff are key to achieving SHARP goals. The Army trained approximately 19,000 command-selected program personnel on a prevention-focused 80-hour program certification course. The Army is institutionalizing this training at the command level by establishing 73 full-time SHARP 80-hour certification course trainer positions within our Active and Reserve components. The Army is aggressively pursuing DOD certification of more than 10,000 SHARP personnel by the end of fiscal year 2013.

The Army also continues to expand our SHARP Life-Cycle Training. The training is designed to improve the capabilities of our force to address sexual assault at every level of career progression.

While the primary objective is prevention, when an incident occurs, the Army is committed to providing the best possible support and protection of the survivor through our advocacy efforts. In 2012, the Army implemented the requirement to have two full-time program personnel to serve as Sexual Assault Response Coordinators (SARC) and Victim Advocates (VA) at brigade and equivalent units. To institutionalize these efforts, the Army is resourcing 829 military and civilian full-time SARC and VA positions at AC/RC brigade and equivalent units and thousands of collateral positions at battalions and below.

In 2012, the Army began executing its executive agent role to train military investigators/prosecutors from all Services at the U.S. Army Military Police School 80-hour Special Victim Unit Investigation Course. The course includes the groundbreaking Forensic Experiential Trauma Interview technique developed by the Army. This interviewing technique reduces the survivor's risk of re-traumatization during interviews and produces stronger case evidence.

DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL REPEAL/EXTENDING BENEFITS TO SAME SEX PARTNERS

The Army, in coordination with the DOD, is proceeding with the planning necessary to implement the extension of benefits to same sex domestic partners.

With the repeal of "Don't Ask Don't Tell," discrimination based on sexual orientation no longer has a place in the military. All soldiers who serve our Nation deserve to be treated with equal dignity and respect. As such, on February 11, 2013, the Secretary of Defense, directed the Services to develop plans to extend family member and dependent benefits that can be lawfully provided to the same-sex domestic partners of military servicemembers and their children.

These 22 family member and dependent benefits identified by the Joint Benefits Review Working Group require policy revisions, training, and technical upgrades to

our automated personnel identification system. However, the Army will be ready to make these benefits available to same-sex domestic partners by August 31, 2013 as directed by the Secretary of Defense.

While our work is focused on changing our policies and practices in accordance with current law to ensure fair and equal treatment of all our members and their families, we will ensure we implement this change in the same disciplined manner that has characterized the Army's service for the past 237 years.

CONGRESSIONAL ASSISTANCE

As the Army continues the deliberate and methodical reductions in the force, we will need congressional support to drawdown accurately and efficiently while maintaining readiness. The Army will maximize voluntary measures, but will need congressional support as it resorts to inevitable involuntary measures in the coming fiscal year. The continued support of Congress for competitive military benefits and compensation, along with incentives and bonuses for soldiers will remain critical to the All-Volunteer Army's efforts to recruit, retain, and support the highest caliber of individuals. The Army must retain the flexibility to offer incentives to attract and retain talent. The continued funding of these programs by Congress is absolutely critical. These incentives assist in shaping the force for both quality and specific talent required. Finally, predictability in the authorization and appropriation bills that are aligned with the President's budget request would help the Army tremendously in preparations for the force of the future.

CONCLUSION

We have invested a tremendous amount of resources and deliberate planning to develop and preserve the All-Volunteer Force. People are the Army, and our enduring priority is to preserve the high quality, All-Volunteer Force—the essential element of our strength.

While we transform to a smaller Army, we remain dedicated to improving readiness, and building resilience in our soldiers, civilians, and their families. The Army will not sacrifice readiness as it draws down. We must draw down wisely to preserve the health of the force and prevent breaking faith with the brave men and women who serve our Nation. The Army has gained the trust of the American public more now than at any other time in recent history, while fulfilling our responsibilities toward those who serve.

The well-being of our force, regardless of its size, is absolutely dependent upon your tremendous support. The Army is proud of the high caliber men and women whose willingness to serve, is a credit to this great nation. To conclude, we wish to thank all of you for your continued support, which has been vital in sustaining our All-Volunteer Army through an unprecedented period of continuous combat operations and will continue to be vital to ensure the future of our Army.

Chairman Gillibrand, Senator Graham, and members of the subcommittee, we thank you again for your generous and unwavering support of our outstanding soldiers, civilian professionals, and their families.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you.
Secretary Garcia?

STATEMENT OF HON. JUAN M. GARCIA III, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE NAVY FOR MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS

Mr. GARCIA. Thank you, Chairman Gillibrand, Senator Graham, and distinguished members of the subcommittee. Thank you for this opportunity to speak about the Department of the Navy's personnel programs, about the sailors, the marines, and the civilians who comprise the Navy.

There have been several significant and successful changes in the Navy in personnel policies and programs since we last testified before this subcommittee. In accordance with the January 24, 2013 Secretary of Defense memorandum entitled "Elimination of the 1994 Direct Ground Combat Definition Assignment Rule," we will submit the Navy-Marine Corps implementation plans next month to the Secretary of Defense. These plans will provide details on how

we intend to move forward with our expansion of opportunities for females to serve in previously closed Military Occupational Specialties (MOSs), ground combat units, and those positions closed due to privacy and berthing restrictions.

We have made great strides by opening positions on submarines and assigning women to previously closed ground combat units at the battalion level. We continue to offer the opportunity for female lieutenants to volunteer for training at the Marine Corps Infantry Officer Course immediately following graduation from The Basic School. We are committed to providing women with the same opportunities as their male counterparts while maintaining the highest levels of combat readiness and capitalizing upon every opportunity to enhance our warfighting capabilities.

The Navy is supporting ongoing efforts by DOD to review and extend benefits, including compensation benefits, to same sex domestic partners of servicemembers. Many benefits are currently available to same sex domestic partners by designation of servicemembers. At the direction of the President, DOD established a Joint Benefits Review (JBR) Working Group, comprised of representatives from each of the Services. The JBR's mission is to conduct a careful and deliberative review of the benefits currently provided to the families of servicemembers.

The working group has identified 22 additional family well-being, child and youth programs, family support, travel and transportation, and survivor and death benefits that can be lawfully provided to the same sex domestic partners of servicemembers and their families through changes to DOD policies and regulations. On February 11, 2013, then Secretary of Defense Panetta directed the extension of those benefits to same sex domestic partners and their children once the servicemembers and their same sex partners sign declarations attesting to the existence of a committed relationship.

Implementation of these benefit changes requires substantial policy revision, training, and technical upgrades. The Department of the Navy will extend the 22 additional family member and dependent benefits to eligible partners of the servicemembers no later than October 1 of this year, subject to approval by the Secretary of Defense. Meanwhile, the Department will continue to comply with existing law and will review the extension of military benefits in conjunction with OSD and other Services should a change in law occur.

In addition to ensuring our manpower and personnel policies meet our country's security requirements, it is my honor and privilege to represent and advocate for the more than 800,000 sailors, marines, and civilian teammates who are always prepared to respond to whatever our Nation needs. Vice Admiral Van Buskirk and Lieutenant General Milstead will have the opportunity to address their respective Services' personnel plans in detail, but I would like to touch on some common challenges the Navy faces as a whole.

After more than a decade of war and given the challenges in the broader economy, we must honor our commitment to veterans and wounded warriors by taking concrete steps to facilitate their transition to civilian life. A key achievement over the last year is the progress made with regard to transition support and reintegration.

In fiscal year 2012, the Navy hired 10,867 veterans into civilian positions. Fifty-nine percent of those were new hires. Of these, nearly one-quarter were disabled veterans and 1 in 10 was a wounded warrior.

The Navy has just over 200,000 U.S. direct hire civilians as of December. Veterans, including wounded warriors and disabled veterans, comprise a majority of our civilian workforce. Civilians operate across a broad spectrum of 558 occupations to include world class scientists and researchers who develop and procure cutting-edge weapons and equipment. More than half of the civilian workforce is made up of technical professionals, such as engineers, logisticians, mathematicians, scientists, acquisition specialists, and members of the medical community.

Because of the combination of sequestration and the fiscal year 2013 continuing resolution, Navy commands have been operating under an across-the-board civilian hiring freeze to reduce spending, primarily in the Operations and Maintenance (O&M) accounts, since January. Fortunately, the Marine Corps has been able to avoid so drastic a measure. Sustained execution of a hiring freeze simply hampers the Navy's ability to recruit a skilled and talented workforce capable of executing the mission. Critical gaps created by ongoing vacancies affect the Navy's readiness and could negatively impact execution for many months to come.

Our Department level sexual assault prevention strategy since 2009 has had three main components, each of which has shown progress during fiscal years 2012 and 2013. I know we will have a chance to address those.

From suicide reduction to sexual assault prevention and response, the Navy's 21st Century Sailor and Marine Initiative is addressing head-on the critical and urgent issues facing our sailors, marines, and their families. As part of our aggressive drug demand reduction efforts, we have expanded our drug testing panel to include synthetics, like spice. We have also ended discount subsidies on the sale of tobacco products in our Navy and Marine Corps exchanges, while providing no cost tobacco cessation products for those trying to quit, and improved education and training programs to steer potential new consumers away from starting.

In short, the 21st Century Initiative is providing the tools needed to face challenges through a variety of programs aimed at fostering a healthy lifestyle both on and off duty. We are committed to continuing these efforts to ensure a safe, healthy, resilient, and ready force.

I wish to thank the committee members for your continued and unwavering support to the Navy, Marine Corps, and the men and women who are sailors and marines, who serve bravely in Afghanistan, spend months at sea apart from their families, guard embassies throughout the world, conduct humanitarian assistance missions whenever and wherever needed, and perform countless other missions under often unimaginably demanding conditions and circumstances.

We look forward to your questions. Thank you.

[The prepared joint statement of Mr. Garcia, Vice Admiral Van Buskirk, and Lieutenant General Milstead follows:]

PREPARED JOINT STATEMENT BY HON. JUAN M. GARCIA, VADM SCOTT R. VAN
BUSKIRK, USN, AND LT. GEN. ROBERT E. MILSTEAD, JR., USMC

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Department of the Navy's fiscal year 2014 manpower and personnel budget request appropriately balances risk in supporting the readiness requirements of the fleet and providing for the care and compensation of our sailors and marines. Our active budget request will support active end-strength of 323,600 within the Navy and 182,100 within the Marine Corps (190,200 with Overseas Contingency Operations support) and a Reserve end strength of 59,100 within the Navy and 39,600 within the Marine Corps.

Personnel Efficiencies

The overall pressure on the budget and the need for efficiency made achieving an appropriate balance between resources and requirements particularly difficult this year. The pay raises and changes in TRICARE fees for fiscal year 2014 and across the Future Years Defense Program (FYDP) represent the Department's best effort to balance personnel requirements, budget realities, and the welfare of our servicemembers and retirees. Because the increases in base pay are more modest than those of recent years, funding of special pays and bonuses will be particularly important. In addition, the budget includes increases for Basic Allowance for Housing (4.2 percent) and Basic Allowance for Subsistence (3.4 percent). As indicators of an improving economy emerge, we are closely monitoring for any downward trend in recruiting and retention. Meanwhile certain critical skills and positions remain difficult to fill.

Sailor, Marine, and Family Care

In fiscal year 2014 our team of dedicated family readiness professionals will continue to respond with agility to the needs of sailors, marines, and their families. Our goal is to address the needs of individual service and family members while also providing for the family unit as a whole. Technology, such as handheld applications and more sophisticated tools like eMarine, provides a wide range of communication capabilities. By providing information for self-help and education electronically, these tools enable our staff to focus their efforts on providing face-to-face interaction when and where it is needed the most. In addition, the Department continues to support vital programs such as the Military Spouse Employment Partnership, both as a resource for our members' spouses and as an employer, and the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program, a popular and proven reintegration tool.

Recruiting

Both the Navy and Marine Corps continue to experience strong performance in our recruiting programs across both the officer and enlisted force. Accordingly, both Services' fiscal year 2014 budget requests for accession bonuses represent reductions from fiscal year 2013. However, accession bonuses remain critical to achieving our goals for certain hard to fill positions such as health professionals, nuclear operators, and special warfare/special operations in both the Active and Reserve components and Unrestricted Line officers in the Navy Reserve component.

Retention

The overall economic conditions, particularly with the improving but still weak civilian job market, contribute to the Navy and Marine Corps having had considerable success with retention across the force. As a result, bonuses and special pays have been reduced significantly in recent years. While we continue to make selected reductions in bonuses and special pays paid to sailors and marines, these highly targeted forms of compensation remain crucial to filling critical skill areas. In many cases these skill areas require significant investments in training and education and civilian demand for people with these skills remains strong despite the overall economic environment.

Transition Support

While higher than normal unemployment in the civilian sector makes it easier to meet our retention goals, it also makes it more difficult for those who leave the military to find a job. In fiscal year 2012, the Department of Navy spent nearly \$344 million on unemployment benefits for those who left active service. While the unemployment rate for veterans is lower than the national average, and the vast majority of our veterans do find civilian employment, it is taking many of them too long to do so. The newly redesigned Transition Assistance Program (TAP)—entitled "Transition GPS" (Goals, Plans, Succeed)—is intended to prepare sailors and marines to

make a successful transition from military to civilian life and help shorten their time to post-service employment. Transition GPS includes the following elements:

- **Pre-Separation Assessment and Individual Counseling:** Through the new transition program, separating servicemembers will have a one-on-one counseling session to discuss their transition needs and goals. Each servicemember will develop an Individual Transition Plan that documents their personal transition, as well as the deliverables they must attain to meet the new transition program's Career Readiness Standards.
- **5-Day Core Curriculum:** The 5 day Transition GPS Core Curriculum will include a financial planning seminar, a workshop offered by the Department of Veterans Affairs on the available veterans' benefits, and a re-designed employment workshop offered by the Department of Labor. Transitioning servicemembers will also undertake a Military Occupational Code Crosswalk to translate their military skills, training, and experience into civilian occupations and credentials.
- **Career-Specific Additional Curriculum:** In addition to completing the Transition GPS Core Curriculum, transitioning servicemembers will also have the option of participating in a series of 2 day tailored tracks within the Transition GPS curriculum: (1) an Education track, for those pursuing college education; (2) a Technical Training track, for those seeking to attend technical school or earn a credential; and (3) an Entrepreneurship track, for those wanting to start a business.
- **CAPSTONE Event:** At least 90 days before their separation from Military Service, servicemembers will participate in a CAPSTONE event, which will verify that transitioning servicemembers completed the Transition GPS curriculum and achieved Career Readiness Standards. Servicemembers who require additional assistance will be referred to additional or remedial training opportunities. In addition, through the CAPSTONE event, all servicemembers will be offered a "warm handover" to government agencies and organizations that will be able to provide them continued benefits, services, and support as veterans.
- **Military Life Cycle Transition Model:** The new transition program will incorporate career readiness and transition preparation into the entire span of a servicemember's career. In the past, transition and preparation for the civilian workforce occurred late in a servicemember's lifecycle—near the point of separation. Under this new program, these concepts will be incorporated earlier as a way to ensure that the counseling, assessments, and access to resources to build skills or credentials occur at earlier stages.

Chairman Gillibrand, Senator Graham, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to speak about the Department of the Navy's personnel programs and about the sailors, marines, and civilians who comprise the Department of the Navy.

There have been many significant and successful changes in the Department of the Navy personnel policies and programs since I testified before you last spring.

In accordance with the January 24, 2013, Secretary of Defense Memorandum, "Elimination of the 1994 Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule," we will submit the Navy and Marine Corps implementation plans in May to the Secretary of Defense. These plans will provide details on how we intend to move forward with our expansion of opportunities for females to serve in previously closed Military Occupation Specialties (MOS), ground combat units, and those positions closed due to privacy and berthing restrictions. We have made great strides by opening positions on submarines and assigning women to previously closed ground combat units at the battalion level. We continue to offer the opportunity for female lieutenants to volunteer for training at the Marine Corps Infantry Officer Course immediately following graduation from The Basic School. We are committed to providing women with the same opportunities as their male counterparts while maintaining the highest levels of combat readiness and capitalizing upon every opportunity to enhance our warfighting capabilities.

The Department of the Navy is supporting ongoing efforts by the Department of Defense to review and extend benefits, including compensation benefits, to same-sex domestic partners of servicemembers. Many benefits are currently available to same sex domestic partners by designation of servicemembers. At the direction of the President, the Department of Defense established a Joint Benefits Review (JBR) working group. Comprised of representatives from all the Services, the JBR's mission is to conduct a careful and deliberative review of the benefits currently provided to the families of servicemembers. The working group has identified 22 addi-

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Implementation of these benefit changes requires substantial policy revision, training, and technical upgrades. The Department of the Navy will extend the 22 additional family member and dependent benefits to eligible same-sex domestic partners of servicemembers no later than October 1, 2013, subject to approval by the Secretary of Defense. Meanwhile, the Department of the Navy will continue to comply with existing law and will review the extension of military benefits in conjunction with OSD and the other services should a change in law occur.

In addition to ensuring our manpower and personnel policies meet our country's security requirements, it is my honor and privilege to represent and advocate for the more than 800,000 sailors, marines, and civilian employees who are always prepared to respond to whatever our Nation demands.

Vice Admiral Van Buskirk and Lieutenant General Milstead will address their respective Service's personnel plans in detail, but I would like to touch on some common challenges the Department of the Navy faces as a whole.

Last March, the Secretary of the Navy unveiled the 21st Century Sailor and Marine Initiative which is designed to place an increased focus on the resiliency and fitness of our servicemembers. With so much of our new defense strategy dependent upon the Navy and Marine Corps, we must ensure that our resources support the most combat effective and the most resilient force in our history. We set high standards and provide individuals with the services and training needed to meet those standards.

Aligned with the Defense Strategic Guidance's direction to maintain a ready and capable force, the 21st Century Sailor and Marine Initiative is designed to maximize sailor and marine personal readiness, to maintain the resiliency of the force, and to hone the most combat effective force in the history of the Department of the Navy. The 21st Century Sailor and Marine Initiative consists of five basic "pillars": Readiness, Safety, Physical Fitness, Inclusion, and Continuum of Service. Our intention is to maximize sailor and marine personal readiness and resilience by concentrating on all five pillars.

The Navy will continue to provide a well-trained, healthy force in order to maximize our greatest military advantage and the bedrock of our Navy and Marine Corps—our sailors and marines. To accomplish this, our leadership team will do all we can to provide each member with the resources needed to maintain resiliency. The Navy will continue efforts to reduce suicides, curb alcohol abuse, deter the illegal use and misuse of drugs—including emerging synthetic drugs and prescription drugs, prevent sexual assaults, improve motorcycle safety, move to a culture of physical readiness, offer healthful and nutritious dining options, expand diversity (ideas, expertise and backgrounds) and provide tools for life after military service.

After more than a decade of war, and given the challenges in the broader economy, we must honor our commitment to veterans and Wounded Warriors by taking concrete steps to facilitate their transition to civilian life. A key achievement over the last year is the progress made with regard to transition support and reintegration. In fiscal year 2012, The Department of the Navy hired 10,867 veterans into civilian positions (59 percent of new hires). Of these, nearly one-quarter (2,540) were disabled veterans and 1-in-10 was a Wounded Warrior.

The Department of the Navy has just over 200,000 U.S. direct hire civilians as of December 2012. Veterans, including wounded warriors and disabled veterans, comprise a majority of our civilian workforce. The Navy civilians operate across a broad spectrum of 558 occupations, to include world-class scientists and researchers who develop and procure cutting-edge weapons and equipment. More than half of the civilian workforce is made up of technical professionals such as engineers, logisticians, mathematicians, scientists, acquisition specialists, and members of the medical community.

Because of the combination of sequestration and the fiscal year 2013 continuing resolution, Navy Commands have been operating under an across-the-board civilian hiring freeze to reduce spending, primarily in the Operations and Maintenance (O&M) accounts, since January. Fortunately, the Marine Corps has been able to avoid so drastic a measure. Sustained execution of a hiring freeze severely hampers the Navy's ability to recruit a skilled and talented workforce capable of executing

its mission. Critical gaps created by ongoing vacancies affect the Navy's readiness and could negatively impact execution for many months to come.

One consequence of the hiring freeze is a significant reduction in our hiring of veterans and Wounded Warriors. The number of veterans hired in February 2013 totaled only 355, compared to 925 in December 2012. Similarly, the numbers of Wounded Warriors and disabled veterans brought onboard in February dropped to 97, a sharp decrease from the 306 in December.

Additionally, the sequestration required DOD to consider furloughing civilian personnel. The reduction in pay associated with furloughs, in conjunction with the hiring freeze, could severely impact our ability to attract and/or retain employees in our mission critical occupations.

The Navy views civilian furloughs as an option of last resort. Our civilian employees are absolutely critical to the Navy and Marine Corps team that is more than 10 years into the longest sustained period of combat operations in American history. Our civilians have responded to the increased operational tempo of the last decade, but the impact of a furlough, combined with continued pay freezes, may severely damage morale and retention. This proposed civilian furlough affects all levels of the department, from blue collar workers to members of the Senior Executive Service. Exceptions are extremely rare, largely limited to those deployed in a combat zone; those responsible for safety of life and property (mostly police, fire fighters, and nuclear accident responders); those who provide 24-hour inpatient and emergency care; those funded by the Foreign Military Sales trust fund; and civilian mariners at sea. DOD has also exempted foreign nationals, select child care employees and non-appropriated-fund employees. As it currently stands, mid-June is the earliest possible date for a civilian furlough. We continue to prepare our employees and our Commands for the impact this would have on our operations.

Another topic of special concern is sexual assault and prevention. Both the CNO and the CMC have clearly made these issues a high priority for senior leaders. The Marine Corps instituted the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Campaign Plan 2012, and the Navy focused on improving the victim support process. We hold ourselves to a high standard of conduct and we will not tolerate sexual assaults within our ranks.

The Department of the Navy is committed to a Department-wide culture of gender respect where sexual assault is completely eliminated and never tolerated, and where sexual assault victims receive compassionate and coordinated support. This ongoing effort is a top priority of the Department and its two Services—the Navy and the Marine Corps. There are challenges yet to overcome, but we have accomplished much.

Our Department-level sexual assault prevention strategy since 2009 has had three main components, each of which has shown progress during fiscal year 2012 and fiscal year 2013. The first involves the progressive dissemination of a clear, consistent, top-down leadership message that sexual assault is never acceptable anywhere in the Department of the Navy, and that all sailors and marines have shared responsibilities for their own behavior and for protecting each other from sexual assault. The second component involves the broad application of updated Service-wide training tools across the Navy and Marine Corps. Influencing the attitudes and behaviors of young sailors and marines requires their repeated exposure to training that is informative, relevant, and pertinent to them. Our third strategy component involves testing new initiatives to determine their efficacy in actually preventing sexual assaults. Experience at the Navy's Training Support Command Great Lakes has been very encouraging, and we are working to distill the key insights from numerous simultaneous initiatives there, and to apply the more effective ones elsewhere. Underlying all of these concepts is our commitment to candid self-assessment using insights from anonymous surveys, sexual assault case reviews, and site visits to Navy and Marine Corps locations worldwide. Our tactical objective is to reduce the number of sexual assaults involving sailors or marines with a special focus on preventing the most egregious forms of sexual assault.

During fiscal year 2012, both Services deployed innovative new sexual assault prevention training tools. At the Department level, we distributed over 15,000 copies of a newly-published Commander's Guide containing information on departmental priorities, background data, and specific suggestions on the management of sexual assault cases. We also fielded half-day leadership programs at eight concentration sites of Navy and Marine Corps operational forces in the United States and abroad. Each session combined summaries of Departmental insights and priorities, along with presentations by an outside civilian expert with unique experience in sexual assault criminal investigations and offender profiling. A separate, live-acted, vignette-based educational program, which emphasized the importance of bystander intervention in preventing sexual assault, was presented simultaneously to

packed theaters of sailors and marines. In addition, work is nearing completion on a professionally produced Department-level sexual assault prevention and response (SAPR) training video suitable for Department-wide use and focused on educating and orienting Navy civilians.

The Navy leadership has worked with both Services to improve sexual assault victim support services. In addition to coordinating Service-level strategies for implementing new requirements established in NDAA 2012 for full-time victim advocates and sexual assault response coordinators, the Under Secretary of the Navy worked directly with the Naval Audit Service and Navy-SAPRO to assess the responsiveness of 24/7 telephone access to SAPR services for sexual assault victims. The result has been a dramatic improvement in performance and the establishment of formal Navy standards. In another area, the Department partnered during fiscal year 2012 with the Department of Justice (DOJ) to develop a DOJ grant project to explore the efficacy of tele-medicine support for Sexual Assault Forensic Exams at remote sites. The Department of the Navy is the only Military Department engaged with DOJ in this effort, and our insights have helped shape the focus of ongoing project development.

From suicide reduction to sexual assault prevention and response, the Department of the Navy's 21st Century Sailor and Marine Initiative is addressing, head on, the critical and urgent issues facing our sailors, marines, and their families. As part of our aggressive drug demand reduction efforts, we have expanded our drug-testing panel to include synthetics like "Spice". We have also ended discount "subsidies" on the sale of tobacco products in our Navy and Marine Corps Exchanges while providing no-cost tobacco cessation products for those trying to quit and improving education and training programs to steer potential new consumers away from ever starting. In short, the 21st Century Initiative is providing the tools needed to face challenges through a variety of programs aimed at fostering a healthy lifestyle, both on and off duty. We commit to continue these efforts to ensure a safe, healthy, resilient and ready force.

The budget process requires a careful balancing of resources and assessment of risk. The President's fiscal year 2014 budget and the Future Years Defense Program are the results of difficult decisions and tradeoffs. The final product meets mission requirements while providing appropriate compensation and benefits for our Active Duty, Reserves, civilian employees, and military retirees.

In response to the newly enacted requirement to "establish policies and procedures for determining the most appropriate and cost efficient mix of military, civilian, and contractor personnel to perform the mission of the Department of Defense" contained in Section 931 of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2012, the Department of the Navy has established the Total Force Integration Board (TFIB), which I chair. The TFIB serves as the principal forum for Total Force Planning and Management efforts, including determination of optimal workforce mix across the Navy enterprise. Additionally, as of September 2012, the Department of the Navy has implemented the Contractor Manpower Reporting Application (CMRA) which provides for the identification of Service contracts and labor hours expended within the Navy as reported by the contractors. These data will be aggregated and reported to Congress beginning in fiscal year 2014. The application is modeled after the Army's version of CMRA and may eventually transition to an enterprise-wide version of CMRA at the OSD level.

Both Sea Services will strive to meet their operational requirements with as efficient a force as possible. For the Navy this means continuing to move sailors from shore support functions to sea duty to enhance operational readiness. Such a shift means not only fewer sailors available for mission critical work ashore, but also that sailors will, on average, spend more time at sea away from their families. For the marines, the reduction of nearly 20,000 end strength coincides with the planned withdrawal from Afghanistan, but will require careful balancing to maintain the right mix of seniority and specialties.

Our highest priority remains the care and the recovery of our wounded, ill, and injured servicemembers. The Department of the Navy is leading the way in innovative therapeutic treatments of our wounded warriors and these efforts include our continued focus and research in the areas of traumatic brain injury (TBI) and post-traumatic stress disorder. The Navy is collaborating with the other Services, our Centers of Excellence, the Veterans Administration, and leading research and academic centers. We continue to make progress but recognize there is more work ahead in this area.

We continue to search for innovative ways to improve the efficiency and capability of our forces as well as the quality of life of our members and their families. The Navy is actively preparing for the congressionally-created commission on military

compensation and hopes for increased flexibility to meet our requirements with both efficiency and fairness to our members and retirees.

We wish to thank the committee members for your continuous and unwavering commitment to support the Navy and Marine Corps and the men and women who, as sailors and marines, serve bravely in Afghanistan, spend months at sea apart from their families, guard embassies throughout the world, conduct humanitarian missions whenever and wherever needed, and perform countless other missions, often under unimaginably demanding conditions and circumstances.

The following service specific information is provided for the committee. We look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Vice Admiral Van Buskirk follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY VADM SCOTT R. VAN BUSKIRK, USN

I. INTRODUCTION

Chairman Gillibrand, Ranking Member Graham, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, I am honored to appear before you today to review Navy manpower, personnel, training, education and family support programs and priorities for fiscal year 2014.

These are clearly challenging times for all of us. With budget concerns continuing and the pressures of increased OPTEMPO we are asking sailors to do more than ever before. Navy has had to make tough and sometimes unpopular decisions; however, we remain committed to supporting sailors and their families through this challenging time. While we have planned for, and are executing, prudent reductions; the majority of the impacts will not take effect until this summer. My primary concern is the potential for a slowdown in training and impacts on recruiting our future force, resulting in reduced manning and quality of our deployable forces. Our sequestration planning specifically attempted to avoid training and recruiting impacts; however, the depth and prevalence of reductions, increase the probability of an unintended training slowdown and challenge in accessing quality recruits.

II. A READY AND CAPABLE GLOBAL NAVY

In the past year, since assuming duties as Chief of Naval Personnel and Deputy Chief of Naval Operations (Manpower, Personnel, Training, and Education), I have had the opportunity to observe and assess where the Navy is and where it needs to go within the manpower, personnel, training, and education domain. Navy is America's away team—relevant and in demand—for peace keeping duties and power projection. As we expand America's focus in the Pacific Theater, Navy assumes an increasingly critical role in the Defense Strategic Guidance. As we work to achieve the Chief of Naval Operations' tenets of Warfighting First, Operate Forward, and Be Ready, I have established as my three strategic priorities, Responsive Force Management, Effective Personnel Readiness and Sound Organizational Management.

Responsive Force Management:

We must maintain forward progress to properly man the fleet with trained and experienced sailors. This begins with attracting the most qualified youth of America to serve in the Navy by demonstrating the many opportunities and rewards associated with naval service, and appealing to their pride in our Nation, commitment to its ideals, and devotion to protecting its freedoms. It continues with providing world-class training and education opportunities to prepare them to excel in maritime-centric jobs in an increasingly technical fleet comprised of fewer and less manpower-intensive platforms and weapon systems.

Effective Personnel Readiness:

We must capitalize on investments in sailors, both officer and enlisted, by providing the incentives needed to retain the best and to achieve and sustain optimum fleet readiness. Compensation remains an important part of our incentives system but is only a part of what we must do to preserve the world's best All-Volunteer Force. We must continue to offer the best training available and provide opportunities for off-duty education to enhance the force and help our people meet their education goals. Highly educated sailors are our best performers and tend to stay in the Navy making them key to Navy's success. We must continue to build resiliency among sailors and their families. We ask much of our men and women in uniform and those who support them at home. We owe them the tools to help them endure and thrive in challenging environments and under demanding circumstances.

Sound Organizational Alignment:

The fleet is our primary customer and we must ensure that every decision and action supports the needs of the fleet and its sailors. Shortly after assuming the helm as Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Greenert issued direction to optimally position his headquarters staff to meet the demand signals provided by fleet and combatant commanders. We continue to evaluate our effectiveness in delivering what the fleet requires and to ensure that we align ourselves to be on time and within budget. We must ensure effective coordination and communications among major headquarter organizations, fleet and shore commands, and our support organizations, to deliver the best possible services to sailors and their families in all areas of Navy manpower, personnel, training, and education.

In addition to these three strategic priorities, my primary mission objectives are to effectively Stabilize, Balance and Distribute the force. Since the mid-1990s, Navy end strength has trended downward, consistent with manpower needs dictated by a decreasing force structure and, more recently, withdrawal from Iraq and Afghanistan. However, beginning in fiscal year 2013, we began a period of slow growth to stabilize the force, increase manning at sea, improve sea/shore flow and increase the Navy's Cyber capabilities. As we worked to determine the proper force size, we conducted a requirements-based process to properly balance the force in size, seniority, and skill mix, and to enhance capabilities to better distribute qualified personnel to the right places at the right time. This set the stage for long-term force stabilization while maintaining effective personnel readiness.

To stabilize, balance, and distribute the force, it is essential that sailors are assignable, deployable, and distributable. Given the demands placed on our people over the past decade, including the stresses of war and high operational tempo, we have placed unprecedented emphasis on force resiliency. Fit and resilient sailors are critical to Navy readiness. We must continue to bolster Navy families to meet the demands we place on them; the 21st century sailor initiatives provide the priority and resources necessary to permit sailors to achieve excellence while instilling confidence through our unwavering commitment to them and their families. It is imperative that we continue to commit resources toward programs that build force resiliency.

III. RESPONSIVE FORCE MANAGEMENT

Responsive Force Management strategic priorities are focused on end strength, compensation, fleet manning, retention, recruiting, and training throughput.

Stabilize End Strength:

The President's fiscal year 2014 budget request supports active end strength of 323,600, and selected Reserve end strength of 59,100. The request seeks \$27.8 billion in Military Personnel, Navy (MPN) appropriations, and \$1.8 billion in related Operation and Maintenance, Navy (O&MN), appropriations. The request includes \$1.9 billion for Reserve Personnel, Navy (RPN) and \$24.9 million in related Operation and Maintenance, Navy Reserve (O&MNR) appropriations.

Navy has invested in additional strength to help reduce manning gaps at sea, while concurrently restoring targeted shore billets to provide adequate shore rotational assignments for sailors in sea-intensive ratings, and at regional maintenance centers and afloat training groups. These additional billets will not only help improve sea/shore flow, they will develop additional trained sailors with advanced maintenance skills while on shore duty, who will return to sea better prepared to make an immediate technical contribution to their commands. In the near-term, we are also increasing strength among junior officers in the surface and submarine warfare communities to meet future department head requirements. Our budget request appropriately balances risk, preserves capabilities to meet current fleet and joint requirements, fosters growth in emerging mission areas, and provides vital support to sailors and Navy families, as we carefully monitor personnel and fleet readiness. We are also applying and adjusting force management tools to retain the right skills, pay grade, and experience-mix necessary to provide mission-ready naval forces. End strength continues to grow across the Future Years Defense Program until it stabilizes at approximately 326,100 in fiscal year 2018.

We are carefully managing reduction of over 3,000 positions from the Reserve billet base, to 59,100 end strength. These adjustments align the Selected Reserve with post Operation Enduring Freedom requirements, reconfiguration of the Navy Expeditionary Combat Command, and the new Defense Strategy, while retaining capabilities vital to fulfilling the Reserve component role in Navy's Total Force mission. By calibrating accessions, offering increased active duty augmentation and recall opportunities, and allowing for natural attrition, the Navy Reserve will accomplish

this reduction within strength and fiscal controls. In the long term, however, the Navy Reserve Force will grow to approximately 60,000, and the Reserve mission-set is increased to include shipyard maintenance augmentation, unmanned aerial vehicle support, maritime operations center augmentation and additional intelligence, cyber and information dominance.

Effective Force Management:

Perform to Serve (PTS) remains our primary force-management tool to maintain balance across all enlisted ratings by ensuring that we have the right number of enlisted sailors in each rating at the right experience level. Through PTS, which uses performance criteria within individual ratings and length of service cells to ensure long-term sustainment of experience, we have made significant progress toward achieving balance across all enlisted ratings, reducing the number of overmanned ratings from 35 in 2011, to just 9 today.

Improved rating balance has resulted in more reenlistment approvals. In 2011, approximately 60 percent of PTS requests were approved, while just 1 year later 80 to 90 percent were approved, and advancement opportunity increased. PTS also allows sailors not selected for retention in their current rating to consider, as alternatives to leaving the Navy, converting to a new rating or transitioning into the Navy Reserve.

Compensation:

Compensation is a critical force-management tool. As we look for cost saving measures, we strive to ensure that we will not disadvantage sailors; rather we will look to preserve the strength of the All-Volunteer Force and ensure fiscal sustainability of our pay and benefits programs. Special and Incentive (S&I) pays provide flexible compensation incentives to address specific manning needs or other force management issues not efficiently addressed through basic pay increases alone. Navy judiciously applies S&I pays, such as Enlistment Bonuses, Selective Reenlistment Bonuses and Critical Skills Retention Bonuses, to recruit and retain sailors in key occupation specialties or critical skill areas. S&I pays are also provided as compensation for onerous or hazardous duty assignments or conditions, and for maintaining proficiency in specific skills important to national security.

Recruiting:

Navy has worked hard to achieve strong recruiting success over the past 5 years by attracting the Nation's best and brightest for America's Navy. Our recruiting brand, "America's Navy-A Global Force for Good", captures CNO's priorities while appealing to our 17-24 year-old recruiting market. In fiscal year 2012 and fiscal year 2013-to-date, Navy achieved accession goals for officers in the Active component, and for enlisted in both the Active and Reserve components. We continue to do well recruiting into priority ratings in the Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program (NNPP) and Navy Special Warfare/Special Operations (NSW/SPECOPS). Additionally, we attained the highest quality future sailors in history, with 99 percent of accessions entering as high school diploma graduates, and 90.2 percent of accessions scoring in the upper 50th percentile on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB).

Navy Recruiting leading indicators forecast that our recruiting mission will become increasingly challenging. While the quality of accessions rose between fiscal year 2009 and fiscal year 2012, accession quality has begun trending downward, and is expected to close-out the year with approximately 85 percent of accessions scoring in the upper 50th percentile on the ASVAB. While still well above DOD and Navy minimum standards, this trend is a source of concern as we continue our efforts to recruit the best America has to offer. Additionally, each month, Navy is meeting enlistment contracting goals later in the month. The impact of sequestration on recruiting resources, particularly marketing and advertising, will further increase our recruiting challenges.

Navy achieved most Active component officer recruiting goals in fiscal year 2012, but experienced a shortfall in attaining direct accession physicians, which was offset by success in recruiting within student medical officer programs. We were also successful in recruiting officers into the priority NNPP and NSW/SPECOPS mission areas. Success in officer program recruiting was further reflected by the highest ever quality and number of diversity applicants into the NROTC Program.

For the Reserve component, Navy faced challenges again this past year with recruiting for the General Officer unrestricted line communities (e.g., surface, submarine, and aviation warfare) primarily because of high active duty retention rates. In recent years, we have also had challenges in recruiting specialized medical professionals for the Reserve Component (e.g., surgeons, anesthesiologists) due to high

active duty retention, stiff competition from the civilian healthcare community, and perceived risk to civilian medical practices due to frequent mobilizations.

Fiscal year 2014 is projected to be more challenging for both officer and enlisted recruiting. Consequently, we will balance recruiter manning, accession bonuses, and the marketing and advertising budget, to continue to aggressively attack challenging areas, such as healthcare specialties, and maintain focus on priority recruiting mission areas. The fiscal year 2014 budget requests \$269 million for recruiting programs, including accession incentives, advertising, and support for Active and Reserve recruiters despite the improving economic forecast, our budget request ensures that the recruiting force remains appropriately sized and resourced for success.

Selection and Classification Programs:

Effective selection and classification programs are the foundation of Navy efforts to properly man the fleet to current and future requirements in this dynamic environment. We are using state-of-the-art technology and processes to hire recruits into jobs optimally suited to their abilities and interests. This same technology is used to identify sailors for lateral conversion into mission critical career fields. These programs have had a significant impact on reducing training losses, increasing retention and increasing promotion opportunity.

Fleet Manning:

Navy manpower has decreased by more than 50,000 sailors since 2004, through a combination of reduced force structure and reduced manning aboard individual ships and aircraft, causing an imbalance between sea and shore billets and between ratings. As a result of efforts that began in fiscal year 2012 to improve fleet manning by moving approximately 6,000 billets from shore to sea, fleet manning is projected to improve throughout the remainder of the fiscal year while gaps at sea decrease from about 11,600 to 7,800. We also project that by the end of the fiscal year, nearly 95 percent of all enlisted billets at sea will be manned, with close to 90 percent filled by the right sailor with the proper seniority and appropriate skill level and training.

Through various force management tools, including special and incentive pays applied to critical skills, voluntary/involuntary distribution, funding the Individuals Account and shore billets for sea intensive ratings, Reserve to Active augmentation, and Active Duty Definite Recall Program for Reserve Enlisted, we are shaping sailor behavior to attain optimum fleet manning. Selective application of these tools is helping retain sailors in undermanned skills, but requires continuous assessment and regular adjustments to account for changing economic conditions. Ultimately, we must ensure that gaps at sea are filled by the right sailor, with the right skills at the right time.

Retention:

Navy aggregate enlisted retention continues to be strong compared to last year, with increased retention in all zones. However, retention in select areas is challenging and our current key focus is on first term sailors. Four years ago, we reduced accessions so that we could retain more career sailors. Consequently, as these cohort groups enter their reenlistment windows, we now need a greater percentage of first term sailors to reenlist. As we monitor personnel and fleet readiness, with a focus on increasing sea duty manning, we are applying force management tools, where appropriate, to retain the right skills across pay grades. Our new and existing policies encourage sailors to commit earlier to stay for longer periods, affording increasing predictability of future personnel readiness. We recently updated reenlistment bonuses to target junior enlisted personnel to attain first term retention goals in fiscal year 2013, and sustain a healthy force into the future.

To position Navy to meet future mission requirements, we must balance the force by recruiting and retaining officers in the right mix of specialties. Officer inventory shortfalls remain in several critical communities. Offering precise targeted incentive pays and bonuses is essential to maintaining and improving manning in these mission-essential specialties.

IV. EFFECTIVE PERSONNEL READINESS

The Effective Personnel Readiness strategic priorities focus on matching sailors with jobs for which they are well-suited; and on sailor quality of life, training, education, and family support.

21st Century Sailor and Marine Initiative:

In March 2012, the Secretary of the Navy announced the 21st Century Sailor and Marine initiative. To maximize sailor personal readiness, we designed objectives and policies to maintain the resiliency of the force and to hone the most combat effective force in the history of the Department of the Navy. Our aim is to prepare sailors and their families to face life's challenges through a myriad of programs focused on creating a balanced lifestyle, on- and off-duty, while specifically addressing the needs of wounded warriors through our Navy Safe Harbor Program.

- **Health of the Force.** Navy's assessment of the overall health of the force is good, morale remains high and work satisfaction increased over the last 12 years. Our sailors are choosing to remain in the Navy; aggregate retention remains strong, though some areas continue to prove challenging. The 2012 Quality of Life Survey and Behavioral Health quick polls revealed positive feedback with standard of living/income and job satisfaction, while concern was expressed about manning shortages, long work hours and high operational tempo. As deployment lengths and schedules change, based on world events, we must monitor the impact on sailors and their families and understand the underlying factors that may distract from our operational goals. We expect the assessment of the health of the force to remain strong; however, there are areas that require significant continued focus and efforts, specifically prevention of suicides and sexual assaults. Additionally, we remain committed to providing quality care and robust programs through our wounded warrior Safe Harbor program.

- **Suicide Prevention and Operational Stress Control.** Suicide prevention extends beyond specific program efforts and strives to create an open environment that reduces barriers and encourages sailors to seek help. Navy's suicide prevention strategy concentrates on moving prevention as far left of the potential event as possible through effective execution of five lines of effort: Education and Awareness, Prevention and Intervention, Sailor Care and Transformational Growth, Physical, Mental and Spiritual Fitness, and Assessment. Navy focuses on building personal resilience, promoting peer-to-peer support, enhancing family relationships, enabling intervention up-and-down the chain of command, and fostering a command climate in which help-seeking behaviors enable sustained personal resilience. Our robust programs include:

- Navy's Operational Stress Control (OSC) Program;
- Reserve Psychological Health Outreach Program (RPHOP);
- Navy Mobile Care Teams;
- Deployment Health Assessments;
- Returning Warrior Workshops;
- Project FOCUS (Families Overcoming Under Stress);
- Coalition of Sailors Against Destructive Decisions (CSADD); and
- Crisis Intervention and Response.

Navy leadership is determined to prevent suicides in our force; the loss of even one life to suicide is a one too many.

- **Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR).** Sexual assault rates in the Navy remain unacceptable; we are committed to achieving a steady reduction in the incidence of sexual assault to eradicate this abhorrent crime from our ranks. Our lines of effort to combat sexual assault are: Education and Awareness, Prevention and Intervention, Victim Advocacy and Resiliency, Investigation and Accountability and Assessment. Navy has focused proactively on prevention programs, expanded a successful model instituted at Recruit Training Command, focused on individual unit climates and instituted enhanced victim care, prosecution measures and reporting procedures. We will continue to aggressively promote and foster a culturally aware and informed Navy; respectful of all, intolerant of sexual assault, and supported by a synergistic program of prevention, advocacy and accountability.

- **Alcohol and Substance Abuse Prevention.** Navy's "zero tolerance" drug abuse policy is comprised of three key elements: detection, deterrence, and prevention. Navy Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention (NADAP) is a comprehensive, science-based program consisting of sailor education, prevention awareness, advocacy, trend analysis/threat assessment, and intervention. This past year, NADAP achieved tangible goals in reducing the number of positive urinalysis and alcohol-related incidents and increasing Navy leadership awareness of prevention programs. In 2012, Navy incorporated testing for synthetic drugs, including spice and bath salts. The testing regimen is robust and flexible enough to adjust testing protocols to the dynamic synthetic drug market through a collaborative arrangement with intelligence resources that track market changes. Initial indications are that this is having the desired deterrent effect on synthetic drug

use. We recently implemented use of hand-held Alcohol Detection Devices (ADD) as an education and awareness tool to provide sailors and commands the ability to readily identify the impact of alcohol-use decisions.

- Family Support. Navy recognizes that military service presents unique challenges and opportunities for sailors and their families. Family support programs assist commanding officers and Navy families in managing the demands of military life in concert with a healthy family life. Fleet and Family Support Centers provide services that include deployment support, crisis response, and career support and retention programs. Navy leadership is committed to investing and increasing resources for Sailor and Family Readiness Programs, including:

- sexual assault prevention and response;
- alcohol awareness and deglamorization;
- drug detection and abuse prevention;
- Navy Safe Harbor wounded warrior support;
- suicide prevention and resiliency;
- casualty assistance and funeral support;
- child care; and
- Morale, Welfare, and Recreation.

We are working to minimize the impacts of Sequestration on Sailor and Family Readiness programs to avoid adverse affects on the people each of them supports.

Navy's budget request adds \$18 million to support full implementation of the VOW Act and Veterans Employment Initiative (VEI). We are also implementing a re-designed Transition Assistance program, entitled "Transition GPS" (Goals, Plans, Succeed), which includes delivery of legally mandated requirements, such as Pre-Separation Counseling, Department of Labor (DOL) Employment Workshop and a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Benefits briefing. Transitioning sailors will also have the option of participating in a series of two-day tailored instructional tracks within the transition GPS curriculum:

- a higher education track, for those pursuing a college degree;
- a technical training track, for those seeking job-ready skills and industry-recognized credentials in shorter-term training programs; and
- an entrepreneurship track for those desiring to start a business.

The design of all of fleet and family support programs is to help families be resilient, well-informed, and adaptable.

Training and Education:

Our most critical obligation in the continuum of training is providing sailors with the most relevant knowledge, skills, and abilities as quickly as possible to achieve optimal knowledge transfer and make best use of finite resources. This means using our established end-to-end curriculum content development-and-revision process to identify the most cost-effective solutions to deliver training without sacrificing quality. As new weapon systems and platforms are introduced, we must ensure that innovative techniques, such as interactive multimedia, simulators, and avatars, are applied when appropriate.

Navy has developed a plan to improve timeliness, relevance, and comprehensiveness of technical training. Modularized training optimizes the initial training pipeline and provides continuous training opportunities as sailors progress through their first tours. This approach creates flexibility in the pipeline and allows sailors to report sooner to their first duty station, armed with the necessary skills to have an immediate positive impact. Strategically distributing training delivery, so that sailors receive only the instruction necessary to perform their immediate duties, minimizes time between instruction and utilization, thereby, reducing knowledge-and-skill decay associated with current delays. Pilot programs evaluate the modularized training concept to ensure training quality remains high along the continuum.

- Asymmetric Advantage: There is an inherent premise that asymmetric warfare must deal with unknowns. The ability of our maritime forces to respond quickly to crises and eliminate threats is a direct result of exemplary training. Technical expertise gained through a variety of initial and advanced skills training gives sailors the ability to evaluate what needs to be done to fight and win. Navy's leadership training, mentoring, and coaching, contribute directly to development of a sailor's critical thinking skills, willingness to accept prudent risks, and ability to adjust rapidly based on situational assessment.

The discipline, technical expertise and esprit de corps that enable us to win in combat also enable us to adapt to, and accomplish, other complex missions, such as humanitarian relief efforts at home and abroad. New technologies, com-

bined with proven learning strategies, continue to drive cost-effective improvements in training. Intelligent tutoring systems and learning strategies leveraging simulation, virtual worlds, and emerging technologies, allow us to maximize training efficiency while improving training effectiveness and timeliness of delivery, ensuring our asymmetric edge is maintained.

- **Nationally Recognized:** In addition to meeting fleet performance requirements, initial skills training provided to new accessions has been consistently recognized by leading industry and training organizations for innovations that improve workplace learning. Over the past 2 years, our training commands were recognized by the prestigious American Society for Training and Development, with three “Excellence in Practice” awards and three citations. For the last 4 years, Navy has ranked as one of the country’s top training organizations on Training Magazine’s “Top 125” list. The high quality of training provided to our force is also demonstrated through thousands of college credit hours recommended by the American Council on Education, which supports our efforts to compete for the best talent in the Nation.

Additionally, our training programs are internationally recognized. We provide training and education to foreign servicemembers and civilians from over 160 nations in support of the DOD Guidance for the Employment of Forces and the Maritime Strategy, for deeper partnerships, building partner nation capacity; and improving joint, allied and coalition interoperability. On any given day, over 1,270 international military students train at over 150 schools and activities in the United States and participate in a wide-range of training activities in foreign countries. In fiscal year 2012, we finalized training arrangements for U.S. grant programs, such as the International Military Education and Training Program, Counter Terrorism Fellowship Program and African Partnership Station.

- **Transformative Training and Technology.** Traditional Navy war-fighting communities (e.g., surface, aviation, and submarine) and the recently reconstituted expeditionary community, rely increasingly on simulators to conduct training. Simulators are among the most significant improvements in our training programs. As fidelity and access to simulator technology increase, prevalence of this technology is building at Navy schoolhouses, training commands and in the fleet. Investment in simulator training increases training capacity, effectiveness, and efficiency and reduces wear on platforms and operational equipment; thereby, minimizing operation maintenance and replacement costs. Simulators used for the expeditionary community are currently resourced through Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) funding. Accordingly, we have requested an additional \$3.3 million to facilitate shifting funding for this vital simulator training into the baseline budget.

- **Joint and Professional Military Education.** Naval War College (NWC) and Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) continue to deliver core mission functions that provide critical support to the maritime strategy. Both are central to Navy’s strategic investment in Navy- and DOD-relevant education to develop a resilient, knowledgeable and adaptable force. With implementation of Enlisted Professional Military Education (EPME) in 2008, which includes Joint Professional Military Education (JPME), Navy has a progressive continuum of Navy-specific PME coupled with JPME, from pay grade E-1 through O-9.

- **Voluntary Education/Tuition Assistance.** Navy remains steadfast in our commitment to sustain the Tuition Assistance (TA) Program. The Chief of Naval Operations has assured sailors that TA will remain intact and available. We have made no changes to the program and continue to provide 100 percent funding up to the established caps for eligible sailors. While ongoing fiscal pressure will necessitate continued scrutiny of all investments, our goal is to ensure that we can continue meeting current obligations and fulfilling the educational goals of every sailor who desires to enroll. Our course completion rate is well over 90 percent, which we attribute in part to the exceptional support sailors receive from trained Navy education counselors. Each sailor, working with a qualified counselor, must develop an appropriate educational plan, which the counselor must approve before TA funding can be authorized and classes begin. Counselors ensure that sailors are prepared for the academic requirements associated with each sailor’s approved plan and help them streamline an attainable degree completion process.

- **Credentialing and Licensure.** Navy Credentialing Opportunities Online funds over 17,000 credentials each year for approximately 7,500 individuals. Every Navy occupation has at least one professional credential available, with more than 1,800 civilian certifications now funded. Additionally, the Navy Credentialing Program Office actively participates in the President’s Education,

Training, and Credentialing Strategic Working Group, in supporting the Presidential Call for a Career-Ready military by maximizing servicemember certifications in critical civilian job fields.

- Language, Regional Expertise and Culture (LREC). Navy's LREC program builds capability by incentivizing language, regional, and culture learning through relevant, cost-effective education and training products structured to meet operational requirements while leveraging proven, existing resources. The program incorporates regional and cultural content in Navy Professional Military Education (NPME), provides language acquisition and sustainment training to Cryptologic Language Analysts (CTIs) and Foreign Area Officers (FAOs), and makes nonresident language instruction available to sailors who require it. To encourage language learning for Naval Special Warfare commands, expeditionary units, and Afghanistan-Pakistan Hands, Navy expanded its Foreign Language Proficiency Bonus (FLPB) program to incentivize language skills at the proficiency levels specifically required for the operational readiness of those forces. Navy LREC also provided products and services to more than 110,000 sailors and coastguardsmen in 2013. In response to the Defense Strategic Guidance of January 2012, Navy has developed an Asia-Pacific Hands Pilot, which leverages existing educational resources to provide enhanced regional knowledge to select officers ordered to assignments in the Pacific Command Area of Operations.

CONCLUSION

The President's fiscal year 2014 budget request resources critical programs that will continue to support Navy manpower, personnel, training, and education priorities of: Responsive Force Management, Effective Personnel Readiness, and Sound Organizational Alignment, while maintaining a ready and capable global Navy. I look forward to working with you as we continue to shape the Navy to meet current and emerging requirements, while confronting the challenges that lie ahead. On behalf of the men and women of the U.S. Navy, and their families, thank you for your leadership, commitment, and unwavering support.

[The prepared statement of Lieutenant General Milstead follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY LTGEN ROBERT E. MILSTEAD, JR., USMC

I. INTRODUCTION

Chairman Gillibrand, Ranking Member Graham, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, it is my privilege to appear before you today to provide an overview on Marine Corps personnel.

As our commandant recently testified to you, sequestration—both the immediate cuts in fiscal year 2013 and the associated reductions in discretionary caps in future years—could have a significant impact on our Nation's readiness both short- and long-term. However, no matter what the implications, there are some things that must endure. Your Marine Corps is, and will continue to be, our Nation's expeditionary force in readiness. We will be ready to rapidly respond to crises around the globe to ensure the continued security of the American people and to protect the interests that underpin our prosperity. Marines will be always faithful to the trust which the American people have vested in them. Already a lean organization, your marines will continue to give you the best capability that can be squeezed from the resources you allocate for our Nation's defense. Our individual marines are the Corps' most sacred resource, and always will be.

II. END STRENGTH

Pursuant to guidance issued by the President and the Secretary of Defense, the Marine Corps has initiated a reduction in our Active component end strength from 202,100 to 182,100 by the end of fiscal year 2016. We are conducting our drawdown in a measured way. Our plan is to reduce our end strength by no more than 5,000 marines per year and will be accomplished primarily by natural attrition, voluntary separation, and retirement authorities. Involuntary separations will be minimized as much as possible, and we have no plans to conduct a reduction-in-force. Such an approach would no doubt do significant long-term damage to our ability to recruit and maintain a quality force. Our overarching goal must be to keep faith with our marines and their families.

During fiscal year 2012, we made a conscious decision to get a 'head start' on our drawdown rather than wait for fiscal year 2013. This early drawdown was achieved

primarily through increased voluntary attrition of junior enlisted marines as part of the large Grow-the-Force cohort population. As a result, the Marine Corps' active duty end strength at the end of fiscal year 2012 was 198,479 marines (including reservists who served on active duty at least 3 out of previous 4 years). Our end strength goal for fiscal year 2013 is 193,500 marines.

While our military personnel accounts have been exempted from sequester in fiscal year 2013, it would be inaccurate to assume that your marines are not to be impacted by it. Overall, the readiness of your Corps stands to take a hit. In essence, those whom have given the most to the security of this Nation are asked to accept the bulk of the risk sequestration poses to this Nation.

III. MARINE CORPS RESERVE

Our Reserve component continues to make essential contributions to Total Force efforts in Overseas Contingency Operations. We are continuing to refocus our recruiting and retention efforts on meeting our Reserve component grade and skill requirements at the unit-level. These efforts include retraining marines affected by force structure-directed actions, lowering rates of attrition, providing travel reimbursement for our senior staff noncommissioned officer and company grade officer leadership, and discreet targeting of those marines eligible to receive an incentive. As a result, we have achieved our end strength goal of 39,600 over the last 2 years.

For fiscal year 2013 and beyond, we have refined the use of incentives to strengthen unit staffing in specialties and grades where we remain critically short. In particular, our Selected Marine Corps Reserve unit staffing of company grade officers, aviators, and staff noncommissioned officers (SNCO) remains most challenging. Targeted incentives and transition assistance outreach programs help us to attract junior officers and aviators who are leaving the Active component. While transitioning officers from the Active component provides the majority of our company grade officer leadership, we have had considerable success commissioning officers directly into the Reserve. The Reserve Officer Commissioning Program, which includes Officer Candidate Course-Reserve (OCC-R)—has produced a total of 561 lieutenants for the Marine Corps since its creation in 2006 and has been key to increasing ground company grade officer fills from 21 to 67 percent. More importantly, it enables the Marine Corps Reserve to place officers in critical small unit leadership positions at the platoon and company level.

To complement outreach efforts and the use of incentives, and to address the challenges of geographic constraints, we offer occupational specialty retraining. Our retraining programs are crucial in our efforts to join enlisted marines to units that are located in areas of the country where it is geographically challenging to recruit, that are undergoing Force Structure Review Group actions, or that are in high-demand low-density Military Occupational Specialties (MOS). This training has helped us to build positive trends with respect to recruiting and retention and are integral to our future success in staffing our SNCO above the current level of 63 percent.

This year we increased efforts to fully staff Reserve aviation squadrons. To achieve this goal, we developed a number of Reserve aviation manpower initiatives designed to encourage transitioning Active component aviators to affiliate with Reserve units. Since there are a limited number of Reserve squadrons, the use of travel reimbursement, incentives, and aviator transition and conversion programs are critical to achieving our staffing goals. Altogether, these programs, combined with our prior service recruiting efforts, should provide for at least 90 percent staffing of critical combat arms and company grade officer billets by the end of fiscal year 2015 with Reserve squadrons reaching this mark 1 year later.

IV. RECRUITING

The Marine Corps is unique in that all recruiting efforts (officer, enlisted, regular, Reserve, and prior-service) fall under the purview of the Marine Corps Recruiting Command. Operationally, this provides us with tremendous flexibility and unity of command, allowing us to meet accession requirements.

To meet future challenges in the current recruiting environment, it is imperative that we maintain our high standards both for our recruiters and those who volunteer to serve in our Corps. Recruiting quality youth ultimately translates into higher performance, reduced attrition, increased retention, and improved readiness for the operating forces. Our actions, commitment, and investments today in recruiting ensure a high state of readiness in our Corps tomorrow. Severe budget constraints related to sequestration that result in reductions in recruiters, recruit advertising, and potential civilian furloughs at our recruit processing stations will degrade the quality of our recruit pool, cause disruptions in our pipeline of recruits, and place added stress on our recruiters, 71 percent of whom already work in excess of 60 hours per

week. Reductions to our recruit advertising budget jeopardizes our established market share and awareness with prospects, their influencers, and multicultural audiences, which includes diversity outreach capacity. It is important we acknowledge that today's successes are dividends from the investments made in recruiting and advertising 4 to 5 years ago.

Last year, we successfully achieved all enlisted and officer recruiting goals for both the Active and Reserve components. Our current mission for enlisted marines is 33,200 regulars (Active component) and 5,780 reservists. We expect to achieve our annual recruiting 'shipping' mission (i.e. new accessions sent to recruit training) and quality goals, but sequestration-related budget constraints may impact our contracting efforts and capacity to achieve success in fiscal year 2014. The fiscal year 2014 mission forecast is 30,200 regulars and 5,481 reservists.

Our officer accessions mission for fiscal year 2013 is 1,400 Active Duty and 125 Reserve officers. Historically, the Active component has been the exclusive source of lieutenants and captains for the Reserves. As previously noted, filling company grade officer billets for our Selected Marine Corps Reserve units is traditionally our greatest challenge, but the success from the OCC-R program is proving to help in remedying this shortfall.

Our greatest asset continues to be the individual marine. Recruiting remains the lifeblood to the Corps and our bedrock to "Make Marines, Win Battles, and Return Quality Citizens." We thank you for the generous support you have provided to us and look forward to working with you to ensure continued success in the future.

V. RETENTION

For fiscal year 2013, the Marine Corps is on track to achieve its end strength target of 193,500 Active component marines (and approximately 250 reservists who have served on active duty at least 3 of the previous 4 years). It is vital during our drawdown that the Marine Corps continue to shape our force to meet continuing mission requirements and fill critical military occupational specialties (MOSs) with the most qualified marines. Incentive pays remain critical to this effort, allowing the Marine Corps to fill hard to recruit positions, such as crypto linguists and reconnaissance. Enlistment bonuses also allow us to ship new recruits at critical times to balance recruit loads at the depots and meet school seat requirements. It is important to note that only 8 percent of new Marine Corps recruits receive an enlistment bonus. Similarly, Selective Reenlistment Bonuses (SRBs) allow us to shape our career force. SRBs target critical MOSs and supports lateral movement of marines to these MOSs.

VI. CIVILIAN MARINES

Our civilian marines support the mission and daily functions of the Marine Corps and are an integral part of our Total Force. They exemplify our core values; they embrace esprit de corps, teamwork, and pride in belonging to our Nation's Corps of Marines. Serving alongside our marines throughout the world, in every occupation and at every level, our civilian appropriated funded workforce remains the leanest of all Services, with a ratio of 1 civilian to every 10 active duty marines. Over 93 percent of our civilians do not work in headquarters' elements in the Pentagon; they are at our bases, stations, depots, and installations. Sixty eight percent are veterans who have chosen to continue to serve our Nation; of those, a full 13 percent have a certified disability. Our civilian non-appropriated funded workforce steadfastly continues to provide vital support to our marines, Reserve marines, their families, and our wounded, ill, and injured.

The potential human impact associated with furloughing our civilian marines is significant. While we would like to believe that a discontinuous furlough will reduce the impact on our employees, most will not be able to easily absorb this sudden loss of income, even over a period of several months. With prolonged budgetary uncertainty employee stress is increasing, morale is declining, and at some point productivity will begin to suffer. Marine Corps bases and commands in Virginia, California, North Carolina, and Georgia will feel the most dramatic impact as hiring pools stagnate and the essential talent needed to conduct missions there begins migrating.

Our civilian labor represents less than 5 percent of the Marine Corps' total O&M budget, demonstrating that our "best value" for the defense dollar applies to our civilians as well as our marines.

VII. WOMEN IN SERVICE REVIEW

On January 24, 2013, the Secretary of Defense rescinded the 1994 policy that restricted women from combat roles. The Secretary has provided the services ample

time to assess this change in policy by setting a deadline for full implementation of 1 January 2016. The Commandant and the entire Marine Corps are dedicated to maintaining the highest levels of combat readiness and capitalizing upon every opportunity to enhance our warfighting capabilities and the contributions of every marine; it is the right thing to do. Our ongoing deliberate, measured and responsible approach to validate occupational performance standards for all marines is consistent with the Secretary's decision to rescind the direct combat exclusion rule for women. As our Corps moves forward with this process, our focus will remain on combat readiness and generating combat-ready units while simultaneously ensuring maximum success for every marine. The talent pool from which we select our finest warfighters will consist of all qualified individuals, regardless of gender.

Our implementation plan will take a two-pillar approach, which will be conducted concurrently—one for previously closed occupational specialties and the other for closed units. The first pillar will include a three-step process: (1) review and validate the physically demanding tasks by occupational specialty; (2) test male and female marines on these physically demanding tasks and correlate their performance to scores on the current Physical Fitness Test and Combat Fitness Test; and (3) develop a safe, physical test that will serve as a predictive mechanism for recruiters to use to determine an applicant's physical propensity to successfully accomplish the physically demanding tasks required of an MOS.

The second pillar will include a phased expansion of our assignments of females in open MOSs to previously closed ground combat units. These assignments are a continuation of an effort which the Marine Corps began in June 2012 known as the Exception to Policy (ETP) pilot program. The Marine Corps opened 371 Marine and 60 Navy billets in open Military Occupational Specialties to females in previously closed units under the ETP. These 19 previously closed operational units included artillery, tanks, assault amphibian, combat engineers, and low altitude air defense communities. The assessments and feedback from these units are positive. Expansion of this pilot program in newly-opened units to female noncommissioned officers will be considered as assessment of the current assignments of SNCOs and officers to those units indicate that additional assignments would be successful. A phased approach will provide leadership the opportunity to address issues, establish a solid mentorship program, and progress towards the necessary social/cultural shifts within these units. Overall, 90 percent of our military occupational specialties are open to females, as well as 68 percent of our table of organization (T/O) billets.

VIII. HAZING

Hazing violates our institutional character and disrespects our most precious asset—our marines and sailors. Consequently, the Marine Corps will continue to pursue the actions necessary to eliminate hazing in any form. In April 2012, a Marine Corps working group was convened to examine hazing prevention and response within the Marine Corps. The working group's efforts centered on conducting a critical review of the Marine Corps' current policies and procedures and culminated with the development of specific recommendations for increasing our effectiveness at preventing and responding to hazing. These recommendations, upon final approval, will be incorporated into our current policy.

The most significant planned changes to the Marine Corps' new hazing policy include: mandatory and immediate reporting all hazing allegations irrespective of the initiation or completion of the initial investigation, mandatory reporting of hazing allegations within the existing Discrimination and Sexual Harassment (DASH) database, utilization of the DASH database as a comprehensive, service-level hazing database enabling tracking of all reported hazing allegations from start to finish, and amplification of the Marine Corps' hazing definition in order to enhance its application in real-world scenarios.

In the short-term, implementation of these procedural changes may result in an increased number of reported hazing incidents. However, the positive consequence of this potential increase is that it may indicate growing trust in leadership to effectively respond to hazing allegations. Through this foundation of mutual trust, the Marine Corps will more accurately determine the prevalence of hazing within our ranks and ultimately develop more effective prevention plans.

IX. DIVERSITY

The Marine Corps is committed to attracting, mentoring and retaining the most talented men and women who bring a diversity of background, culture and skill in service to our Nation. In both representation and assignment of marines, diversity remains a strategic issue. Our diversity effort is structured with the understanding that the objective of diversity is not merely to strive for a force that reflects a rep-

resentational connectedness with the rich fabric of the American people, but to raise total capability through leveraging the strengths and talents of all marines.

We are near completion of a new comprehensive campaign plan to focus our diversity effort in areas where improvement is most needed and anticipate release of this roadmap this year. This is an effort facilitated through our standing Diversity Review Board and Diversity Executive Steering Committee chartered to establish the foundations for diversity success in the Total Force. During January 2013, the Marine Corps held an Executive Off Site for Diversity to commence senior executive action in support of the long term diversity effort. In addition, since 2010, we have conducted leadership seminars that introduce diverse college undergraduates and high school students to Marine leadership traits and leadership opportunities in the Marine Corps; we are actively seeking new communities within which to continue this effort.

The Marine Corps has established minority officer recruiting and mentoring as the highest priority in our recruiting efforts. Because we acknowledge the accession and retention of minority officers has been a challenge for our Corps, we are committed to taking steps to further facilitate the mentoring and career development of all our officers with emphasis on our minority officers in order to encourage the retention of our best officers no matter their background.

Overall, we seek to communicate the Marine Corps diversity mission through community outreach and recruit marketing; to ensure continued opportunities for merit based development and advancement; and to optimize training and education to increase the understanding for all marines of the value that diversity brings to the Total Force.

X. TAKING CARE OF MARINES, SAILORS, AND FAMILIES

The Marine Corps' approach to potential sequestration cuts to our Marine and family support portfolio is focused on preserving programs that support the health and welfare of our marines and their families. These protected programs collectively promote the physical and mental well-being of marines and families and are considered most essential in meeting the operational objectives of the Marine Corps. We will have to prioritize our resources to ensure we maintain these protected programs while taking risk in lower priority programs.

Furthermore, any actions that impact our civilian workforce will directly impact our capability to provide essential support services to marines and their families. A furlough would impact our direct-care service, decreasing service hours across Behavioral Health, Family Readiness, Personal and Professional Development, and Family Care programs, including child care. However, our highest priority family programs will be protected to the greatest degree possible, as will our Wounded Warrior Regiment, the command responsible for recovery care for our wounded, ill, and injured marines.

Caring for our Families

Our Family Readiness Program strengthens and fortifies marines and families by providing official unit communication, readiness preparedness training, information on and referral to qualified helping professionals, and vital unit, installation and community connection. Our Family Readiness Officers are an asset throughout the Total Force and support the commander's family readiness mission through direct interaction with marines and families. Our Marine Corps Family Team Building training provides preventative education to marines and families and enhances their quality of life, provides a feeling of empowerment, and increases levels of resiliency. Lifestyle, Insights, Networking, Knowledge, and Skills (L.I.N.K.S.) training, for example, helps marines and families connect to the military culture and teaches how best to thrive in it. eMarine, our secure family readiness website, delivers strategic communications to marines and their families, both Active Duty and Reserve, whether they are stationed at large installations or in remote locations. It gives family members access to documents, photos and videos, discussion forums, and information about their marine's unit from anywhere in the world, 24/7. We continue to improve and streamline our programs in fiscal year 2013, with a focus on our computer-based Marine Corps Family Team Building curriculum and a new initiative to promote volunteerism to enhance unit morale and family readiness.

Our Family Care programs support the development continuum of Marine Corps children from birth to their teens. First, our school liaisons provide school districts with information about the needs of Marine Corps families and access to training and counseling services to support teachers and students. Marine parents are comforted by the support of a local education expert, who provides meaningful insight to new transfers and those with questions on local education policies. Second, child care services remain a high priority, and we plan to increase our child care capacity

with additional spaces in fiscal years 2013 and 2014. Third, families enrolled in our Exceptional Family Member Program strongly endorse our focus on providing a continuum of care and the improvements made to their level of support. The Marine Corps continues to underwrite the cost of up to 40 hours of short-term respite care per month for enrolled families, providing more than 400,000 hours of respite care in fiscal year 2012.

Transition Assistance

Our transition assistance will be integrated into the lifecycle of a marine from recruitment, through separation or retirement, and beyond as a veteran marines. Our first step is our revised Transition Readiness Seminar, which now gives marines a choice of one of four pathways during this program: College/University Education; Employment; Vocational or Technical Training; or Entrepreneurship. This tailored approach reduces information overload, targets individual needs of the marine, promotes effective military skills translation, and is in full compliance with the VOW to Hire Heroes Act and the recommendations of the President's Veterans Employment Initiative. The Marine for Life Program, with its nationwide network of Marine for Life Representatives, will support improved reach-back and outreach support for those veteran marines who require localized support in their hometowns with information, opportunities, or other specific needs. These assets help veterans develop and maintain local networks of Marine-friendly individuals, employers, and organizations.

Sexual Assault Prevention and Response

Sexual assault is a crime that is incompatible with Marine Corps values of honor, courage, and commitment. Not only does it undermine mission readiness and unit cohesion, sexual assault results in an irrevocable loss of faith in the institution and violates the basic principles every marine has vowed to uphold and defend. In step with our Commandant-directed 2012 Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) Campaign Plan, the SAPR Program implemented large-scale Corps-wide training initiatives, utilizing a top-down leadership model. SAPR's training message charges leadership with establishing an environment that is non-permissive to any misconduct or crime—especially sexual assault—and making certain that the Marine Corps' high standard of discipline is maintained. SAPR training remains unequivocal in its assertion, however, that the inherent duty of preventing sexual assault belongs ultimately to marines of every rank.

While aggressive in our prevention initiatives, we remain steadfast in our commitment to victim care and response, never ceasing in our efforts to ensure that all victims of sexual assault receive the kind of supportive services and justice that preserve their dignity and safety. Response systems have been strengthened through intensified credentialing requirements for SAPR personnel, as well as through an increased number of SAPR personnel in the field. In addition, the Commandant directed a reorganization of our legal community to improve our ability to prosecute complex cases. The centerpiece of this new model is the regional complex trial team comprised of experienced military prosecutors and augmented by civilian highly qualified experts, providing a wealth of experience for the prosecution of such cases. Eliminating sexual assault in our ranks is our ultimate goal, and the Commandant intends to stay personally and actively engaged in leading this campaign.

Behavioral Health Support

The integration of our behavioral health programs seamlessly weaves our efforts in suicide prevention and response, combat and operational stress, substance abuse, and family advocacy into the support network of command structures and the health and human services across the Marine Corps. We focus on evidence-based practices to ensure we are providing effective support in these critical areas. The Marine Corps is increasing the number of personnel available on installations to develop, implement, and execute behavioral health prevention and treatment assistance. Community Counseling Centers are being established to enhance clinical case management capabilities as well as easier resource system navigation and ensure that marines are properly screened, tracked, and referred to appropriate behavioral health services. We are expanding our Military Family Life Consultant program so that these licensed clinical providers are embedded into the larger support network of command structures and can provide confidential counseling when needed.

We are implementing our Behavioral Health Integrated Training, which will consolidate all behavioral health information into a single training session that focuses on common risk and protective factors across the full spectrum of behavioral health issues. Our Behavioral Health and Brain Injury Advisory Committee meets quarterly to advise senior Marine Corps leadership on emerging programs and issues, solicit senior leadership guidance and feedback regarding integration efforts, and

identify gaps in services delivery as well as opportunities to gain efficiencies. Our Behavioral Health Integrated Case Management System will facilitate the communication of clinical and administrative data across behavioral health programs.

Suicide Prevention and Response

One suicide is too many. Suicide prevention is not a single act but rather a series of actions. The Marine Corps is actively engaged in making lasting improvements to the overall health, well-being, and quality of life for marines. Each tragic loss to suicide has a far-reaching impact on families, friends, and our entire Marine Corps community. Saving lives requires vigilance and our concerted effort to harness the strength of engaged leaders. Engaged leaders are alert to those at risk for suicide and take action to help marines address the hard times or pain in their lives, helping individual marines optimize their physical, psychological, social, and spiritual spheres and revitalize depleted areas. Fit marines are fortified and strengthened and better able to withstand the tensions and stressors of life in and out of the Marine Corps.

Leaders prevent suicide by strengthening all marines and encouraging them to engage helping services early when problems are most manageable. Whenever possible, we deploy evidence-based prevention practices such as our award-winning “Never Leave a Marine Behind” suicide prevention training program, which is peer-reviewed and updated to reflect emerging evidence-based practices. Our Suicide Prevention Program Officers, located at our battalions and squadrons, will be an administrative and coordinating resource for the commander to use in managing a unit’s suicide prevention program. Our DSTRESS Line, which is staffed by veteran marines and corpsmen, family members and civilian counselors trained in Marine Corps culture, provides anonymous, 24/7 counseling services to any marine, attached sailor or family member. We work closely with DOD and forge strong relationships with other Federal agencies, academia, and private industry in an effort to work together to better understand suicide and improve our programs.

Combat and Operational Stress Control

Our Combat and Operational Stress Control (COSC) program assists marine leaders with maintaining warfighting capabilities by addressing the impacts of stress, enhancing fitness, and addressing the long-term health and well-being of marines and their families. COSC resources support all of the tenets of good leadership. Understanding the full range of stress reactions and associated leader actions enhances the ability to mitigate risk and take care of marines in all environments. COSC efforts prevent, identify, and manage combat and operational stress-related issues and increase access to mental health care by breaking stigma and raising awareness. COSC principles are embedded in Operational Stress Control and Readiness Team Training, Deployment Cycle Training and third location decompression events that reach the Total Force. We have improved training including education and awareness on Traumatic Brain Injury, continuing the destigmatization of behavioral health care, and incorporating current information from Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom deployments.

Marine Total Fitness. In fiscal year 2013, we are continuing to advance our Marine Total Fitness concept to develop marines of exemplary physical, psychological, spiritual, and social character. Marine Total Fitness infuses fitness-based information and concepts into all aspects of a marine’s training and readiness and prepares marines to successfully operate in and respond to the rigors, demands, and stressors of both combat and garrison.

XI. SEMPER FIT AND EXCHANGE SERVICES

Semper Fit and Recreation programs supports the social and physical cords of Marine Total Fitness efforts by providing the best mix of programs and services to marines and their families. This year we are expanding programs, such as High Intensity Tactical Training (HITT), a comprehensive strength and conditioning program geared towards optimizing physical performance and combat readiness. Another program slated for expansion to additional installations is Operation Adrenaline Rush (OAR), which combines Combat and Operational Stress Control (COSC) principles with an Outdoor Recreation Adventure activity to aid in mitigating boredom and high risk behavior for marines recently returned from deployment. OAR assists marines with reintegration by empowering small unit leaders, maintaining combat readiness, and reinforcing unit cohesion. The goal is to increase social resilience through unit-driven recreational activities such as whitewater rafting, mountain biking, and deep sea fishing. Semper Fit is focused on providing relevant programs that promote the overall fitness and health of our Corps.

The Marine Corps Exchange (MCX) is an important part of the overall non-monetary benefits package. MCX success is measured on the program's value and contributions to the readiness and retention of marines, as well as our ability to provide unparalleled customer service, premier facilities, and valued goods and services at a significant savings. With MCX, unlike any other retail store, marines can rely upon a high quality product at a fair price and know that the proceeds are returned to their community, creating a stronger Marine Corps.

Deployed support is one of the most important services we provide. Our Exchange, Recreation and Fitness, Communication, and MCCS Amenity Wi-Fi services not only boost and maintain morale, but also help to reduce mission-related stress:

- Exchange. Ongoing missions in Afghanistan include the operation of two Direct Operation Exchanges Tactical at Camps Leatherneck and Dwyer, one Tactical Field Exchange at Camp Delaram II, one Imprest Fund Site at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Edinburgh, and numerous Warfighter Express Services Teams operating out of Camps Leatherneck, Dwyer, and FOB Edinburgh.
- Recreation and Fitness. We assist in providing transportable recreation, sports, and fitness equipment to units throughout Helmand Province.
- Communication. We have delivered 13 satellite communications systems to units in Afghanistan. Each system has 2 phones which each provide 6,000 free minutes per month and 5 laptops that allow internet access and chat/video capabilities to deployed marines. In 2012, there were 94,272 phone calls using 776,644 minutes of air time; approximately 72,860 marines were able to use the Morale Satellite services at several different FOBs/COPs during 2012.
- MCCS Amenity Wi-Fi Solution. The Marine Corps Community Services Amenity Wireless Fidelity (Wi-Fi) Solution program deploys Wi-Fi capability at various facilities on installation at no cost to marines and families. This morale and welfare initiative helps families stay in contact while separated from their marine.

XII. WOUNDED WARRIOR REGIMENT

The Marine Corps' Wounded Warrior Regiment (WWR) is a fundamental component of the Marine Corps' pledge to "keep faith" with those who have served. The WWR supports marines wounded in combat, who fall ill, or who are injured in the line of duty.

The WWR administers the Marine Corps' Recovery Coordination Program that ensures wounded, ill, and injured (WII) marines' medical and nonmedical care needs are fully integrated. Through its comprehensive organization of nonmedical care assets, the WWR has been supporting the recoveries of WII marines and their families since it was established in 2007. In the broadest terms, this includes determining the degree of support required through case review, working with marines and their families to develop recovery plans, and executing those plans for their return to duty or reintegration to their hometowns. When WII marines successfully execute their recovery plans, they are well-positioned for their future endeavors.

Under the Marine Corps' proven care model, WII marines may remain with their parent units so long as their medical conditions allow and their units can support them. When WII marines remain with their parent units, they are also supported by the WWR through its various assets. This support is accomplished through direct contact with the WII marine and family members and by providing information and resources to the WII marine's commander. WII marines not assigned to a WWR element are still connected through the Wounded Warrior Battalion Contact Centers, where staff reaches out at regular intervals to ensure their needs are being met.

Recovery Care Coordinators and Marines' Comprehensive Recovery Plans

To be successful in his or her recovery mission, a WII marine must take a pragmatic look forward and set attainable goals. These goals must be developed based on each marine's, and his or her family's needs, and incorporated into a plan with carefully articulated and monitored actionable steps.

The Marine Corps continues to fully comply with the "Wounded Warrior Act" section of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008. Prominent in this section is the requirement to assign a Recovery Care Coordinator (RCC) to recovering marines. All eligible marines, generally those who are severely to catastrophically ill or injured and unlikely to return to duty, may be assigned an RCC. RCCs meet with a WII marine within 72 hours of assignment and begin a comprehensive assessment process which takes into consideration the various recovery components (i.e., housing, finances, counseling, family support, disability evaluation,

employment, and more). The results of this assessment process form the basis for the Marine's Comprehensive Recovery Plan (CRP). Each CRP is tailored to the WII marine's and family's specific recovery circumstances. The CRP document, which is owned by the WII marine, is frequently updated and adjusted to suit the WII marine's evolving situation.

Support for Caregivers

Compassionate and dedicated caregivers are central to recovery and they endure many hardships, to include financial setbacks when they leave their jobs, to be with their recovering marine. We thank Congress for authorizing Special Compensation for Assistance With Activities of Daily Living. The WWR is also providing our marines' caregivers the opportunity to receive caregiver training, which is identical to the caregiver training provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs to support their Caregiver Stipend Program.

Transition

Most WII marines will not return to duty and will transition to veteran status. Meeting this transition milestone prepared and confident is paramount to a WII marine's success in his or her civilian community. The WWR's transition support is twofold: we help WII marines and families successfully enter the VA system and assist them with securing rewarding and fulfilling careers.

For WII marines with CRPs, prior to leaving active duty service, the Marine's RCC will schedule phone conferences with the Marine's VA recovery team members to ensure all required paperwork is transferred and benefits are on schedule for payment. Marines not joined to a WWR element may be provided VA transition information via the WWR's fact sheets and staff who hold subject matter expertise. They are also assisted through the WWR's Call Center. The WWR highly encourages all WII marines to register with the VA's eBenefits, a joint VA/DOD web portal that provides resources and self-service capabilities to veterans, servicemembers, and their families.

WWR has transition cells at its Regimental Headquarters and its Wounded Warrior Battalions where coordinators work with marines in a one-on-one setting to conduct comprehensive career assessments; develop education and career plans; provide career coaching; identify education, internship and training opportunities; and facilitate networking and transition activities such as job fairs. WWR also coordinates with external entities to enhance WII marines' transition success. The Regiment has facilitated the placement of Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Service counselors aboard various Marine Corps installations; WII marines continue to take advantage of Federal internships through the Operation Warfighter Program; and the WWR continually coordinates with charitable organizations, such as the USO and Hire Heroes USA, to provide transition workshops and opportunities specifically geared toward WII servicemembers and their families.

To further ensure WII marines are succeeding in their civilian lives, we utilize our Sergeant Merlin German Call Center to make outreach calls to marines and families who have transitioned. The Call Center conducts an average of 7,000 calls per month. Call Center staff, to include psychological health professionals, is also available 24/7 to accept calls from marines and families. Moreover, WII marines who transition from the WWR receive varying levels of needs-based support for 90 days (or more if needed) to ensure smooth transition to the VA.

The WWR's District Injured Support Coordinator Program (DISC) provides assistance to WII marines transitioning from military to veterans status through its geographically dispersed network of marines. Our DISCs are purposefully aligned with the Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Integrated Service Networks to further enhance coordination with VA services. DISCs provide a multitude of services to include conducting face-to-face visits with marines and families, ensuring marines are registered with the VA, providing information on various community resources, and linking WII marines in need back to the WWR for assistance.

Collaboration with the Department of Veterans Affairs

Given the transition outcomes of our WII marines, the value of our collaboration with the Department of Veterans Affairs cannot be overstated. Although our WII marines may depart our ranks, they are always considered marines and we have a sense of duty to advocate for them after they have transitioned. At the strategic, tactical, and operational levels, the WWR partners with various VA entities to ensure our marines receive the transition support they require. With our VA colleagues, we engage in policy development that will suit the interests of WII marines from point of incident throughout their veteran status. Currently, we are active participants in the Interagency Care and Coordination Committee, which is working to better harmonize the efforts of the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs,

simplify processes, and reduce confusion for our recovering servicemembers and their families. We have a Marine Corps Liaison Officer position established at the VA for enhanced coordination. Our RCCs and other multi-disciplinary team advocates regularly engage with Federal Recovery Coordinators on behalf of our WII marines who have sustained serious or very serious wounds, injuries, or illnesses. We will continue to identify ways to collaborate with our VA partners on behalf of our Nation's wounded, ill, and injured.

As this statement demonstrates, the Marine Corps is heavily invested in providing for WII marines and their dedicated family members. Whether we are a Nation at war or in times of peace, the WWR will continue to successfully meet their care and support needs. For the Marine Corps, wounded warrior care is not a process, but a persistent relationship between the Marine Corps and our marines.

XIII. CONCLUSION

To continue to be successful, we must always remember that our individual marines are our most precious asset, and we must continue to attract and retain the best and brightest into our ranks. Marines are proud of what they do. They are proud of the "Eagle, Globe, and Anchor" and what it represents to our country. With your support, a vibrant Marine Corps will continue to meet our Nation's call.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you.
Secretary Ginsberg?

STATEMENT OF HON. DANIEL B. GINSBERG, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE FOR MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS

Mr. GINSBERG. Chairman Gillibrand, Ranking Member Graham, and members of the subcommittee, Lieutenant General Jones and I would like to thank you for the honor and opportunity to testify today on behalf of more than 700,000 Active, Guard, Reserve, and civilian airmen who make up the most capable air space and cyber space force the world has ever known. We know that you and the members of this subcommittee are keenly interested in the well-being and support of our airmen. We must start by thanking you for all that you have done and continue to do on their behalf.

As the Nation draws down its efforts in the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility and prepares to support a strategic shift to the Asia-Pacific, the Air Force finds itself at a critical juncture. The Air Force faces continual demands on its people and all its specialized capabilities, while dealing with new fiscal realities. Our airmen have met every challenge and are poised to respond to these new challenges in the future.

The strictures of sequestration have forced the Air Force to face tough choices, like a furlough of civilians and standing down of some of our combat coded flying squadrons. At the direction of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Air Force is protecting funding for war time operations, wounded warrior programs and, to the extent feasible, programs most closely associated with this new defense strategy, as well, of course, as family programs.

The Air Force remains committed to providing cost-effective medical care, services, and programs to maintain balanced, healthy, and resilient airmen and families. Initiatives implemented by our airmen and Family Readiness Centers, such as transition assistance, wounded warrior, Yellow Ribbon, and suicide prevention programs, have made considerable progress.

This past year, we confronted the problem of sexual assault and unprofessional relationships at basic military training, and we

have strengthened our sexual assault prevention efforts with new initiatives, like an Air Force-wide health and welfare inspection and the establishment of a Special Victim's Counsel program. The Air Force remains steadfast in our commitment to prevent incidents of sexual assault, provide victim care where assault has occurred, and hold those who commit such acts accountable.

Looking ahead, the Air Force will continue to balance competing defense needs among the size of our force structure, today's readiness, and modernization in the future. The Air Force is committed to carrying out our national defense mission while dealing with the disruption of sequestration.

As I have said before, it is both an honor and a privilege to represent and advocate on behalf of our Nation's airmen as we search for better and smarter ways to approach and solve our Nation's security challenges. Thank you for your continued commitment and overwhelming support to our total force airmen, civilians, and families. I look forward to answering your questions.

[The prepared joint statement of Mr. Ginsberg and Lieutenant General Jones follows:]

PREPARED JOINT STATEMENT BY HON. DANIEL B. GINSBERG AND LT. GEN. DARRELL D. JONES, USAF

Today the 690,000 Total Force airmen of your Air Force are a highly trained, experienced, and battle tested force, standing as vanguards of freedom around the world. Despite the last 2 decades of sustained conflict, the men and women of your Air Force are as dedicated, innovative and hard working as ever before. The Air Force does not take lightly its primary role of training and equipping the highest quality airmen the President, Congress, combatant commanders, and ultimately our Nation can call upon as needed.

Airmen are the backbone of our Air Force. Throughout our Service history and ingrained in our culture, is a spirit of innovation where airmen are enabled and expected to find novel solutions to ensure domination in our multi-dimensional battlefield of air, space, and cyber space. In order for airmen to continue to fulfill their expected roles as innovative leaders and warriors, the Air Force must remain focused on recruiting, training, developing, supporting and retaining a world-class, All-Volunteer Force. Maintaining an All-Volunteer Air Force is a significant undertaking and requires a continuous and deliberate investment of time and national resources.

MILITARY AND CIVILIAN PERSONNEL BUDGETS

The Air Force is committed to maintaining and sustaining the appropriate size and force mix to meet mission requirements with acceptable personnel tempo and associated stress on the force. Total Force Military changes in end strength are based on Strategic Guidance, the Air Force operating budget, and an operational assessment to align manpower resources to critical missions. Fiscal realities require the Air Force to face tough choices, trading size to protect a high quality and ready force while balancing overall risk to military capabilities. The Air Force will focus on reinforcing military end strength in high priority areas, such as Cyber, Intelligence, F-35, KC-46, and Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) programs.

The Air Force's total military end strength forecast for fiscal year 2014 will be reduced by 2,640 from 506,040 to 503,400, which represents an approximate 0.5 percent reduction from fiscal year 2013 levels. This will result in an Active Duty (AD) military end strength reduction from 329,460 to 327,600. Our Air Force Reserve (AFR) military end strength will decrease by 480 to 70,400, and Air National Guard (ANG) military end strength will decrease by 300 to 105,400. The fiscal year 2014 budget includes a total budget authority request of \$29.2 billion for AD, ANG and AFR military personnel. Included in this budget is a 1 percent military base pay increase, a 4.2 percent increase in the housing allowance and a 3.4 percent increase in subsistence allowance. In addition, the civilian personnel budget requested for fiscal year 2014 is \$11.4 billion for a programmed civilian strength of 186,026, and includes a 1 percent pay raise.

Programmed reductions were accomplished in base/management operating support and logistics/maintenance functional areas, as a result of declining defense budgets, and in an effort to make the best use of our resources, including military manpower. These reductions to our military end strength would place greater responsibilities on the remaining civilian and contractor workforce.

Subsequently, OSD tasked the Services to analyze their civilian workforce requirements. Working with OSD, Air Force conducted a comprehensive, enterprise-wide review examining the full spectrum of operations—from base level to headquarters activities in an effort to develop a wide range of initiatives to forge a leaner, more effective Air Force in support of defense guidance. As a result, civilian workforce reductions are planned which are commensurate with our programmed military reductions. The civilian workforce review also provided a means to shift resources in support of Cyber Command and source emerging requirements such as enhanced transition programs compliant with the Veterans Opportunity to Work (VOW) to Hire Heroes Act and the Veteran Employment Initiative (VEI).

MILITARY FORCE MANAGEMENT

By trading size for quality, the Air Force is postured to rapidly respond to a full range of contingencies and threats to national security interests. Our Force Management program is a tailored multi-year strategy focused on sizing and shaping the total force with the right balance of skills to meet current and emerging joint mission demands. The program ensures career field sustainability as we retain sufficient personnel inventory and experience to meet career field requirements. The Air Force's strategy over the past few years has been aggressive, allowing us to meet congressionally mandated end strength requirements and maintain a high quality force by leveraging voluntary programs first, offering incentive programs where needed, and implementing involuntary actions when required.

Our active duty officer and enlisted force experienced continued high retention rates in fiscal year 2012, just below the 20-year high of 2011. This continued trend required us to employ a variety of voluntary and involuntary force management programs to achieve the required losses to stay within our fiscal year 2012 332,800 programmed end strength. Our force management initiatives brought the force within 0.1 percent of end strength for fiscal year 2012, with the officer force 408 below and the enlisted force 545 above their targets.

Our force management efforts in fiscal year 2012 positioned us well for fiscal year 2013 but a National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2013 mandated 3,340 end strength reduction and lingering high retention require the continued use of Force Management tools. The Air Force's voluntary programs in fiscal year 2013 are similar to the officer and enlisted programs offered in fiscal year 2012. For our officer force, we will rely solely on voluntary measures to achieve additional losses over normal attrition. Voluntary programs will include time-in-grade, active duty service commitment, 8 versus 10 years of commissioned service waivers for certain year groups and overage career fields. We will also continue the Palace Chase program for eligible lieutenant colonels and below to retain experience levels in our Reserve component.

For our enlisted force, we will rely on a number of voluntary and involuntary measures to achieve additional losses over normal attrition. Voluntary programs include Limited Active Duty Service Commitment and time-in-grade waivers, as well as Palace Chase opportunities. Additional enlisted measures include Date of Separation Rollbacks, a very limited reduction in accessions, reduced opportunities for retraining after initial skills training failures, and Career Job Reservation constraints.

The AFR is also experiencing a reduction in end strength and while the cuts are smaller, they still require meticulous handling to maintain a strong force. Since AFR units are primarily filled by reservists who live relatively close to their base of assignment, force structure changes typically result in members separating from the AFR if they cannot find a position reasonably close to their residence. A number of authorities like Inactive Duty Training (IDT) travel pay and even Permanent Change of Station (PCS) entitlements, however, will help retain some of these well-trained and experienced assets in other vacant billets nation-wide. Authorities such as 180 days of Tricare and retention of the Montgomery GI Bill we help ease transition from the selected Reserve for those members unable to be placed in a suitable position. In anticipation of future reductions, the ANG and AFR are also submitting legislation to request approval for the Temporary Early Retirement Authority (TERA) and retention of education benefits for those members involuntarily discharged because they could not find a position. These additional authorities will help shape the force while allowing a smooth landing for those who are forced to end their careers.

The objective of our fiscal year 2014 Force Management strategy is to continue to maximize voluntary programs first in order to minimize the need for involuntary measures. Given the current fiscal challenges, we will continue to assess the need to pursue voluntary and involuntary force management actions to meet future authorized end strength levels.

CIVILIAN FORCE MANAGEMENT

The Air Force continues to perform strategic assessments to ensure our civilian workforce maintains mission critical competencies and to eliminate redundant functions in order to improve the effectiveness of the Air Force mission. The Air Force's civilian Strategic Human Capital Plan identified Cyber, Acquisition, Nuclear, and Engineering as critical occupational series necessary to meet current mission requirements and defense guidance. Our efforts are focused on ensuring these critical functions have the necessary talent to meet mission requirements, including heavy recruiting efforts to fill these highly technical specialties.

In 2010, the Defense Department began a comprehensive effort to increase efficiencies, reduce overhead costs, and eliminate redundant functions in order to improve the effectiveness of the DOD enterprise. In fiscal year 2012, the Air Force voluntarily retired or separated approximately 3,500 civilian employees through three rounds of Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA) and Voluntary Separation Incentive Pay (VSIP) to achieve civilian reductions. In addition, the service received limited approval to implement Reduction In Force (RIF) actions on positions in the Air Force Reserve Command (AFRC), Air Education and Training Command (AETC) and Air Force Space Command (AFSPC). The RIFs resulted in 77 separations, 27 reassignments, and 69 grade reduction actions (without reductions in pay) which mitigated the need for involuntary separations.

The Air Force requires latitude to continue voluntary separation programs, such as VERA and VSIP to allow civilian employees to retire or separate on a voluntary basis and avoid involuntary separations for fiscal year 2013 and fiscal year 2014. The Air Force will also require RIF authorities, including involuntary separations, as an option to balance the civilian workforce skills if reductions are not achieved through voluntary separation programs.

QUALITY TRAINED AND DEVELOPED FORCE

Our Chief of Staff clearly articulated in his recent vision statement that "Education and training are the foundation of our airpower advantage ... and ... we must safeguard and reinforce that foundation" by ensuring we remain the most technically proficient, best-educated, and best-trained air force in the world. Developing the world's best airmen requires the best education and training. The developmental education pillar of our force development framework includes Professional Military Education (PME), Fellowships, Advanced Academic Degrees (AAD), Professional Continuing Education (PCE) and voluntary education. The training pillar includes initial skills training and retraining as well as skills and proficiency training such as Language, Region, and Culture training.

Our enlisted PME and Officer developmental education programs provide an educational foundation through the delivery of carefully prescribed skill sets or institutional competencies. Our leadership doctrine defines these competencies and lays out a road map to develop our force to accomplish national security and national defense objectives. Reductions to developmental education would have severe long-term effects to the professional and innovative capabilities of our Air Force.

The Air Force is striving to enhance the development, sustainment, and utilization of cross-culturally competent airmen across the Total Force to lead and enhance partnerships in today's dynamic global environment. The ability to work collaboratively with stakeholders and support the Department of Defense (DOD) Security Cooperation mission of building international partnerships is critical in meeting complex and emergent threats and will require greater foreign-language, regional, and cultural skills.

Air Force Voluntary Education (Vol Ed) programs provide comprehensive opportunities for airmen to pursue programs of higher education in order to meet Air Force goals of a highly trained and educated workforce. Vol Ed program funding is largely comprised of Military Tuition Assistance (MilTA) which is provided to service-members to pursue accredited post-secondary programs. MilTA supports and affects approximately 105,000 military airmen in an active duty status (of those, approximately 78,000 are junior noncommissioned officers (NCO)). It contributes to force readiness by assisting our airmen in attaining a higher level of skill and management proficiency. This core group of young airmen will one day become our Senior NCOs responsible for leading and developing other young airmen as well as advis-

ing Air Force leaders. MilTA has historically cost more than budgeted, and we fund it in execution years to maintain the commitment to our airmen. In the current fiscal environment, we must establish updated enrollment and compensation controls in the MilTA program to sustain the programmed budget.

RETENTION, RECRUITMENT, BONUSES, AND INCENTIVE PAYS

The Air Force continues to successfully attract, assess and retain innovative airmen to maintain our status as the world's preeminent aerospace nation. The Service has consistently met its accession goals since 1999 and this positive trend continued through fiscal year 2012. Our recruiting strategy is founded on a powerful organization and network of professional recruiters in communities across the country supported by a compelling, multi-layered, local, regional and national marketing campaign. In the recovering economy, the Air Force Recruiting Service (AFRS) is predicting challenging recruiting conditions from fiscal year 2013 through fiscal year 2016. We are projecting enlisted accession requirements will reduce by 2,661 to 26,376 for fiscal year 2013 and then stabilize at 27,085 in fiscal year 2014. The Air Force strategy to sustaining an All-Voluntary Force includes: Maintaining a Strong and Experienced Recruiter Force; Understanding the Recruiting Environment; leveraging the Power of Marketing; and leveraging Technology and Information Systems to Improve the Mission.

The AFRS' success is partially attributed to its advertising and marketing campaign that targets America's best and brightest youth across a broad slice with respect to race, gender, geography and socio-economic background. We are projecting a \$63 million advertising budget for fiscal year 2014—\$6 million less than this year's budget. Air Force advertising and marketing strategies continue to attract quality recruits as validated by our recent success in recruiting 99.5 percent of our enlisted accessions (EA) as high school graduates (HSG) while 98.4 percent of our EA scored in the top three mental categories (CAT I to IIIA) of the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB). Our fiscal year 2012 EA production quality outpaced the Department of Defense (DOD) standards of 90 percent HSG and 60 percent for CAT I to IIIA. The Initial Enlistment Bonus (IEB) program ensured AFRS recruited 100 percent of all critical skills accessions. We used the IEB program to target nine career fields for 6-year enlistments with the majority of these being Battlefield Airmen such as Combat Control and Pararescue. Our programmed budget for IEB is \$14.5 million in fiscal year 2014. We expect the fiscal year 2014 IEB career fields will continue to focus primarily on Battlefield Airmen.

The Air Force Reserve (AFR) will continue to focus on filling geo-specific vacancies in critical skills needed to ensure wartime capability. In fiscal year 2012, the AFR accessed 9,429 personnel against a goal of 9,229 obtaining 102 percent of their fiscal year 2012 recruiting goal. The AFR is projecting to finish at 100.3 percent of their 8,900 fiscal year 2013 recruiting goal and their fiscal year 2014 goal is also expected to be approximately 8,900.

The Air National Guard (ANG) achieved 100.7 percent of their officer and enlisted goal in 2012. They are on pace to meet their 11,600 (10,500 enlisted/1,100 officer) goal for 2013. However, the ANG is experiencing a percentage of losses not seen since 1989, as well as multiple mission changes across the country as a result of the 2013 NDAA.

ANG Incentive Program is a national program designed to attract and retain quality personnel in critical enlisted and officer career fields, with additional focus on Health Professionals (HP) and Chaplains. Other targeted commissioned career fields include Engineering, Intelligence, Cyber and Battlefield Airmen. The enlisted accession and reenlistment bonuses focus on critical skills within Aircraft Maintenance, Intelligence, Civil Engineering, Medical, and Battlefield Airmen. This effort includes a Local Program designed to assist units in recruiting and retaining personnel in critical enlisted and officer career fields, by wing and geographically separated unit.

The ANG's fiscal year 2013 Incentive Program Budget is \$88.5 million for Recruiting and Retention and includes HP Bonus, HP and Chaplain Loan Repayment, Officer Accession and Affiliation, Enlistment, and Reenlistment Bonuses. Funding covers initial payments for new contracts and anniversary must-pays for prior year contracts. The fiscal year 2014 Incentive Program budget of \$65.2 million continues to target all critical skills and professional officer specialties.

Overall, our Active component officer force continued to experience strong retention in 2012 with an average career length (ACL) of 14.8 years of service, a value just slightly below the all-time high of 15.9 in 2010—the highest since tracking began in 1993. Despite high retention trends, however, there are pockets of concern for our stressed career fields. Currently, 11 out of 96 officer career fields, 6 pilot

and combat systems officer career fields and 5 Special Operations Forces (SOF) and non-rated career fields, are stressed with high operational demand, low manning and insufficient retention. To stem attrition, we are excluding all stressed career fields when possible from targeted voluntary and involuntary Force Management programs in fiscal year 2013 and fiscal year 2014. Where necessary, we will add accessions and retrainees to stressed career fields to increase overall inventory and bring undermanned year-groups closer to required levels. Additionally, we offer Aviator Retention Bonuses and Critical Skills Retention Bonuses (CSRB) to specific skills and year groups in our stressed career fields to include Combat Rescue, Special Tactics, and Contracting officers.

Enlisted force retention rates remained high for the third year in a row; however, retention is still problematic for certain skills and year groups. Currently, 13 out of 329 enlisted career fields, specifically Battlefield Airmen, Intelligence, and Career Enlisted Aviator career fields, are stressed with high operational demand, low manning and insufficient retention. The Selective Reenlistment Bonus (SRB) continues to be the most effective, responsive and measurable tool for retention, encouraging airmen to stay and/or retrain into career fields with high demand requirements. Additionally, CSRB remains a vital tool to retain Senior Noncommissioned Officers (SNCO) in certain high-demand specialties experiencing manning shortfalls, and high operational demand.

The fiscal year 2013 budget for all Special and Incentive Pay is \$926.5 million, with recruiting and retention pays accounting for \$420.4 million. The remaining \$506.1 million of the total budget pays for health profession incentive pay, flying duty pay, hazardous duty pay and other special pays, such as Special Duty Assignment Pay and Foreign Language Proficiency Bonus/Pay. The Air Force allocated \$232 million of the Special and Incentive Pay budget in fiscal year 2013 for SRBs for 55 Air Force specialties, up slightly from 53 specialties at the end of fiscal year 2012 but down considerably from 78 specialties at the beginning of fiscal year 2012.

The fiscal year 2014 budget for all Special and Incentive Pay is \$894.2 million, with recruiting and retention pays accounting for \$412.5 million. The remaining \$481.7 million of the total budget pays for health profession incentive pay, flying duty pay, hazardous duty pay and other special pays, such as Special Duty Assignment Pay and Foreign Language Proficiency Bonus/Pay. The Air Force allocated \$232 million of the Special and Incentive Pay budget in fiscal year 2014 for SRBs and will continue to focus on Battlefield Airmen; Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance; and Career Enlisted Aviator career fields. SRB investments have shown to improve retention from 1 to 8 percent per SRB increment, depending on the reenlistment zone.

OPERATIONAL RESERVE

The Air Force has successfully employed the Operational Reserve concept for more than 2 decades. During this timeframe, the three components (Active, Air Force Reserve, and Air National Guard) have become an increasingly integrated force fully capable of supporting combatant commander requirements as a single seamless team. Continued expansion of Total Force associations will further enhance the operational effectiveness of the forces provided to combatant commanders. Under this concept, the components routinely train together at home station, which allows individual members of all three components to develop effective working relationships and team cohesiveness prior to deploying. Additionally, they develop an understanding and appreciation of the strengths (and inherent limitations) of each component.

Looking to the future, the Secretary and Chief of Staff of the Air Force have chartered the Total Force Task Force to take a holistic approach to provide strategic options on the appropriate Total Force capabilities mix to meet current and future Air Force requirements. Three Major Generals (one from each component) will be leading this effort. The task force will consider the strategic shifts driven by post-Afghanistan reconstitution and the new Defense Strategic Guidance. The expectation is for the task force to recommend policy, legislation, personnel, organizational, and force structure changes that would maximize the overall effectiveness of the Air Force's total force team in a budget-constrained environment.

Our Total Force Air Force will continue to be structured on a balanced foundation that relies on the strengths of each component, to provide and sustain the capabilities required in the years ahead. Total Force Task Force recommendations anchored on this principle will inform the Air Force Strategic Planning and Programming Process for fiscal year 2015 and beyond.

The Secretary of Defense recently approved the Air Force policy and procedures for Reserve involuntary mobilization authority under title 10 U.S.C. §§ 12304a and

12304b. The Air Force is prepared to implement § 12304a to involuntarily access the Air Force Reserve if needed to respond to a major disaster or emergency within the United States. We are working closely with the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve to develop the plans and specific missions where it may be necessary to augment the Active component for preplanned missions using § 12304b involuntary mobilization authority. We will apply this authority judiciously in order to ensure predictability for Reserve component members to minimize the impact to their families and employers. Appropriate use of this authority is being considered as we develop the Air Force input to the fiscal year 2015 President's budget.

SUPPORT TO AIRMEN AND THEIR FAMILIES

The Air Force will continue to prioritize quality airmen and family support programs to sustain the resiliency of our force. Our strategy to meet the Service's evolving demographics and demands is to tailor or eliminate services where appropriate and capitalize upon community resources to gain efficiencies where possible.

Our Airman and Family Readiness Centers (A&FRC) have made considerable progress implementing the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) requirements that will expand training and employment services for our Active and Reserve component members who transition from the military. The Air Force was compliant with the Veterans Opportunity to Work (VOW) To Hire Heroes Act of 2011 as mandated by law on 21 November 2012 and is on schedule for compliance with the Veterans Employment Initiative (VEI) Task Force goals by 1 October 2013. In support of VEI, the Air Force was the first service to pilot the redesigned 5-day TAP workshop and the Higher Education optional track at Joint Base San Antonio (JBSA) and the first to pilot the Small Business Administration's Entrepreneurship track Outside the Continental United States (OCONUS) at Royal Air Force Mildenhall, United Kingdom. During fiscal year 2013, all Air Force installations will complete the rollout with the addition of three 2-day tracks of Entrepreneurship, Technical Training, and Education and a Capstone ensuring that members are ready to make a successful civilian transition.

In fiscal year 2012, Air Force Child Development Programs supported more than 61,000 children ages 6 weeks to 12 years, with over 4,600 of these children having special needs care requirements. We have continued to focus on increasing our care capacity in our Child Development Centers, adding 5,794 childcare spaces from fiscal year 2005 to fiscal year 2012. The Air Force also participated in piloting the first centralized web-based DOD request for childcare system, which will provide our families with easier access to DOD-wide childcare options.

We are concerned about the effect Sequestration will have on our Child and Youth Programs in fiscal year 2013 due to potential Appropriated Fund (APF) civilian furloughs. The furlough of Child Care support staff could impact approximately 25 percent of our caregiving staff as well as our entire management and administrative team, who are charged with ensuring health and safety standards are maintained. To maintain these mandated standards, installations may be forced to reduce hours of operation or reduce class sizes, which may require single and dual working parents to adjust their work hours or find alternative care off base at a higher cost. Reduced staffing and construction project delays could also stall the opening of approximately 750 childcare spaces that are currently in different phases of construction. Due to limited off-base childcare options (particularly for infants and toddlers at many locations), the result may be growing on-base child care waiting lists at a time when community-based funding for such programs has simultaneously been cut.

The Air Force is equally committed to supporting Child and Youth programs that are designed for the unique requirements of our ANG and AFR members. The Home Community Care (HCC) Program continues to provide ANG and AFR members access to quality childcare services that are similar to those available to military assigned to or living on a military installation and provides free quality childcare during primary drill weekends. In 2012, HCC provided care for 7,632 children within 35 ANG and AFR units with 59 State licensed providers.

Recognizing our recent funding challenges and the evolving demographics and lifestyles of today's airmen and families, we are reviewing all Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) programs through customer satisfaction surveys and business analysis. Our goal is to determine how best to provide family and MWR programs and base-level support services in today's budget-constrained environment. For instance, we are focusing our resources on those core programs (ex: Food, Fitness, Child and Youth Programs) which best support ready, resilient airman and may be forced to make hard decisions to not fully support other programs (ex: Libraries, Outdoor Recreation). To support this initiative, we launched our Services

Transformation Project (STP) in July 2011 to conduct an Air Force-wide program business assessment of base-level service and support, MWR programs. Major Commands (MAJCOM) and installations were provided STP business assessment results with proposals to keep, divest or repurpose programs. These assessments contributed to Wing Commander decisions to eliminate 22 programs at various installations. Additionally, a STP team visited 8 test bases making recommendations to create Community Commons and Information Learning Centers among other recommendations that will combine MWR programs into a central location.

Airmen and family quality of life is also significantly enhanced by the contributions of our non-pay programs. The Army Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES) provides merchandise at an average savings of 24 percent compared to similar retail stores and gave back \$223.9 million in dividend contributions to military communities in fiscal year 2012. Additionally, the Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA) operates as a nonprofit organization and can save a family of four an estimated \$4,500 a year.

COMPREHENSIVE AIRMAN AND FAMILY FITNESS

The Focus of Comprehensive Airman and Fitness (CAF) is building resilience among our Total Force airmen and their families. While we have completed our mission in Iraq, airmen are still in Afghanistan where they have been for more than 10 years and in the Middle East for over 20 years. Continued high operations tempo at home and abroad coupled with downsizing the force and budget cuts stress the need to deliberately increase our focus on building strong, resilient airmen and families. Resilient airmen are better equipped to withstand, recover and/or grow in the face of stressors and changing demands. Many of our programs are designed to continue to build resilient airmen and families.

The planned way-ahead for 2013 through 2014 includes the development of a Virtual Wing-Man smart phone application, continued production of Master Resilience Trainers (MRT) and the rigorous analysis of scientific data collected to validate the effectiveness of the MRT training on First Term Airmen Center (FTAC) students.

SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

The Air Force remains steadfast in our commitment to prevent incidents of sexual assault, provide victim care where assault has occurred and hold accountable those who commit such acts, while protecting the due process rights of the accused. Our current and ongoing initiatives to achieve a zero tolerance environment are targeted toward prevention (dissuade, deter, and detect) and response (victim care and responsibility).

In fiscal year 2013, we stood up our first of several Integrated Product Team meetings, incorporating university experts and other subject matter experts, to assess our pre-command, senior enlisted and entry-level SAPR education and training curricula with the goal to make it more relevant, impactful and reality based. Increased emphasis on Investigations and Accountability included an Advanced Air Force Sexual Assault Investigations course and Special Victims' Counsel "Pilot" program to provide representation and advocacy throughout the investigation and prosecution processes by a specially trained Judge Advocate.

The Air Force also distributed a Wing Commander's SAPR Guide, developed by subject matter experts and Wing Commanders and Command Chiefs. The guide includes statistics, facts and talking points to help installation leaders encourage healthy conversations with their airmen. It was distributed to installation commanders, MAJCOM commanders, six area of responsibility commanders, and the ANG. DOD SAPRO recognized this guide for how well it was done.

In March 2013, HQ Air Force Office of Special Investigations (AFOSI) published new policy guidance to improve the investigation of sexual assault offenses. One change directs Command-wide use of AFOSI's new Sexual Assault Investigative Plan Worksheet and Sufficiency Assessment Tool in drafting written investigative plans. The tool will help focus collaboration between agents and military justice attorneys, as it integrates legal sufficiency (Articles 120, 125, and 80 elements of proof) with investigative sufficiency (i.e. investigative activities apt to reveal information probative to the elements). Additionally, HQ AFOSI has equipped its field units with cutting-edge alternate light sources to greatly enhance agents' ability to detect the presence of forensic evidence at sexual assault crime scenes. The field was also armed with new cyber tools that significantly improved agents' ability to identify and collect probative information from computers and cell phones.

The Air Force is assessing manpower requirements needed to execute fiscal year 2012 and projected NDAA for Fiscal Year 2013 requirements. Our goal is to increase manpower in policy oversight, education and training and legal/investigation roles.

We will comply with the requirements by establishing at least one full time Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Coordinator (SARC) and one full time Victim Advocate (VA) at each Air force host wing. Additionally, we are going a step further by placing additional SARCs or VAs at larger installations and those with higher risk populations (such as our training bases), while also providing a capacity for supporting expeditionary requirements. We have created standardized position descriptions for SARCs and VAs to facilitate hiring, and we are continuing efforts toward SARC and VA certification by 1 October 2013.

The Air Force SAPR office utilized the Unit Climate Assessment (UCA), a known commander's management tool, to proactively assess climate for Air Force individual units. Embedded in the Air Force Climate Assessment are six questions that illuminate four dimensions of the SAPR climate factors. These Air Force climate factors and results detailed areas for further work in 2013 and beyond, namely more information geared towards junior enlisted, civilians and lessening the barriers to reporting. Additionally, the UCA revealed that our Bystander Intervention training and reporting options are both understood and found to be highly viable tools. In 2013, we will launch a follow-on survey to the initial 2010 Gallup survey which established a baseline measurement of actual prevalence and incidence of sexual assault in the Air Force. This repeat measurement will be compared to our baseline data to assess the progress of our SAPR program. As we move forward with our program, ongoing biannual measurement and tracking will allow the Air Force to continue monitoring changes and improvements.

HAZING

The Air Force has a zero tolerance policy for hazing, bullying, maltreatment, and discrimination as it is contrary to the standards of conduct that we expect of all airmen—entitling every airman to dignity, respect, and equal opportunity. Guided by our core values of Integrity, Service and Excellence, the Air Force utilizes a comprehensive approach to prevent and/or respond to such allegations or observations. We believe that using a comprehensive, continual training approach throughout an airman's career not only ensures that these concepts and preventative measures are delivered at the right time, but more importantly, become part of the Air Force culture and help to ensure good order and discipline. If an allegation of hazing is substantiated, it may be punishable by court-martial or nonjudicial punishment under several punitive Articles of the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

INTEGRATION OF AIR FORCE COMPONENT PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

To better support our airmen and families, we continue to move forward with our "3 to 1 Total Force Personnel Management" initiative. This effort integrates personnel management policies, processes and procedures across the Active, Reserve, and Air National Guard components to create a more efficient and effective Air Force.

In May 2012, we successfully completed a high level review of all laws, regulations and policies to determine where barriers to integration existed. This review yielded 69 recommendations, spanning over two dozen human resource activities. We learned that few legal barriers exist to the integration of Air Force Human Resource policies, but there are many opportunities for us to consolidate directives and instructions, while still allowing for component uniqueness where warranted. This will pave the way for significant process improvement, facilitate better collaboration and coordination across Air Force components, optimize warfighter support and improve service levels for our airmen.

A few examples of change include the establishment of a Total Force Recruiting Council which is analyzing consolidated storefronts and conducting a Total Force review of schoolhouse curriculum; the implementation of enlisted performance reports for Traditional Guardsmen; process and training enhancements to remedy issues associated with transition between components; and the deployment of an electronic operating support system for our Total Force promotion and force development board processes. This will transition manual and cumbersome paper boards to a new technology that will garner significant efficiencies in the coming years.

Finally, the most significant outcome from this effort to date is the institution of a Total Force Human Resource Management governance structure which stood up on 1 April 2013. For the first time in our Air Force's history, we will have a unified Total Force forum where we can discuss challenges and shape shared solutions towards a common Total Force human capital strategy.

DIVERSITY

The Air Force recognizes a diverse force is a military necessity and we continue to focus efforts on advancing our strategic priorities of institutionalizing diversity, attracting, recruiting, developing and retaining a diverse and inclusive workforce of highly qualified total force individuals who reflect the rich tapestry of the Nation we serve.

Over the past 2 years, we have made significant progress in our efforts to execute these priorities. First, in response to the Presidential Executive Order (13583) establishing a Coordinated Government-Wide Initiative to Promote Diversity and Inclusion in the Federal Workforce, we recently updated our Diversity Strategic Roadmap. The Roadmap is an action plan that directly supports Air Force diversity objectives and is designed to move us forward in key areas essential for success and posture us to compete for a finite pool of candidates in a changing nation. Additionally, in July 2012, the Air Force published Air Force Instruction 36-7001, Diversity, which provides policy and oversight for Air Force Diversity and guidance for its implementation within the Air Force.

Outreach programs remain key to attracting and recruiting diverse talent. In partnership with the Office of Diversity Management and Equal Opportunity within the Office of the Secretary of Defense, our sister services and Air Force total force stakeholders (active duty, Guard, Reserve and civilian service), the Air Force plans, coordinates and provides oversight to national-level diversity outreach programs supporting our priorities, goals and objectives. In fiscal year 2012, our Global Diversity Division collaborated with the AFRS to conduct a targeted advertising campaign aimed at attracting high performing African American and Hispanic students who might qualify for U.S. Air Force Academy (USAFA) or Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps programs. In fact, the recruiting service devoted 20 percent of its fiscal year 2012 marketing budget to initiatives targeting specific minority communities (African American and Hispanic) to locate high performing applicants and counter cultural biases against military service.

U.S. AIR FORCE ACADEMY

The USAFA continues to thrive as a world-class university, creating strong leaders of character that are prepared for today's strategic environment that includes a broad range of threats and an unpredictable set of challenges.

USAFA cadets have performed impressively over the past 12 months. The graduating class of 2013 has a Marshall Scholar and the U.S. News and World report ranked USAFA's undergraduate management program #1 in the Nation. The Academy's undergraduate engineering program is ranked #4 in the Nation, civil and computer engineering programs are ranked #5 nationally, and USAFA has the #2 air and space engineering program for the 12th consecutive year.

Respect for human dignity and integrity are at the core of the USAFA's leadership development. The Academy continues to enhance sexual assault prevention and response programs by identifying new ways to advance a climate of dignity and respect, and to more completely integrate sexual assault, harassment and violence prevention into Academy life and learning. Additionally, the Academy continues to conduct Religious Respect Training which is receiving national attention as a benchmark program.

USAFA is committed to recruiting a diverse force and its numerous recruitment efforts and programs such as Summer Seminar, Diversity Visitation, and Admissions Forum have succeeded in many aspects and serve as the foundation for future efforts. The Summer Seminar Program targets high performing, diverse students who would be USAFA direct entry, USAFA Prep-School or Falcon Foundation candidates. The Diversity Visitation Program brings prospective minority cadets to the Academy for a 4-day program, which includes academics, interaction with senior leaders, tours of the Prep School and airfield and attendance at a sporting event. The USAFA Admissions Forum Initiative conducts up to ten admissions events per year in strategically selected locations across the country that have under-representation of target populations at the USAFA.

WOUNDED WARRIORS

The Air Force is dedicated to continuously improving the support to our combat and seriously wounded, ill, and injured airmen by leveraging prior Air Force investments including the Recovery Care and Coordinator Program (RCCs). In fiscal year 2012 the Air Staff, Air Force Personnel Center and Office of Surgeon General jointly planned and reengineered the Air Force Recovery Coordination Process to integrate the medical and nonmedical care of all Air Force wounded, ill, and injured into one

7-phased Continuum of Care process. This initiative eliminated redundancies and minimized confusion for our recovering airmen and their families. This effort produced a single centralized and coordinated line of command for operations and a decentralized execution process. In addition, a singular referral and identification process was implemented for determining eligibility for these specialized services and added to the combat ill and injured population, the management of care for all seriously ill and injured. This design approach relates to airmen's perspective by better meeting their anticipated needs in advance and leading to improved sustained care. The Recovery Team now provides concentrated care while simultaneously providing services to all current ill and injured and results in a 30 percent reduced active case load ratio to the current 45/1 (40/1 is DOD standard). As a result, the AF now manages this population in an improved and inclusive process, which currently stands at 2,583 (498 ill; 1,299 psychological; 786 injured [including TBI]). Of this total population 1,048 are still on active duty and 1,535 have separated from the AF. In summary, the AF focuses its support of airmen and their families through medical and non-medical programs on behalf of DOD and in coordination with the VA as follows:

- DOD Medical Support: Clinical Care & Case Management
- Line Non-Medical Support: Directorate of Airman & Family Care and Recovery Care Coordinators
- VA Support: Poly Trauma Centers, Case Management & Federal Recovery Coordinators

Air Force sponsored, along with other Services, Adaptive Sports Camps to assist recovering airmen to heal not only physical, but socially, emotionally and spiritually. Warrior Game participation has grown from 27 to more than 100 new athletes in fiscal year 2012 and 50 participants have been selected for the 2013 Air Force Wounded Warrior Games team. In addition to Warrior Game participation, the Air Force purchased adaptive sports equipment now located in its fitness centers and established a dedicated adaptive sports staff under the new Air Force Wounded Warrior directorate to host advanced adaptive sports and recreation camps and clinics. As simply put by AF Staff Sgt. Larry Franklin, a program participant, "This program saved my life. Being part of a team again gives me a sense of pride and makes me feel like I'm a part of something."

AIR FORCE YELLOW RIBBON PROGRAM

The Air Force Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program (YRRP) has promoted the well-being of Air National Guard and Air Reserve airmen and their families. Driven by high tempo deployment cycles, these events have taken on an increased importance given the increased accumulated stress on our ARC airmen and their families. The events, offered at key stages in the deployment cycle, have clearly addressed the need for the providing critical support information to family members and more importantly, given the multiple deployments, supported the build-up of resilience skills to better cope with the significant stress on families caused by absence of their airmen.

The value-added propositions of these events, which further allow for the development of inter-family support teams, cannot be overstated. Many of these ARC units are not in close proximity to Active Air Force airmen and family care centers, so the YRRP events serve as form of resilience support and training.

INTEGRATED DISABILITY EVALUATION SYSTEM

The purpose of the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES) is to maintain a fit and vital force. Air Force uses the IDES to determine if airmen who are wounded, ill, or injured are still fit for continued military service and quickly returns those who are. If they are deemed unfit for continued service, the IDES process ensures servicemembers receive a Veteran's Affairs (VA) disability rating and are aware of their compensation and benefits before they transition from military service. We are aggressively working to meet OSD's goal to process airmen through the IDES in 295 days. Currently, the Air Force Active component is averaging 362 days processing time from referral for disability evaluation to the date of VA benefits decision or return to duty. Within the IDES, the Medical Evaluation Board (MEB) phase performance is averaging 63 days, which is well below the IDES goal of 100 days. However, the Physical Evaluation Board (PEB) phase is averaging 141 days, which falls short of the IDES 120-day goal.

The Air Force is committed to improving IDES timeliness to better serve airmen as they rehabilitate, reintegrate or transition from military service. We are diligently working various measures to improve the IDES timeliness. We have realigned manpower and made hiring a priority within the Air Force Personnel Center

to assist the PEB. The Air Force has partnered with OSD and the VA to enhance IDES information technology (IT) to create a seamless and integrated system to improve IDES timeliness. While DOD and VA develop an enterprise IT solution, the Air Force is exploring short-term IT solutions to expedite the transfer of IDES cases between the Military Treatment Facilities (MTFs) and the Informal and Formal PEBs. In addition, we have improved communications between the VA, the Air Force Personnel Center, and the Air Force Surgeon General to ensure consistency of IDES tracked data. Finally, the Air Force rolled out its IDES pre-screening initiative to ensure the right airmen are referred into the IDES. The IDES pre-screen process provides a centralized review at the Air Force Personnel Center's Medical Retention Standards Branch of potential IDES cases which may not meet retention standards. The intent of the pre-screening process is two-fold, to identify airmen who may be returned to duty (RTD), instead of entering the IDES, thus preserving resources and reducing hardship on the airman and the unit. Additionally, the process identifies airmen, who need a complete Medical Evaluation Board, and refers them to the IDES, preserving readiness and a fit force. The pre-screening process does not alter any stage of the IDES, airmen rights remain intact and the Air Force ensures due-diligence. As of 10 April 2013, the Informal PEB adjudicated 978 cases referred into the IDES by our Personnel Center's Medical Retention Standards shop as a result of pre-screening. Of those, only 27 were returned to duty by the Informal PEB, for a 2.7 percent RTD rate, far below the 15–20 percent RTD rate historically seen prior to pre-screening implementation. We expect these major improvement strategies to improve the Air Force IDES timeliness by fall 2013.

On 13 June 2012, former Secretary of Defense, Leon Panetta, directed the Department to conduct a comprehensive review of mental health diagnoses for prior servicemembers who completed a disability evaluation process from 11 Sep 2001 to 30 Apr 2012. The Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness is the delegated authority to establish the Special Review Panel as a collaborative undertaking of the DOD Physical Disability Board of Review (PDBR) and the Military Department Boards for Correction of Military Records. These reviews will include a re-evaluation of servicemember records whose mental health diagnoses were changed to their possible disadvantage during the disability evaluation process. The PDBR has coordinated with the Services and has defined the resources required for the timely completion of these important reviews.

SUICIDE PREVENTION

Air Force leaders at all levels are committed to suicide prevention through our wingman culture. We do not view suicide prevention as belonging to either personnel or medical communities, but to all members of the Air Force community, including commanders, supervisors, and peers. Suicide prevention is a Total Force responsibility. This is the premise upon which our Community Action Information Board (CAIB) was built and the cornerstone of the Air Force suicide prevention program as we established it in 1996. We believe evidence shows it is the necessary framework for effective intervention across the enterprise. Prevention starts with leadership involvement from the top down and across all spectrums of the Air Force.

In a wingman culture, airmen look out for fellow airmen. We teach them to identify risk factors and warning signs for suicide, and to take appropriate action once these indicators are identified. We call it: Ask, Care, Escort (ACE). We have taken Air Force-wide training to a new level with required Frontline Supervisor Training for the highest risk career fields. We are increasing our mental health provider staffing across the Air Force by more than 300 professionals by 2016. All of our mental health providers are trained to use the Air Force Guide to Managing Suicidal Behavior, a clinical guide for assessing, managing and treating suicidal ideation.

Within the Air Force, we have not seen a link between suicide and deployments, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, or Traumatic Brain Injury. For our Total Force, the most frequently linked risk factors to suicide continue to be relationship problems, legal or administrative problems, work related issues, or a combination of these factors.

We are keenly focused on reducing stigma through positive commander messages and by expanding opportunities to access mental health resources such as embedding mental health providers in our primary care clinics. Although the 2012 Air Force Climate Survey found stigma is still an issue for many airmen, we are encouraged that most reported they are willing to seek help, and 90 percent see leadership as genuinely interested in preventing suicide.

We continue to research how we can better identify those at risk for suicide to achieve the earliest possible intervention. One such study explores how airmen's use of social media impacts their relationships, help-seeking, and emotional well-being.

We are also conducting research that examines the role of life events and social stressors in the suicides of specific clusters of airmen.

In addition, we continue to collaborate with the Defense Suicide Prevention Office, our sister Services, and the Department of Veterans Affairs to leverage the full extent of our internal resources, combining our experiences and best practices to improve our suicide prevention efforts.

CONCLUSION

Our airmen and their families will always remain as the cornerstone to the success of the U.S. Air Force. The enduring contributions provided by Air Force airpower are a direct result of the innovative spirit that resides in all our airmen. Investments in our Air Force capabilities are inextricably linked to our Service's ability to recruit, train, develop, support and retain a world-class, All-Volunteer Force. We are confident that our Air Force will continue to overcome any challenge or adversary if we, as a Service and a Nation, keep faith with our commitment to train and equip the highest quality airmen.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you all for your statements. We have also received a statement for the record from the National Guard Association of the United States. Without objection, it will be included in the record.

[The information referred to follows:]

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY
PETER J. DUFFY
DIRECTOR, LEGISLATION
NATIONAL GUARD ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES
BEFORE THE
UNITED STATES SENATE MILITARY PERSONNEL SUBCOMMITTEE OF
THE SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
24 April 2013**

Chairwoman Gillibrand, Ranking Member Graham, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on behalf of the National Guard Association of the United States to address critical personnel issues facing members of the National Guard and their families. It will provide factual background, analysis and recommendations for the Committee to consider.

The Unique Citizen Service Member

The National Guard is unique among components of the Department of Defense in that it has a dual state and federal mission. While serving in a Title 10 active duty status such as Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) or Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), National Guard units are under the command and control of the President. Upon release from active duty, members of the National Guard return to all parts of their home states under the command and control of their governors where they train, not only for their federal missions, but for their state missions such as fire fighting, flood response and providing assistance to civil authorities in a variety of possible security and disaster scenarios.

While serving in their states, members are scattered geographically with their families as they hold jobs, own businesses, pursue academic programs and participate actively in their civilian communities.

Military service in the National Guard is uniquely “community based”. The culture of the National Guard remains little understood outside of its own circles. When the Department of Defense testifies before Congress to present its programmatic needs, it will likely recognize the indispensable role of the National Guard as a vital “Operational Force” but it will say little about the benefit disparities, training challenges and unmet medical readiness issues that exist for National Guard members and their families at home. These conditions exist before, during and after deployment. The National Guard Association of the United States asks this Subcommittee to recognize the value of the National Guard in a budget short environment and understand that the personnel issues of the National Guard are different from those of the active forces, and in some cases radically so. We ask that they be given a fresh look with the best interests of the National Guard members and their families in mind in reviewing the recommendations set forth below.

Future Roles, Missions and Structure of the National Guard

Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel has directed a Strategic Choices and Management Review of the Defense Department to examine the utilization of resources and structure within the Department of Defense in the modern era of evolving strategic asymmetric threats in a and budget challenged environment. Deputy Defense Secretary Ashton Carter will lead the effort with assistance from the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Martin Dempsey.

It is essential that the Adjutants General and council of Governors National Guard be involved in key processes within and without the Pentagon in any bottom up review process examining the roles, missions and force structure of the National Guard. Without active participating as the key stakeholders in the processes that will form recommendations going forward on these issues, the National Guard would passively bear the consequences of recommendations relative to the National Guard borne of assumptions lacking a factual basis that too often emerge from closed rooms.

The reckless recommendations made by the Air Force in 2012 to slash equipment from the Air National Guard unsupported by data and devoid of reasoned input from the Adjutants General and Council of Governors underscore this message.

In reviewing the President's Budget and entertaining testimony on the future force mix of the military that may follow, please find for your review and future reference a link to an independently written discussion paper titled "[National Defense in a Time of Change](#)" published as part of The Hamilton Project by the Brookings Institution. The paper offers cogent recommendations for potential defense budget savings of \$500 billion over 10 years.

Authors Adm. Gary Roughhead, U.S. Navy (Ret.) and Kori Schake, both of the Hoover Institution, recommend a redesign of the military's force structure (page 13): "We must redesign our forces and budget to our strategy, and not to equal service share between branches.... Putting more of the responsibilities for ground combat into the combat-proven reserve component is both consistent with the new demands of the evolving international order and justified by the superb performance of National Guard and reserve units in our recent wars."

Although Roughhead and Schake believe that the current structure of the Navy and /Air Force would meet their redesign needs, they assert that Congress must reduce the current Army by 200,000 from 490,000 while adding "100,000 reservists and National Guardsmen closely entwined in the regular rotation whose principal mission would be arriving in a mature theater for sustained combat."

On page 14, Roughhead and Schake cite the drag arising from the 781,960 civilians currently employed by DoD and the resulting inefficiencies arising from an over reliance on private contractors. "If the military cannot deploy or sustain he fight without those contractors market pressures will bid up the cost of civilian contractors until the cost advantage is negligible. In fact, we are probably beyond that cost point. We would reduce

civilian personnel by a greater proportion than uniform reductions.” (According to Bloomberg, DoD currently employs 700,000 private contractors with nearly 5,000 working in the office of the Secretary of Defense alone).

Please also find links to the [Reserve Forces Policy Board \(RFPB\) report](#) showing the fully burdened life cycle costs of the Reserve components to be less than one third per capita those of the active forces and to a [summary RFPB transmittal letter to the Secretary of Defense](#) whose office had requested the report.

Lastly, please find a link to the National Guard Association's [RFPB Fact Sheet](#), which we feel sums up the above issues.

Thank you for your consideration of these studies.

Funding authorized mental health programs

In the numerous post mortem articles emerging at the ten year anniversary of Operation Iraqi Freedom, major media acquiescing in Department of Defense data routinely reported that there were 33,000 serious injuries arising from OIF.

However, data gathered by the Rand Corporation in a study on the “Invisible Wounds of War” published in 2008 reported then approximately 300,000 veterans of OIF and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) suffered from PTSD or major depression and about 320,000 veterans then reported a probable Traumatic Brain Injury during deployment. These numbers would only have increased since then. Sadly, these injuries are not considered “serious” although for many the effect will be debilitating lifelong.

Suicides throughout the military and among veterans continue at an alarming near epidemic rate. The Army reported for 2012 a record 325 potential or confirmed suicides, with 96 of those occurring in the Army National Guard and 47 Army Reserve. The Army number exceeds the 219 Army deaths in operation Iraqi Freedom. The VA reports that 22 veterans take their lives daily.

Congress’ previous efforts to deal with Reserve Component (RC) suicides, however well intended, have fallen short because of critical funding errors. In 2011, Congress passed Section 703 of the National Defense Authorization Act for 2012 NDAA for fiscal year 2012 which amended 10 USC 1074a by authorizing the Secretary of Defense to embed mental health professionals to provide RC members with ready access to screening and treatment during unit training assemblies. Section 703 further authorized the Secretary of Defense to conduct suicide prevention and post suicide response training for the RC.

However, during the opaque 2012 NDAA joint conferencing process, the conferees switched funding of the embed program from the flush Defense Health Programs(DHP) to the limited and fully accounted for RC Operations and Maintenance (O&M) accounts. This funding decision kept the embed programs from being implemented in the at risk

states in most need. Adding insult to injury, DHP turned in nearly \$800 million of unspent funds at the end of fiscal year 2012 after turning in a like amount in 2011.

The National Guard Bureau (NGB) Director of Psychological Health (DPH) had actively supported the embed program in the 2012 NDAA which, in California, had proven its effectiveness overcoming geographical, temporal and stigma barriers by giving drilling Guard members ready access to known and trusted mental health professionals during drills via command direction or self referrals. Sadly, the insertion of "O&M" funding in Section 703 crippled the efforts of the NGB DPH to establish embed programs in the states that would need it most. The approximately 96 Army Guard suicides in 2012 and bereft families bear witness.

The 2013 NDAA recently authorized a pilot for NGB to establish long sought after community mental health programs. Although the DPH for NGB has developed the contract and methodology for implementing the pilot, she again needs the money.

Importance

- National Guard and Reserve personnel in states at high risk for suicide and dangerous behavioral health conditions need convenient access to community based mental health professionals for screening, care and referrals.
- On site access to embedded mental health professional during training assemblies has proven successful in overcoming geographical, stigma and time barriers that might otherwise bar a member from similar services in a rural or underserved community.

Recommendation

- The National Guard Association of the United States urges the Congress to fence no less than \$ 30 million for the National Guard Bureau Director of Psychological Health (DPH) to use to establish embedded mental health providers authorized by the 2012 NDAA in states determined by the DPH to be at mental health risk and to fund the community mental health pilot programs established in section 706 of the 2013 NDAA..

Post Deployment Health Assessments and Mandatory Medical Screenings at the Home Station

For much of the war our deployed members were not adequately screened for service connected injuries. The long acknowledged lack of screening puts our Guard veterans at a severe disadvantage when filing veterans' disability compensation claims for war related injuries that were not adequately documented by the services. This is particularly true for Post Traumatic Stress injuries which may not have even presented until well after separation.

The VA acknowledges the processing problem that it has in trying to establish the necessary service connection component relative to injuries for which a Guard veteran seeks compensation that lack a documentation base.

Since 1997, pursuant to 10 USC 1074 f, the Secretary of Defense has been obligated to maintain records in a central location recording the medical condition of members before and after deployment. Unfortunately, that office did not fulfill this obligation for many members of the Guard who find themselves bereft of the needed medical records to support their war related injury claims.

It is imperative post-deployment, that our members while still on active duty deployment orders, be examined confidentially at the home station by qualified health care providers in order to address the under reporting of physical and mental health conditions that occurs on the self administered Post Deployment Health Assessment(PDHA). The PDHA is currently being completed by a homeward-bound member at a demobilization site often several states away from home.

When the PDHA is completed, it is accompanied by the "instruction" that the self assessing member may be "medically held" on active duty at the demobilization site if he or she reports a medical condition requiring that action. To avoid the risk of being held at the demobilization site after a long deployment, members are simply not fully reporting their physical and behavioral injuries. This under-reporting not only delays treatment but can prejudice later claims with the VA for service connected disabilities arising from conditions not previously reported on the PDHA.

What is needed forthwith is a free and confidential reporting of physical and mental health conditions at the home station by all members, stigma free, to a health care provider trained to elicit that information and to screen for those conditions without the fear of being medically held far from home. If medically holding the member is advisable, it should be done as close to home as possible.

The irony in the current PDHA under-reporting phenomenon is that a medical hold is usually in the best interest of the member and his or her family as it allows pay and benefits to continue during treatment for a condition that may well render the member unemployable once discharged. The medical hold should not cynically be administered as a threat to discourage reporting of injuries when, if properly administered in a friendly environment, it offers substantial benefits to the members and his or her family.

Insurance companies, in performing their due diligence before the issuance of an insurance policy do not allow an applicant's self assessment of health to be the only determinant. Neither should the military. If geographical separation from families is causing under reporting and non-reporting of physical and psychological combat injuries on the PDHA, then moving this process to the home station would likely produce a better yield at a critical time when this information needs to be captured in order for prompt and effective treatment to be administered. If necessary and appropriate, the examining health care provider in coordination with the National Guard J-1 and State's Surgeon

General can cause the member to be retained on active duty locally for further treatment and evaluation.

This is especially critical in screening for behavioral conditions. It is absolutely imperative that members returning from deployment be screened with full confidentiality at the home station while still on active duty by trained and qualified mental health care providers from VA staff and/or qualified health care providers from the civilian community that could include primary care physicians, physician assistants and nurse practitioners who have training in assessing psychological health presentations. Prompt diagnosis and treatment will help to mitigate the lasting effects of mental illness.

Please see the copy of a November 5, 2008 electronic message to NGAUS from Dr. Dana Headapohl (a practicing occupational physician in Missoula, MT) set forth in the Appendix which strongly recommends a surveillance program for our members before they are released from active duty. Dr. Headapohl opines the obvious in stating that **"...inadequate medical screening of our members before they are released from active duty is "unacceptable to a group that has been asked to sacrifice for our country." (Emphasis added)**

Recommendation:

The National Guard Association of the United States recommends that Congress support authorization and appropriations for programs that will:

- Require the Post Deployment Health Assessment for National Guard members to be administered at the home station before releasing members from active duty
- Mandate medical and behavioral screening of all National Guard members returning from deployment by health care professionals at the home station before releasing the members from active duty.

Modernize Alert Reporting for the National Guard

Unlike officers in the Air Force Reserve who can start drawing pay immediately upon telephonically reporting from their homes for alert or stand by duty, 37 USC 204(c) prohibits alerted Air National Guard (ANG) members from receiving federal pay on orders of 30 days or less until they physically report to their military unit.

This archaic law initiated in 1903 requires alerted National Guard members to travel often considerable distances from their homes to physically report to their units in order to begin federal service and receive pay even though they return immediately thereafter to their homes where they will remain on alert or stand by status.

Many members serving in Air National Guard reside hundreds of miles from their units or even in other states. For ANG members assigned to Alaskan Air National Guard crews who reside in the lower 48 states, physically reporting to the Alaskan unit could involve thousands of miles of unnecessary travel when a simple phone call or electronic message would suffice as it does for the Air Force Reserve.

This double standard for the Air Guard and Air Force Reserve rooted in an obsolete law from horse and buggy days makes no sense today. Moreover, fiscal audits and subsequent penalties for non-compliance with 37 USC 204(c) are increasingly burdensome. The Government Accountability Office Comptroller General has ruled in decision B-152487 that Guardsmen are entitled to federal pays after receiving and complying with telephone orders, from competent authority, to federal service in a stand-by or alert status. <http://www.gao.gov/products/B-152487#mt=e-report>

Importance

- DoD relies on the ANG to efficiently and effectively comply with mission requirements that necessitate Guardsmen starting federal service in a stand-by or alert status.
- It is unnecessary and wasteful to require ANG members to physically report to their military units before returning to their domicile to start alert procedure.
- A double standard should not exist with Air Force Reserve performing the same federal missions being eligible for military pay by simply telephoning their military unit to report for duty.
- Compliance with 37 USC § 204(c) deters voluntary acceptance of missions while being costly, inefficient and avoidable with modern personnel accountability methods that make this 1903 stipulation obsolete.

Recommendation

The National Guard Association of the United States urges the Congress to:

- Amend 37 USC 204(c) to authorize alerted National Guard to report to their units telephonically or electronically to begin federal service and entitlement to federal pay and allowances in an alerted or stand by status.

Reject the recommendation of the Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation (QRMC) to cut National Guard drill pay in half

NGAUS welcomed the recommendations from the QRMC released in 2012 that would reduce duty statuses from 30 to six for calling members of the Guard and Reserve to duty, and allow our members to receive their retired pay upon their 30th anniversary of service.

However, the QRMC is totally wrong with its recommendation to cut drill pay in half by equating a drill day with one day of “regular military compensation,” which the QRMC claims would “ensure equitable pay for similar service” with the active component. This reduction of pay would also reduce the number of retirement points earned from four to two for a drill weekend and the retirement pay benefit.

The QRMC discusses the vague possibility of discretionary incentive pay options to bolster a reduction in drill pay should it occur, but those discussions without workable recommendations are illusory. The current drill pay structure is fair and much simpler in comparison.

Unlike the active forces, drilling National Guard members work a 12-day “work week” when a MUTA 4-drill weekend occurs between full-time 40-hour-plus work weeks. They are not compensated for the time and expenses for travel to drills, physical training, medical readiness, family care and performing extensive unit administrative responsibilities.

In assessing equitable pay for similar service, the QRMC ignores the fact that active duty forces in stateside assignments receive full pay and allowances for the customary idle weekends plus 2 ½ days of leave per month. This amounts to full pay for more than one third of a month for down time.

A just and more comprehensive recommendation from the QRMC would have been to keep the current drill pay structure and increase lagging benefits to “ensure equitable pay for similar service.”

Importance

- According to the study released in 2013 of the Reserve Forces Policy Board, the full life cycle costs of the active forces are three times those of the National Guard and Reserve.
- The current superior life cycle cost economies of the National Guard and Reserve compared to the active forces do not require a downward adjustment in pay.
- The needed adjustments to improve economies for maintaining full military capabilities must come from the outmoded active force structures still locked in a Cold War paradigm.

Recommendation

The National Guard Association of the United States urges the Congress to:

- Reject the recommendations from the Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation (QRMC) to cut national Guard drill pay in half

Fix the broken medical evaluation board process

The Medical Evaluation Board process is broken resulting in a current four year backlog for Reserve Component personnel awaiting fitness determinations. Some personnel are separating from the military with the termination of enlistments and officer retirements without a fitness determination or the military disability finding that would otherwise follow the MEB evaluation process when appropriate. The bottleneck arises from the limited number of military physicians staffing the MEBs and the current policy that restricts MEBs to the often far removed Military Treatment Facilities creating severe access problems for injured Guard. Increasing MEB physician staffing from civilian, Veterans Administration and Reserve Components sectors and locating MEBs in the states and territories would alleviate the backlog. This would enhance readiness by increasing opportunities and catch points for physicians to clearly document in a timely manner a Soldier's medical condition and any duty limitations. Defense Health Programs has historically been turning in nearly a billion dollars annually in unobligated funds which could well be spent in this effort.

Recommendation

The National Guard Association of the United States urges the Congress to:

- Authorize Off Site Medical Evaluation Boards with Adjudicatory Authority for Reserve Component Personnel; and require the Department of the Army to establish within each state and territory Medical Evaluation Boards (MEBs) staffed by a combination of civilian occupational medicine, Veterans Administration and Reserve Component physicians to adjudicate medical retention standards for National Guard and Reserve personnel, in accordance with Army regulations

Eliminate the Fiscal year Requirement for Deployed Service to Reduce the Eligibility Age for Members of the Reserve Components to Collect Retirement Pay

The Fiscal Year 2008 National Defense Authorization Act reduced the archaic 60 year eligibility age for retired members of the Ready Reserve to collect retirement pay three months for each aggregate of 90 days per fiscal year of active duty performed in Title 10 status in support of a contingency operation or in Title 32 status in responding to a national emergency. Unfortunately, the qualifying service must occur within a single fiscal year thereby not crediting otherwise qualifying service spread over two fiscal years. Historic provisions applied only to service after January 28, 2008, the date of enactment of the 2008 NDAA.

For example, if one served 90 days in OIF from September 1, 2008 through November 29, 2008, that service would not be credited in reducing the retirement eligibility age. However, if the person served 90 days in OIF from October 1, 2008 through December 29, 2008, that service would be fully credited. This distinction unfairly penalizes those who serve bravely with orders spanning two fiscal years.

Recommendation

The National Guard Association of the United States urges the Congress to:

- Eliminate the fiscal year requirement that requires the 90 days of qualifying cumulative service in a contingency operation needed to reduce the 60 year eligibility for Reserve Component members to collect retirement pay to be served in a single fiscal year.

APPENDIX

Excerpted from a 2008 e-mail from Dana Headapohl, M.D., to Colonel Peter J. Duffy
Colonel Duffy - I am sending links to articles about the importance of providing medical surveillance examinations for workers in jobs with specific hazardous exposures. I believe this approach could be modified to evaluate National Guard members returning from Iraq and Afghanistan for PTSD, TBIs and depression.

The OSHA medical surveillance model includes the following basic elements:

1. Identification of potential hazardous exposures (chemical, physical, biologic).

2. Screening workers for appropriateness of placement into a specific work environment with such exposures. For example, individuals with compromised liver functions should not be placed in environments with unprotected exposures to hepatotoxins.
3. Monitoring workers after unprotected exposure incidents. Examples- monitoring pulmonary function in a worker exposed to a chlorine gas spill, or following hepatitis and HIV markers in a nurse after a needle stick injury.
4. Conducting exit examinations at the end of an assignment with hazardous exposures, to ensure that workers have not suffered adverse health effects from those exposures (including concussive explosions or other traumatic events).
5. Surveillance exams of all types (OSHA mandated surveillance programs, population health screening for chronic disease risk factors) have been a part of my practice of Occupational and Preventive Medicine in Montana for the past 22 years. Early diagnosis and treatment is especially essential for potential medical problems facing military members serving in Iraq and Afghanistan - post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury (TBI) and depression. Timely diagnosis and aggressive treatment is essential especially for these problems, to maximize treatment success and functioning and to mitigate suffering.

There are a number of organizations that design and implement medical surveillance programs. There is no reason the same approach could not be applied to the specific exposures and potential medical problems facing National Guard troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. With proper program design and local provider training, this program would not need to be costly. In my clinical experience, male patients especially are more likely to report symptoms of PTSD, TBI, or depression in the context of an examination rather than questionnaire. Findings can present subtly, but if untreated can have devastating effects on the individual, family and work place.

In my practice, I have seen a number of Vietnam veterans, and more recently National Guard members who have returned from deployment in Iraq or Afghanistan, who have been inadequately screened and/or are suffering unnecessarily because of geographical barriers to adequate treatment. This is unacceptable treatment of group that has been asked to sacrifice for our country. They deserve better.

I applaud your organization's efforts to lobby for better post deployment screening and treatment of the National Guard members returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Dana Headapohl MD

<http://www.aafp.org/afp/20000501/2785.html>

This is about military surveillance exams:

https://www.desc.dla.mil/DCM/Files/QSRHealth%20Medical%20Exam_1.pdf

<http://www.lohp.org/graphics/pdf/hw24en06.pdf>

<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/sbw/management/wald.html>
http://www.ushealthworks.com/Page.aspx?Name=Services_MedSur

Disclosure Statement

Neither NGAUS nor I have received in this current year or within the past two fiscal years any federal grant or contract.

Peter Duffy, Colonel US Army (Retired)
Legislative Director
NGAUS

Senator GILLIBRAND. I am going to talk about a couple of issues in my 7 minutes. I want to go through sexual assault, hazing, suicide. I have enormous respect for the men and women who serve in the military, and that is why I am absolutely committed to ending violent crime, sexual assault, and rape among those in uniform.

The new DOD health related behavior survey of the Active Duty military personnel was released this week, and I was disturbed by the findings that more than one in five women on Active Duty in the armed services reported experiencing unwarranted sexual contact by a fellow servicemember. The rate for men was 3.3 percent. Those rates are absolutely unacceptable, and the men and women who serve in our armed services are the military's most precious resource, as you said, Secretary Lamont. Clearly the system is failing to protect them from the worst kinds of violence.

As you may know, I am working on legislation that will remove the initial disposition authority from commanding officers and put them in the hands of experienced military prosecutors. Over the past few months, we have been examining this change, and one of the concerns that has been voiced is that it will disrupt the good order and discipline of the unit.

In your opinion, what precisely about this change would disrupt good order and discipline? What other recommendations do you have for dealing with this crisis and actually getting results? You may start, Secretary Lamont.

Mr. LAMONT. One thing that detracts from the dignity and respect of a soldier, and we have carefully considered it, we are very much aware of our most recent challenges in this regard.

While I have not seen your proposed legislation, I am aware of bits and pieces of it. I will leave for General Bromberg the concerns that you made reference to with regard to good order and discipline.

Senator GILLIBRAND. General Bromberg?

General BROMBERG. Yes, Senator. Certainly we are just as concerned as you are obviously, and it is just not good enough the progress we are making. We need to continue to make progress. Certainly we want to look at all options on how we can improve as we go forward.

I think the team approach we put into effect, we are in the third year of our campaign plan. This year, we are focusing on achieving cultural change, and I think cultural change is key to our success

as we move forward. We need to continue to push that at every level across the Services.

But the teaming approach we have added over—almost 829 full-time victim advocates and sexual assault response coordinators. They are all trained. They are all nationally certified. They have 80 hours of training. We have also added over 9,000 collateral duty part-time victim advocates and sexual assault coordinators. We have added 20 special prosecutors, 30 additional lab technicians, 10 additional headquarters, what is called special highly qualified experts, to help with this process to enable the commanders to more fully understand the program, and increased training of all our Criminal Investigations Command agents with another additional 80 hours of special investigating procedures.

We think this team approach that we have put together is an alternative to go forward, to include paralegals, victim liaisons from the local judge advocate office as well. So achieving cultural change, including the approach of training, as well as prosecution and putting this larger team together is an alternative we certainly are pushing forward on.

Senator GILLIBRAND. How much time do you think those changes will take to start getting the numbers down, because obviously the difference between the 2008 report and the 2011 report was in the wrong direction. Now, that might just be a difference in feeling comfortable reporting, so we do not know why the change increased the number. How long do you think you will see results, tangible results, see numbers coming down, see reporting going up?

General BROMBERG. I think it is always difficult to put a time on cultural change. But we have seen an increase in our own internal surveys that we are looking at right now and balancing those with other reports we are seeing to make sure we are looking at the right data.

We have seen an increase in the propensity to report. Our last survey showed a 28 percent propensity report. Our most recent survey shows a 42 percent propensity report for females. Now, I am not saying that is—

Senator GILLIBRAND. What is that report called?

General BROMBERG. It is an internal operational troop survey that we have done internal to the Army.

Senator GILLIBRAND. You said “propensity report?”

General BROMBERG. Propensity. The propensity of a female to report that she has been either harassed or assaulted. We have to go back and really dig in the numbers, so I caution on the numbers. We are not claiming that as a victory, but certainly it may be a leading indicator.

We want to continue to do that. We want to continue to watch those leading indicators. A slight increase for males as well.

Mr. LAMONT. I do want to point out, though, that the actual assaults reported did drop this year. Of course, nowhere where we want it to be, but I would like to believe it is an indication that some of these programs, and particularly with regard to the investigators and the special prosecutors will be having an effect.

Senator GILLIBRAND. How did the numbers drop? You mean between 2008 and 2011, or in your own internal numbers?

General BROMBERG. Our internal numbers. That is one of our challenges when we look at the surveys, Senator, we have to make sure we are all looking at the same data on the surveys. I have not seen the reports you are referring to in detail yet, so as we peel those numbers back, then we will be able to tell the differences, because the numbers could be totally different for the different surveys.

Senator GILLIBRAND. I would like you to furnish all your internal tracking so that we have the benefit of that.

Admiral Van Buskirk? Secretary Garcia? General Milstead?

Mr. GARCIA. If I could start, Senator.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Go ahead.

Mr. GARCIA. The Navy leadership shares your belief these numbers are unacceptable, and we appreciate the approach you have taken with your proposed legislation and sharing it with us and letting us offer input.

We concur that the court martial process as we know it has evolved since World War II. The introduction of specialized prosecutors, defense counsel, a robust appeals process, has changed. That is why we are working at the Secretary of Defense's direction to revisit and reform the convening authority process as it exists now.

But know that we are not waiting on that process, and we are not living with these numbers. As we had a chance to visit the other day, you know that we have hired additional full-time sexual assault response coordinators and advocates and instituted a fleet-wide training programs. Every sailor and marine in the Navy has received training this year. Bystander intervention, training is taking place at every fleet concentration center.

Special training for our Judge Advocate General and Naval Criminal Investigation Service agents ensure they are armed with the optimal prosecution and investigative tools available. You know about our expedited transfer policy. You know about the elevation of the sexual assault initial disposition authority. More than that, we are seeking to, as my Army colleagues referenced earlier, change the command culture where events like this could take place. We know, for example, there is an undeniable correlation all too often between incidents of assault and alcohol use, and that is why we are in the process of introducing across the Navy and across the Marine Corps, at every command, the use of alcohol detection devices, which is a new step that we have never taken before, to educate our personnel and our force about responsible use.

I am aware of the study you cited earlier. I echo the concerns voiced earlier that the numbers are challenging, and we are digging into that. Within those numbers, for example, an increase in unrestricted reports versus restricted reports is a trend we want to see. An increase in personnel being willing to report events on the lower end of the unwanted sexual contact spectrum is positive if they are experiencing an atmosphere where they feel more comfortable coming forward.

We have our teeth into this, and we are committed to this, Senator.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you. My time has expired, the Air Force can submit your answer for the record.

[The information referred to follows:]

Mr. GINSBERG. The challenge we face regarding sexual assault in the military is complex. Sexual assault damages unit cohesiveness and mission accomplishment at the unit level. Because of this impact, our commanders need to be at the forefront of the fight to reduce sexual assault in the military.

One example of how good order and discipline could be directly impacted by removing initial disposition authority from commanders is with respect to the ability to enforce discipline through nonjudicial punishment under Article 15 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice. If an airman commits an offense that is appropriately disposed of through nonjudicial punishment under Article 15, the commander cannot compel the member to accept an Article 15. In the Article 15 process, if an airman accepts the forum, his commander assumes the role of trier of fact as well as sentencing authority for the offense alleged. However, an airman has the right to demand trial by court-martial instead. The ability of commanders to swiftly deal with those charges would be impacted if the commander did not have the authority to initiate court martial for an airman who turned down an Article 15 and essentially could render void one of the key tools for commanders to enforce good order and discipline through nonjudicial punishment by Article 15.

When commanders consider the appropriate level of discipline before exercising their initial disposition authority, they are advised by a judge advocate. By teaming a commander and a judge advocate, we achieve the purposes of military law. The commander fulfills the obligation to preserve good order and discipline in the pursuit of combat capability; the Judge Advocate General fulfills the purpose of the independent provision of legal advice in the pursuit of justice.

We continue to enhance our sexual assault prevention and response program to eliminate sexual assault from the Air Force, improving specific initiatives in the realms of prevention, investigation, accountability, and assessment in line with the Secretary of Defense's strategic guidance.

Senator GILLIBRAND. But if we have a second round, that will be my first question. Thank you. Secretary Graham, I mean, Senator Graham.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Mr. Secretary. [Laughter.]

Sorry, Senator Graham.

Senator GRAHAM. Does it pay more and you get a plane? I will take it. [Laughter.]

Senator GILLIBRAND. More than that.

Senator GRAHAM. The country has enough problems without making me secretary of anything. [Laughter.]

TRICARE, from the Army, Navy, and Air Force's perspective at the Secretary level in 30 seconds or a minute, tell me about the sustainability of TRICARE.

Mr. LAMONT. Our health care costs are rising out of sight, as you can imagine. We would support the Secretary of Defense's efforts to increase minimally our fees where necessary.

Senator GRAHAM. They really have not been adjusted since 1995, have they?

Mr. LAMONT. No. While we do have cost-of-living adjustments and our other benefits have gone up for our servicemembers, our TRICARE fees and costs to them have remained flat. I think we are really going to have to address that in the future.

Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Garcia.

Mr. GARCIA. Senator, the numbers speak for themselves. Our medical health system as a whole has gone from a \$19 billion enterprise in 2006 to a \$49 billion.

Senator GRAHAM. Nineteen to \$49 billion?

Mr. GARCIA. That is right.

Senator GRAHAM. Wow.

Mr. GARCIA. Like you, we know how critical this benefit is to our personnel, but it has to be sustainable. We are willing and in support of the efforts to enact sensible and reasonable adjustments to do so.

Senator GRAHAM. Air Force.

Mr. GINSBERG. Senator, obviously, sustaining an All-Volunteer Force is the Department's most critical priority, and medical readiness, and the medical care we provide for our airmen, and all of our servicemembers, is obviously vital.

That said, of course, the trend in health care costs is certainly rising, and in the flat to declining budgetary environment, that means that there is additional pressure on other areas of our budget, including force structure, modernization, and readiness. So, if we do not address those larger issues and make sure we strike that right balance. The continual formula for the Air Force is continually shrinking to become a smaller force, a less ready force. So again, we have to make sure we take care of our people, but then do it in a sustainable fashion.

Senator GRAHAM. So the glide path for the budget is pretty much not growing very fast, but health care costs are. So eventually that is not good news for the budget, and we have to make it more sustainable.

From an Army perspective in about 1 minute, tell us what sequestration is doing on the personnel side, even though pay is exempt from sequestration. From a morale point of view and a readiness point of view, on the personnel side, including families and civilians, how is this playing out in the Army?

General BROMBERG. Yes, Senator, if I could, first of all, as I am sure you are aware, we have had to curtail training in about 80 percent of the force, focusing on Afghanistan forces, those next deployers, as well as those in Korea.

Additionally, we have curtailed for the first time six combat training center rotations at our national training center. I do not recall a time we have ever done that before. We have cut our flight training hours by 37,000 hours. That takes about 500 aviators out of the force. That will take us a couple of years to recover that, and aviation is one of our most used assets in Afghanistan.

Senator GRAHAM. If you do not fly a lot, it is dangerous, right?

General BROMBERG. Yes, sir, very much so. So that is going to be significant for us. We have had to cancel some courses this year, leader development courses. We have had to defer maintenance, both the depots and also down to the units. We have had to release over 3,000 temporary employees, and additionally, we had to reduce the Reserve component and medical readiness. We have had to cut that budget as well.

For the families as far as morale, those civilian cutbacks have then translated into reduced services on installations, so everything you can think about that services a family on a post, camp, or station is going to see less hours, less availability. That, of course, creates great angst in the force.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay. The Navy.

Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. Senator, I would like to focus on—you asked specifically about the morale, and I think from the great part of our jobs and being in the personnel business, you mentioned, is

about the people. I get a chance to actually go visit all of our homeports and actually hold townhalls and all hands call our people.

I would say that the morale is good, yet what is cropping up more and more recently is uncertainty in terms of as they listen to the debates that are being carried among the Services and here in Washington, DC, they are watching very closely how they can be impacted in terms of the budget.

Senator GRAHAM. Are families beginning to feel it?

Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. Yes. Well, they are questioning are services going to be available. So we are reassuring them that, yes, the services are going to be there. The counseling services, our family and readiness services are going to be there. Our critical components of our 21st century sailor and marine are going to still be there.

However, while we are able to do the services, there is a mortgaging of the future because we may not be able to do repairs to the facilities that they are operating in and modernize at the same time. So we are foregoing some of our future perhaps enhancements at the bias towards providing the services on a day-to-day basis.

So a little bit of the uncertainty I think is creeping in there with what is next. You mentioned health care, is health care still going to be there for them? So it is important for us to go out, talk to them, hear their concerns, and address them straightforwardly to let them know what is going on.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you.

Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. But overall, I think the morale still remains good, but there is some uncertainty there.

Senator GRAHAM. The Marines?

General MILSTEAD. Thank you, Senator. The U.S. Marine Corps, 61 percent of our budget goes to the military personnel account. Of that 61 percent, only approximately about 4 percent is discretionary. So a large chunk of our money goes for people. I will echo the uncertainty.

But we have been able to, with the authorities that we have had, the commandant has been able to shift monies around in 2013. We have been able to do that. But 2014 and out—

Senator GRAHAM. If we do this over 10 years, will it be devastating?

General MILSTEAD. Yes. I would say that the Marine Corps is going to have to make some hard decisions. You mentioned that the personnel account is protected. It is protected this year, but the President may not choose—that is a policy decision. He could unprotect it.

But regardless of whether it is protected or not next year, we cannot afford to have the other 39 percent or so go to our readiness, as the Admiral pointed out, in our O&M accounts. The Marine Corps will be forced to do some things, some draconian things, and they may have to do with industry.

Senator GRAHAM. And—

General JONES. Sir, many of our civilian employees are also military spouses. As we cut, as furlough would hit the civilian spouses, it will hit the joint income of the family. But you have to remem-

ber, morale is also part of the mission. We have very proud airmen, and we are very proud of what they do every day, and as we take down flying hours by 203,000 flying hours across the Air Force, as sustainment modernization and restoration accounts are hit significantly under sequestration, all of that begins to eat away at the comfort level of their ability to do the mission.

Our airmen and their families feel the uncertainty of what is going forward in the future because of sequestration as it impacts them personally as a family and professionally as a mission.

Senator GRAHAM. One final thought. It is one thing to be inconvenienced and not have the nicer stuff. People, I think, understand that they are sacrificing their lives in military. But one thing I think would destroy morale is to believe that your spouse is not well equipped and well trained.

VOICE. Senator, is your microphone on?

Senator GRAHAM. Yes, sorry. I said the one thing that will hurt family morale more than anything, they can live without conveniences. They are a tough lot. But if they believe that their loved ones are not well trained and well equipped, we are going to destroy the family.

Thank you.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Senator Blumenthal?

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you, Madam Chairman. I would like to pursue a line of questioning that Senator Gillibrand began. I am pleased to be working with her on some of these sexual assault initiatives, and thank her for her leadership.

To come back to the question that she raised, and I am not sure it was answered, General Bromberg, if prosecutorial decisions were removed from the commanding officer either for sexual assault or more broadly, would that pose an insuperable obstacle to the good order and discipline of the military?

General BROMBERG. Senator, it could. It could very well, and that is what we have to look at. We have to look at the authorities and responsibilities of the commander, not just in this area, but across the whole spectrum of what we ask commanders to do from the company level, at the captain level, all the way through the general office level, particularly in a deployed environment where you expect officers to maintain good order and discipline in combat operations as well as when people are in garrison. Of course, this problem spans both deployment situations as well as at the home station.

I think we have to look at the fundamental reasons why we want the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) and the authority with our commanders in the field. So I think there is a real potential. We have to discuss it, and we have to understand the full range of impacts of those kinds of—

Senator BLUMENTHAL. But you are willing to discuss it, because if there were certain kinds of crimes, and these are really predatory crimes, violence often, that kind of decision as to whether to commence a criminal prosecution in some instances might well be at least lodged in some independent authority.

General BROMBERG. I think right now today, Senator, with the special teams we have put together advising the commander, it

gives the commander that capability in the first place. So I would like to start to have that discussion.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Those special teams include a victim's advocate or a survivor's advocate?

General BROMBERG. They include the special prosecutors, the highly qualified experts, the additional training of the criminal investigation units—

Senator BLUMENTHAL. I know that the Air Force, and maybe I can ask you, General Jones, when I received a briefing from General Welsh, he described the victim's advocate program that the Air Force was implementing. I wonder if you could describe for us perhaps some of the most recent lessons learned, some of the experience, and your evaluation of it.

General JONES. Sir, I would be happy to. We started with 60 legal experts who we trained to be special victim's counsels to give the victims a voice in this process, because the process can be intimidating. The process can be daunting, and many victims will tell us that they are revictimized as they go through the system.

When we appointed 60 attorneys to specifically focus as special victim's counsels, the number of cases they took quickly ramped up to over 250 cases. I say "over 250" because literally every day we go back to look at the numbers. They are continuing to increase. It is empowering the victims to feel that they can go through with the process.

In speaking with national experts that everyone recognizes, individuals such as Anne Munch and David Lisak, are real experts in this area. They will tell us that one of the benchmarks that you should look at is how many people did not follow through with the allegations once they were sexually assaulted, that did not see things through to the end.

You can argue that the number of people who report sexual assaults may go up if you have a good program and people feel comfortable reporting. There is evidence that if people do not feel like there is trust in the system, the numbers will go down. So the experts will tell us the number of people who will not follow through is something we should look at.

The fact that we have instituted this special victims counsel within the Air Force, the fact that our chief of staff called in every operational level commander, every wing commander, to specifically look them in the eye and tell them that we are going to get after sexual assault in the Air Force. We had 790 sexual assaults in the Air Force last year. One is too many. We have to be able to go make sure that the individuals are protected, that the individuals, when they come forward with a crime, that we investigate the crime, we punish the perpetrators.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. We have at this point, and I apologize for interrupting you.

General JONES. No, that is okay.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. We are all limited in terms of the amount of time we have. Do you have benchmarks or metrics that—and I know they may be very difficult to establish, show the success of this program, although it has been operating for a relatively short period of time.

Mr. GINSBERG. Senator, this program just started in January, but it is something we are looking at very carefully. We get reports frequently from our Judge Advocate General, Lieutenant General Harding. We are going to do some interim reports and then a more final report as this goes on, but the initial results, as General Jones says, is that this is making the victims very comfortable with the legal and investigative process.

They have already gone through what can be a life altering experience, and then they are going to go through this very fatiguing investigatory and prosecutorial process. Now to have somebody to help interpret this process, help be there with them, along with the full-time victim advocates that we are bringing on, and the sexual assault response coordinators. You have this whole sort of interdisciplinary team that is there to back up victims as they go through.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Have the other Services expressed interest or inquired about this program?

Mr. GINSBERG. Senator, we are certainly very open with the other Services about our program and how we are doing it, but I certainly do not want to characterize where they are.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. I want to express my appreciation for the good work that you are doing in this area, and suggest that perhaps the other Services might, as you generally do, learn from the experience of your colleagues in your brother and sister Services.

If I may ask, General Milstead, I know that there has been a plus up of the Marine Corps cyber command, Marine security guards, and special operations. As the Marine Corps draws down, are you concerned that the increase in personnel in these various commands could detract from or hollow out the strength of the other units?

General MILSTEAD. Senator, as we have incrementally downsized the Marine Corps, we have done it through a structure review. We have gone at this through a deliberate process of analysis.

We are currently on target for a 1,821 force, and that 1,821 force sufficiently fills the needs to keep the Marine security guard. The extra 1,000 marines that has come out of late is additive to that. The Commandant has made it very clear that the cost of those personnel and the cost for their training, the O&M for those personnel and for those billets must be above and beyond what is in our budget piece.

As far as the cyber community, that has an increased appetite, and we have been feeding it, and we will continue to do so in an analytical way. That has been a part of the process. So as we downsize, you will not see a corresponding decrease in those two forces. They are manned for a specific mission, and they will be kept at that.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you. My time has expired, but I want to thank every one of you for your extraordinary service to our Nation in a difficult time. I very much appreciate your being here today and your very excellent testimony. Thank you.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you, Senator.

Senator Ayotte.

Senator AYOTTE. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

I would ask, first of all, Secretary Garcia and Admiral Van Buskirk, about the civilian furlough impact in the Navy. I am very proud of the work done at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, having visited there recently, and talked to them about the civilian furlough impact on the maintenance schedule for our fleet.

Obviously, I think this is a situation that ends up being penny-wise, pound foolish because we will get behind on the maintenance schedule, and will not be able to have our fleet ready obviously. Then it costs more in the end as we are looking forward to the maintenance costs here for our submarine fleet. I just wanted to say I think it is critical that the hiring freeze be lifted or waivers approved, particularly for critical areas, like maintenance of our submarine program.

Recently it has been brought to my attention that the Navy has developed a plan that could allow the Navy as well as the Marine Corps, General Milstead, to use its funds within existing appropriations to avoid the civilian furloughs all together. Do you anticipate the Office of the Secretary of Defense will permit the Navy to move forward with this plan?

Mr. GARCIA. Senator, I appreciate the question, and I know you are aware that from the beginning of this process, the Navy's position has been that furlough is the last resort. We have developed daily plans to minimize—the number, as we speak, is 14 days—to bring that number as far down as possible. But there are tradeoffs, and this is a deliberative process across DOD. We are working with them every day, including as recently as a session with the comptroller and our Secretary of the Navy yesterday.

In the meantime, we have no alternative but to—our jobs are to manage our workforce such that if the furloughs do go forward, the impact on readiness, on long-term maintenance, is as minimal as possible, spreading those out where we can, trying to drive that number as far down as possible. Scott?

Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. I would just like to add that I think you hit it on the mark. Our biggest concern lies in the maintenance areas because that is directly associated with our ability to maintain a fleet ready and ready to deploy.

Senator AYOTTE. Yes. You get behind on those issues.

Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. Yes, ma'am. Of course, we are very concerned about that. We are also concerned about it from the total force aspect. One of my contemporaries also mentioned here about the impact on morale. As this goes forward, it is one that we are concerned with because this hits just one specific area of our workforce. But still the burden of the work is going to be there and have to be picked up by the remaining civilians who are there, and uniformed service, and Active and Reserves. So we are watching it very carefully. Certainly as low as we can get in terms of the furlough days is the better for us to be able to manage.

From a personnel perspective, I represent as well training and education uniquely as chief of naval personnel. So we are just as concerned there in terms of the furlough days because we have many civilians who work in the training environment that are the instructors that work in our school houses. Therefore, we are concerned about potential impacts to the throughput of our sailors who

then have to go—will be manning the ships to fulfill—to backfill those who are leaving. So it concerns us in that area as well.

Senator AYOTTE. I appreciate that it certainly concerns all of you. My concern is that we know that certainly the Navy can avoid the civilian furloughs, has a way forward to do it. It is up to OSD right now.

I understand what they are saying about looking total force, but we have a situation where we are going to pay for this in the end. I hope OSD actually goes forward with the plan that the Navy has put forward. I will leave it with that.

I wanted to ask about the Army Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES). Secretary Lamont, in your prepared testimony, you said that fiscal year 2012 was the first full year in which the Army used the IDES Army wide, and that it has eliminated many of the sequential and duplicative processes found in the respective Legacy systems.

Thank you for you doing that. I appreciate it. I applaud your efforts. But currently, what is the average time for a soldier to process through IDES?

Mr. LAMONT. We still exceed over 400 days in that.

Senator AYOTTE. Obviously, I think we can all agree that is totally unacceptable.

Mr. LAMONT. Yes, we do agree.

Senator AYOTTE. I know that in your prepared remarks, you said that soldiers starting IDES today will complete the process in less than 295 days. Is that true?

Mr. LAMONT. That is certainly our goal, and we expect to be there by the end of this fiscal year.

Senator AYOTTE. Let me ask you this. Please, do not tell me you think that 295 days is acceptable either.

General BROMBERG. Two hundred and ninety-five is the duty goal, Senator, but what is most important is the care they get. Whatever we do, whether it is a complex case to a simple case, some will get through in 180 days, but they get the appropriate care with the appropriate compensation with appropriate benefits in the amount of time that we desire. That is our primary goal first.

Senator AYOTTE. But you are not setting the ultimate goal at 295 days, are you?

General BROMBERG. That is the DOD goal right now, and that is probably pretty reasonable for what the process—

Senator AYOTTE. That is where we are going to keep the goal.

General BROMBERG. Ma'am, it may change in the future, but we need to meet that goal first.

Senator AYOTTE. No, I want you to meet it, but do not tell me that that is where we are going to stop because I just do not think that is acceptable.

General BROMBERG. We will not stop there, but we will never shortchange the medical care that these folks need to get.

Senator AYOTTE. I think we are certainly all in agreement on that.

General BROMBERG. It does take a while for complex cases.

Senator AYOTTE. I have to say, certainly thank God you are all in a better—having been in a hearing the other day with Secretary

Shinseki before the VA, I mean, at least it is better than what is happening in many of those cases there. But we still have a significant coordination issue obviously with the VA that needs to be addressed. It is really important because we just hear from too many people that are waiting too long.

Mr. LAMONT. Well, we have been very fortunate, frankly, because Congress did give us the ability to increase the resources necessary for our health care workers and the people who are involved in this process. Through the years, we have now standardized our process. We understand where we are going, and our throughput is much, much better than it was before. In fact, we may have contributed, because of that unexpected success, to the VA's problem in that we have created a backlog for them that may not have been able to compensate for without those additional resources.

Senator AYOTTE. Well, at least you got a system online. They are finally getting their system online. I mean, it is taking too long for these things. I know you had a comment, Secretary Ginsberg.

Mr. GINSBERG. Just to add to the discussion of the DOD standard. This is something, of course, of prime interest to our Secretary of Defense and Deputy Secretary. Periodically they will get the Service Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, and those responsible for personnel, to look up and down the various stages of the IDES and say, is this reasonable? What can we do to improve it? Is this really a good metric that is in place. So a critical concern is to make sure that we are moving everybody through the process, and that the standards that are being set are reasonable.

Senator AYOTTE. I thank you all very much for being here today and for your service. This is a very important issue that I look forward to continuing to work with you on, so that we can obviously get our servicemembers evaluated as quickly as possible. I know that you are focused on making sure they get the care that they need in the interim. But we all share the same goal.

I appreciate you leading in difficult times with sequestration, and I thank you for what you are doing.

Senator GILLIBRAND. We have time for another round, so if you would like to stay, you can have another 7 minutes.

I would like to ask a little bit more about cyber. I appreciated Senator Blumenthal's focus on that. The fiscal year 2014 budget indicates a large investment in our military cyber capabilities. The Pentagon approved a major expansion of the U.S. Cyber Command, increased ranks from 900 to 4,900 personnel, or create the cyber warriors. I understand you are going to fortify DOD's own networks, help guide executive offense attacks, protect critical infrastructure like power grids and power plants.

Senator Vitter and I have a bill called the Cyber Warrior Act, which provides the National Guard to serve a robust role in providing cyber experts to the Department. I understand that General Alexander is seeking thousands more cyber personnel, and that the Services do not have the adequate experts among your active duty.

What is each of your Services doing to recruit and retrain individuals with the skills needed for military cyber requirements? Do you need additional legislative authority to track these individuals to military Service? Is there a better way to make use of our Na-

tional Guard and Reserve to make use of cyber skills resident in our society? Why do we not start with the Air Force?

General JONES. Ma'am, we are looking at how we have been doing cyber for a while in the Air Force, but we are looking at how we take that next step, how we retain and recruit these very specialized individuals. Many of them today are military. We can use recruiting bonuses. We can use continuation bonuses. But under sequestration, all bonuses will be getting severe scrutiny as we look to reduce the budget.

Right now we do not know of any special legislative authorities we would need at this point, although we are still evaluating that. But we just have to make sure we are not being caught up in the old way of thinking as we look down at what clearly is going to be a new form of warfare.

Mr. GINSBERG. Ma'am, if I could just dovetail on General Jones' remarks and talk specifically about the role of the Air Reserve component, Guard and Reserve. As we go forward and figure out what are the requirements to staff up to this new cyber command, we are going to make sure that we are looking at the portion of that mission that the Guard and Reserve can contribute to very carefully. This is certainly relevant. The Guard and Reserve could bring some very key contributions.

You need a continuity of expertise in this mission area. We do not move people in the Guard and Reserve at the same level, so you need somebody who understands the details, understands the change in technology. That could very well be a mission that the Guard and Reserve take on more. We have a process in the Air Force to really look at what the Air Force mission requirements are over the long term, and then think mission area by mission area, what is the best balance among the various components.

Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. Senator, I think nothing like that—as I look across this table, all of us who are sitting at this table, we are collectively working with OSD on this very issue, sharing our best practices, our lessons learned as we are trying to all, I think, work jointly towards attacking this issue, and collectively working towards what should be the incentives that we apply. What should be the makeup of the people that make up our cyber warriors, the seniority, the ratings, the ranks, the MOSs? I think you should be encouraged by how well I think the Services are working towards providing this critical capability for our national defense.

Additionally, we are looking at all those things to see if there are legislative things that we do need, and that is what we all have been working on to make sure we do this together jointly so there is no fratricide between us as we go forward, or with the other agencies. Clearly, there are a lot of skill sets that are demanded from our people which would be in demand for other agencies to use. So to make sure we are working with the other agencies that are involved in the cyber area, that we attack it jointly and look towards how we build the workforce, how we sustain it.

So I think, again, you should be encouraged by how well I think we are working towards this to solve those issues, look to see where there are seams.

General BROMBERG. Senator, yes. Very similar to my colleagues here, looking at everything in detail. But there is definitely a place

for the Reserve component, particularly when we look at the particular skillsets we need.

We are going to start by using our existing forces obviously and build from those capabilities. We have already started screening. It does not matter what you are doing today, but do you have the right skills and attributes that we would look for in cyber warfare?

We also believe there might be the need for legislation if we want to look at something along direct commissioning, going out into the civilian market and trying to pull people in. But of course with that will come dollars, and I think we will have to talk in the future about what kind of incentives because I think to maintain this talent and not have it transferred to the civilian sector back and forth, we will have to talk about compensation at some point. A very unique skill set. From my time at the U.S. Strategic Command, a couple of years ago I saw the same thing happen as we started this off. So we would be very sensitive to that, and we will bring those proposals forward jointly, I believe.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you. That sounds wonderful. I really want to work with you on this and to develop the plan, and whatever support you need we want to make sure we get it for you because it is such an urgent issue.

Since I have a minute and a half left, I want to return back to hazing and suicides. Obviously the suicide rate is horrible. Suicide is not a military specific tragedy, but I would like to know what you are doing specifically to prevent suicides.

I have heard that for a lot of the servicemembers, there is still a stigma associated with seeking mental health services, and there is a fear that it could end a member's career. So what is being done specifically to encourage servicemembers to come forward? The increase in suicide among people who have never been deployed is especially troubling, so what are we doing for that particular group?

Now, with regard to hazing specifically, two of the recent suicides were New Yorkers, Private Danny Chen and Private Hamson McPherson. They were both minorities serving in the military, and it has been suggested that the lack of diversity in the military played some role in the hazing that led to their suicides.

It is my understanding that hazing is not an enumerated offense in the UCMJ, leaving convening authorities with limited options for charging the perpetrators. Do you believe with that specifically we should change the UCMJ to make hazing a criminal offense? Just more broadly, what is your status reporting on hazing? What policy changes do you propose? Do you agree that increasing diversity will reduce instances of hazing based on individuals being different? What are your Services doing to increase diversity? Whoever wants to take it first.

General BROMBERG. Just in time, ma'am, very quickly, we have already changed our regulations as far as hazing. We have also modified the UCMJ to include where that is chargeable, and that is with hazing. We will follow up with the details on that.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Okay.

General BROMBERG. Because it is a much more longer answer.

As far as the stigma on suicide—Ready and Resilience Campaign in the Army. Again, we will take this for a follow-up. We will give

you a full detail. That is now we are approaching it, building resiliency in individuals and engaging leadership.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you. Any other—

Mr. GARCIA. If I could start with the suicide challenge. If time permits, Admiral Van Buskirk and General Milstead can take you through the specifics of the programs. You will hear things about the DSTRESS Line. You will hear about the effort to end the stigma of raising their hand. The fact that every marine or sailor who have spent 30 days or greater with boots on the ground will receive a mental health assessment without having to raise their hand. Everyone gets it.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Great.

Mr. GARCIA. We will do it again 120 days later. You will hear about the mobile training teams that are out in theater affirmatively seeking out our individual augmentees and assessing their mental health. They can get into those details.

But if I was to give an overarching departmental wide perspective on this challenge, it is this: perhaps the most vexing piece of this is that, as I suspect you are aware, 50 percent of our suicides—our worst tragedy—are nondeployers. Of those, 80 percent have never gone outside the proverbial wire. When we drill down on these tragedies, and we drill down on every one, what we find are all too often, as you alluded to earlier, non-military components that came together to cause this individual to take the most tragic action.

Personal finance, relationship issues, professional challenges, stress, and that is why we have enacted a series of programs from enhanced financial management for our junior enlisted personnel and their families to address each one of those. If time permits, I know the flag officer—

Senator GILLIBRAND. You can submit a full answer for the record.

[The information referred to follows:]

Mr. GINSBERG and Lieutenant General JONES. We do not believe the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) should be amended to include an enumerated offense for hazing. Under its current construct, our military justice system has multiple tools that can be used to respond to incidents of hazing.

Violating the Department of Defense (DOD) anti-hazing regulations is an offense under Article 92 of the UCMJ and subjects an offender to the possibility of a dishonorable discharge and confinement for up to 2 years. In addition, the offender could still be accountable for any underlying offenses committed during the hazing (most commonly assault under Article 128, UCMJ). There is no shortage of enumerated offenses under the current UCMJ with which to charge misconduct otherwise characterized as hazing.

Although section 534(b)(3) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013 requires each of the Service Secretaries to report the methods currently implemented to track and report incidents of hazing, and Section 534(b)(4)(E) requires an assessment of the feasibility of establishing a database to track incidents of hazing, no requirement currently exists for any of the Services to formally report hazing.

Data on hazing in the Air Force, however, is indirectly collected through use of our Judge Advocate General (JAG) Corps' Automated Military Justice Analysis and Management System (AMJAMS) database. AMJAMS is an offender-centric database used by the Air Force legal community to track the administration of justice for airmen suspected of any UCMJ violation that could result in referral of court-martial charges or nonjudicial punishment. Offenses are tracked in AMJAMS according to the specific UCMJ article or articles suspected to have been violated in a particular case. Since there is no specifically enumerated offense under the UCMJ for hazing,

a query of hazing offenses in the Air Force is accomplished by searching the narrative fields of the database files for key words.

In the past 5 years, the Air Force has had six reports of hazing, with five of those reports substantiated. We have no evidence that there is any link between diversity in the Air Force workplace and our five substantiated reports of hazing. While there are many benefits to increasing diversity in the workplace, it is not clear to us that it will have any impact on incidents of hazing.

We are working hard to identify specific areas of interest in under recruited geographic labor markets to enable us to attract and recruit the highest quality, diverse individuals to serve in our Air Force. In FY12, our Global Diversity Division partnered with the Air Force Recruiting Service to conduct a targeted advertising campaign in direct mail, digital media and print aimed at attracting high performing African American and Hispanic students who might qualify for U.S. Air Force Academy (USAFA) or Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps (AFROTC) programs. In fact, the recruiting service devoted 20 percent of its fiscal year 2012 marketing budget to initiatives targeting specific minority communities (African American and Hispanic) to find high performing applicants and counter cultural biases against military service.

In addition to the recruiting service's efforts, the USAFA's numerous recruitment efforts and programs, such as its Summer Seminar Program, Diversity Visitation Program and Admissions Forum Initiative have been successful in many areas and serve as the foundation for the future. The Summer Seminar Program targets high performing, diverse students who would be USAFA direct entry, USAFA Prep-School or Falcon Foundation candidates. The Diversity Visitation Program brings prospective minority cadets to the Academy for a 4 day program which includes academics, interaction with senior leaders, tours of the Prep-School and airfield and attendance at a sporting event. The USAFA Admissions Forum Initiative conducts 6–10 admissions events per year in strategically selected locations with under-representation of target populations and includes presentations to area high school students and their parents/guardians, training sessions with area Admissions Liaison Officers (ALO), informational presentations to local educators/counselors, and informational/training sessions with local congressional staffers.

In its fourth year as a renewed program for recruiting, AFROTC's Gold Bar Recruiting Program will utilize 20 newly commissioned second lieutenant Gold Bar Recruiters (GBR) during the 2012-2013 school year. GBR's continue to refine their enterprise to find and influence high school minority candidates who have exceeded minimum High School Scholarship Program (HSSP) selection averages. The diverse backgrounds of GBRs allow them to connect with and recruit highly valued diverse applicants, some having similar experiences. The young, diverse faces of AFROTC recruiting, GBRs attend local, regional and national recruiting events.

In fiscal year 2013/2014, continued coordination between all Air Force stakeholders regarding the recruitment of future diverse military and civilian candidates will be crucial to our success. Organizations across the Air Force enterprise will continue to leverage integration of their accession efforts with the goal of gaining economies of scale and scope while maximizing the strategic effectiveness and impact of the Air Force message to key target audiences.

Vice Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. Chairman Gillibrand, your question included multiple parts. I will respond to each one, individually:

Question:

What you are doing specifically to prevent suicides?

Answer:

Navy's Suicide Prevention Program employs five Lines of Effort, guided by an official fleet-wide policy instruction. The first two lines of effort—Education & Awareness and Prevention & Intervention, prepare leaders and sailors with the tools to navigate life's challenges and recognize the factors and warning signs that lead to suicide. Operational stress control and suicide prevention awareness and skills training are institutionalized at all accession points and career milestones. Additionally, in 2011, the Chief of Naval Operations established mobile training teams to deliver detailed professionally-facilitated fleet skills training, on-demand worldwide, for both deck-plate and senior leaders.

Because risk factors and warning signs may be more obvious to qualified professionals, we've developed collaborative partnerships with care providers; medical, chaplains, and other Navy-affiliated counselors, to leverage their unique expertise in recognizing risks in care and treatment settings to actualize our third line of ef-

fort—Sailor Care & Transformational Growth. These experts are key in the re-integration process as well, returning ready sailors to their commands. We've also developed and instituted training for legal officers, designed to enable them to proficiently recognize at-risk sailors in legal trouble, and focused staff training for transient personnel units where sailors are temporarily billeted while they prepare for separation from naval service.

Navy suicide prevention policy mandates that every command appoint a suicide prevention coordinator, who receives formal training and is responsible for local suicide prevention activities, annual command general military training, crisis response preparedness and reporting requirements. Suicide prevention coordinators contribute to building a supportive command climate and assisting leaders with maintaining an environment that promotes our fourth line of effort, Physical, Mental and Spiritual Fitness. Program-branded strategic communications products provide suicide prevention coordinators, leaders, and sailors with information on tools and education available to help them preserve their personal readiness, navigate stress and seek help before stressors compound. Additional "postvention" outreach is conducted for commands that have experienced a suicide to help them return to a mission-ready state.

The fifth line of effort, Assessment, informs program managers and Navy leaders through suicide data collection and analysis, and fleet feedback using annual Behavioral Health Quick Polls and the Command Stress Assessment, which is part of the Defense Equal Opportunity Climate Survey required to be completed annually by every Navy unit.

Question:

What is being done specifically to encourage servicemembers to come forward?

Answer:

Encouraging help-seeking behavior is a critical component of our program's mission. Navy addresses policy barriers that lead to hiding stress injuries, suicidal behaviors and emotional stress, to ensure that commands understand leadership's commitment to upholding seeking help as a sign of strength. All of our training, informational products, leadership messages and multi-media resources encourage sailors to "ACT: Ask, Care, Treat." The 2012 Behavioral Health Quick Poll revealed that over 87 percent of sailors were able to correctly identify the ACT acronym, and many believed that shipmates would be supportive if a sailor sought help from the Navy for suicidal thoughts or actions. Committed to minimizing the negative perceptions and misconceptions regarding seeking help, Navy introduced the message "It's Okay to Speak up When You're Down" in 2012. This message was presented to the fleet through a highly successful Public Service Announcement (PSA) contest that offered first-hand depiction of sailor perceptions. Several high quality PSAs are now being used for command-level training and awareness. We have also developed resources to promote healthy discussion of stress and suicide, as well as those that address myths about the perceived negative effect of reporting psychological health issues on security clearance form SF86. Additionally, this year, Navy has initiated a high degree of collaboration with the Chaplain Corps to reinforce their confidentiality campaign and promote awareness of Navy chaplains' 100 percent confidentiality policy. We continue to find new and creative ways to encourage those who have successfully sought treatment for emotional or psychological issues to come forward and be an example for shipmates, normalizing and rewarding help-seeking actions.

Question:

So, what are we doing among people who have never been deployed?

Answer:

The current Navy operating environment and operational tempo do not appear to directly increase the risk of suicide, likely due to high unit cohesion and camaraderie during deployment, in conjunction with an elevated sense of belonging and purpose. These are protective factors against suicide. Therefore, our Operational Stress Control and Suicide Prevention training and awareness efforts focus heavily on recognizing the same stressors faced by both civilians and sailors, deployers or non-deployers, e.g., relationship difficulties, financial troubles, career decline, substance abuse, and psychological health, in conjunction with service-related factors such as transition periods. From the time sailors enter the Navy—having never experienced a deployment—throughout the duration of their careers, operational stress control courses are the cornerstone of our fleet stress management training, providing an integrated structure of health promotion and resilience-building designed to improve stress coping skills and ultimately to prevent suicide. Initial pro-

gram awareness training is delivered at Recruit Training Command, and is then mandated annually through General Military Training at every Navy command. Additionally, tailored senior leadership training is delivered at the Senior Enlisted Academy and Command Leadership School, to help leaders recognize the signs of distress in all sailors and all operating environments.

Question:

Do you believe we should change the UCMJ to make hazing a criminal offense?

Answer:

There is no need for a new article of the UCMJ to specifically create an enumerated offense of hazing. The conduct which constitutes hazing is already sufficiently punishable under existing articles. Although hazing is not a stand-alone offense under the UCMJ, the UCMJ does allow for its effective prosecution. It is punishable under Article 92, UCMJ, for Violation of a Lawful General Order. The maximum punishment for hazing as an orders violation is dishonorable discharge, 2 years of confinement, total forfeiture of pay and allowances, and reduction to pay grade E-1.

Under Navy instruction, hazing is defined as any conduct whereby a military member or members, regardless of service or rank, without proper authority causes another military member or members, regardless of service or rank, to suffer or be exposed to any activity which is cruel, abusive, humiliating, oppressive, demeaning, or harmful. No one can consent to hazing under the instruction.

In addition to Article 92, servicemembers alleged to have committed hazing can also be charged with additional offenses under the following articles:

- Article 93, Cruelty and Maltreatment. This article may apply when the accused is in a position of authority over another person (such that the accused can issue orders to that person), and the accused is cruel toward, or oppresses, or maltreats that person. Maximum punishment: dishonorable discharge, 1 year confinement, total forfeitures of pay and allowances, and reduction to pay grade E-1.
- Article 128, Assault. Depending on the circumstances and method of assault, the crime may be prosecuted as simple assault; assault consummated by a battery, or aggravated assault. Maximum punishment for the type of aggravated assault that may be the result of hazing: dishonorable discharge, 3 or 5 years confinement (depending on the facts), total forfeitures of pay and allowances, and reduction to paygrade E-1.

Hazing-related offenses can be prosecuted at general, special, or summary courts-martial or servicemembers can receive non-judicial punishment or administrative separation for conduct that constitutes hazing.

The Acting General Counsel of the Department of Defense recently tasked the Joint Service Committee on Military Justice (JSC) to evaluate the possibility of establishing a specific "hazing" offense within the UCMJ. The JSC concluded that the UCMJ currently provides sufficient authority to prosecute hazing offenses. The JSC did propose a change to the Manual for Courts-Martial: the inclusion of an Analysis section, which will provide specific guidance to trial prosecutors on charging hazing incidents as a violation of a lawful order, under Article 92. Another proposal being reviewed is a sentence enhancement for hazing. If adopted by the President, this enhancement would increase the authorized maximum punishment for an Article 92 violation, if that violation constituted hazing.

Question:

What is your status on reporting on hazing?

Answer:

The requirement to report an act of hazing is outlined in the Department of the Navy's hazing instruction and Navy's Special Incident Reporting Procedures. By Department of the Navy policy, any allegation of hazing must be reported to the commanding officer, who must report any substantiated incident to the Chief of Naval Operations.

Question:

What policy changes do you propose?

Answer:

We propose no changes to current hazing policy, which is clear and unambiguous.

Question:

Do you agree that increasing diversity will reduce instances of hazing based on individuals being different?

Answer:

There is currently no data that supports the premise that increased diversity will reduce instances of hazing. Every member of the Department of the Navy must be afforded the opportunity to be a productive and contributing member, free of hazing and its ill effects.

Question:

What are your Services doing to increase diversity?

Answer:

Navy is utilizing focused outreach and recruiting to maintain and expand diversity of accessions, and is utilizing internal programs to enhance retention and development of all sailors. The rescission of the combat exclusion rule opened equal professional opportunity for women and the implementation of proactive programs e.g., longer post-partum deployment waivers, changes to sea/shore rotations, the career intermission pilot program, are having a positive impact on retention of women. Navy has moved away from an episodic, to a sustained, model of outreach to under-represented groups. A Vice Chief of Naval Operations-led panel oversees the allocation of Navy outreach funds and strategy. Navy Recruiting Command utilizes Navy City Outreach Officers to directly contact diverse groups in their respective areas of responsibility. Individual Navy communities are accountable to the Chief of Naval Operations during their annual community self-assessment briefs for diminishing barriers to retention and advancement of diverse groups.

Lieutenant General MILSTEAD. Senator Gillibrand requested the following responses based on the hearing transcript page 56 thru page 59:

1. Obviously the suicide rate is horrible. Suicide is not a military specific tragedy, but I would like to know what you are doing specifically to prevent suicides? Preventing suicide requires vigilance and our concerted effort to harness the strength of engaged leaders.

Answer:

Suicide is a very complex problem and it takes a multilevel (unit, family, peer, individual, community, society), multifaceted (individual/peer suicide prevention, family training, responsible reporting of suicide, stigma reduction of receiving behavioral healthcare treatment, case management) public health approach to prevent suicide. The mission of the Marine Corps as it relates to suicide prevention is to consistently and aggressively identify sources of risk and develop a comprehensive and strategic approach to address them.

Identifying at risk: All marines are taught to recognize the warning signs of suicide, ask if a marine is thinking of suicide, express genuine care and concern for the marine, and immediately escort the marine to help. Marine Corps leaders are taught to know their marines on a personal and professional level and show genuine compassion and concern for all of the marines. Leaders are also taught that they serve as models to show marines that it takes a strong, committed marine to ask for and receive help.

Comprehensive and Coordinated Services: To efficiently manage behavioral health risk, protective factors, and ultimately prevent suicide, the Marine Corps has combined all related programs under one behavioral health branch, and is developing integrated training programs to address common risks and protective factors across all domains of behavioral health. The training supports universal awareness and selected and indicated training for certain high risk Marine populations. It will consolidate all behavioral health information, including our Never Leave A Marine Behind training, into a single training session that focuses on common risk and protective factors across the full spectrum of behavioral health issues.

Operational Stress Control and Readiness (OSCAR) serves suicide prevention by providing marines the avenue to recognize, acknowledge and seek help for stress reactions, which can lead to suicide. OSCAR supports commanders in building unit strength, resilience and readiness, therefore, keeping marines in the fight. The OSCAR team training creates teams of marines, medical, religious personnel, and mental health professionals within each battalion, or equivalent unit, who work together to create a network of support. This model empowers marines with leader-

ship skills to break stigma and act as sensors for the commander by noticing small changes in behavior and taking action early.

The Marine Corps is implementing a Case Management System (CMS) that reaches across multiple programs. The system assists in the identification of at-risk marines and improves appropriate service delivery as well as aftercare efforts. The CMS better equips the Marine Corps to closely monitor marines at-risk for suicide to ensure they receive appropriate care.

The Marine Corps DSTRESS Line provides anonymous, 24/7 counseling services to any marine, attached sailor, or family member. The line is staffed by veteran marines and Fleet Marine Force corpsmen, Marine family members and civilian counselors specifically trained in Marine culture. The counseling gives callers 'one of their own' to speak with about their issues.

Additional ongoing and new prevention efforts are happening as well. This includes appointment and training Suicide Prevention Program Officers for each battalion and squadron to essentially serve as the "eyes and ears" of the suicide prevention program for the commanding officer.

2. I have heard that for a lot of the members of the troops, there is still a stigma associated with seeking mental health services, and there is a fear that it could end a member's career. So what is being done specifically to encourage servicemembers to come forward?

Answer:

It is important for marines to know that their leadership believes that they should seek help when faced with hard times and pain in their lives. Having engaged leaders that are alert to those at risk for suicide and take action to help them get help goes far to removing any notion of stigma. Additionally, it is essential to have leaders that show genuine care and concern for the marine, and who immediately escort the marine to help. It is also necessary for our leaders to serve as models to show marines that it takes a strong, committed person to ask for and receive help and by doing so lives up to the marine ethos. Through our various training programs, the Marine Corps is showing that our leaders are committed to standing behind our marines and their families when they need help spiritually, physically, psychologically and socially.

One particular program that helps remove stigma is OSCAR. OSCAR serves suicide prevention by providing marines the avenue to recognize, acknowledge and see help for stress reactions, which can lead to suicide. OSCAR supports commanders in building unit strength, resilience and readiness, keeping marines in the fight. The OSCAR team training creates teams of marines, medical, religious personnel, and mental health professionals within each battalion, or equivalent unit, who work together to create a network of support. This model empowers marines with leadership skills to break stigma and act as sensors for the commander by noticing small changes in behavior and taking action early.

3. The increase in suicide among people who have never been deployed is especially troubling, so what are we doing for that particular group?

Answer:

Regardless of the deployment history of a marine, the Marine Corps has programs that are available to decrease stress involving suicide risk factors, such as, relationship problems, legal or disciplinary problems, behavioral health diagnoses, financial problems and substance abuse. In addition, our Operational Stress Control and Readiness (OSCAR) program is currently being refreshed with a curriculum that is applicable to all duty assignments. Content is driven by questions rather than scenarios and key messages/topics are relevant regardless of deployment history. Pilots are underway for the updated OSCAR training with planned force-wide implementation in late summer 2013.

4. It is my understanding that hazing is not an enumerated offense in the UCMJ, leaving convening authorities with limited options for charging the perpetrators. Do you believe with that specifically we should change the UCMJ to make hazing a criminal offense?

Answer:

The Marine Corps recommends that no specific hazing offense should be created under the UCMJ or the MCM because it is unnecessary. Enumerating a specific hazing offense under the UCMJ or the MCM would be duplicative of existing articles under which hazing can be appropriately charged. Creating a new hazing offense will not improve accountability or adjudication of hazing. Under its current

construct, our military justice system has multiple tools that can be used to respond to incidents of hazing.

Violating the DOD anti-hazing regulations, in and of itself, subjects the offender to the possibility of a dishonorable discharge and confinement for up to 2 years. That charge, however, does not speak to the underlying offense. The offender could still be accountable for any additional offenses committed during the acts which constitute hazing. There are no shortage of enumerated offenses with which to charge misconduct that qualifies as hazing.

Hazing often has an assault component, and such misconduct will generally be charged separately. In many such cases, the assault is the gravamen of the offense. Since the prevention of hazing is tied to good order and discipline, Article 92 (violation of failure to obey a lawful general order or regulation) is an appropriate mechanism by which to enforce that standard. Moreover, statutory definitions are difficult to amend and update over time. When using Article 92 to prosecute hazing, DOD and the Service branches may update or amend the parameters of hazing much more effectively.

To the extent that Article 92 is the appropriate mechanism with which to charge those who violate the hazing policy, the Marine Corps recommends including guidance on pursuing charges against servicemembers suspected of hazing under Article 92, in a discussion section to be added under that Article, in Part IV of the MCM. The discussion would read as follows:

“Department or Service regulations may promulgate policies on hazing and prescribe punitive provisions. Where such punitive regulations exist, incidents of hazing may therefore be charged as violations of Article 92(1), violation of failure to obey a lawful general order or regulation. In addition to Article 92, practitioners in all armed services may consider additional charges under other punitive articles based upon the underlying conduct of hazing incidents.”

5. With regard to hazing specifically, two of the recent suicides were New Yorkers, Private Danny Chen and Private Hamsom McPherson. And they were both minorities serving in the military, and it has been suggested that the lack of diversity in the military played some role in the hazing that led to their suicides. What is your status reporting on hazing?

Answer:

Effective 20 May 2013, the Marine Corps' policy for reporting allegations of hazing was revised and republished within Marine Corps Order (MCO) 1700.28B. Under this order, all allegations of hazing will be reported to Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps (HQMC). This reporting requirement is not subject to, or dependent upon, the results of investigation used for determining whether or not allegations are substantiated.

As a result of this revised reporting policy, HQMC will be more aware of the prevalence of hazing throughout its ranks and more effective in tracking hazing cases as they proceed through adjudication processes.

6. With regards to hazing, what policy changes do you propose?

Answer:

Effective 20 May 2013, the Marine Corps' hazing policy was revised and republished as MCO 1700.28B. The most significant changes reflected in the Marine Corps' new hazing policy include expanded reporting requirements, implementation of new tracking procedures, and refinements to the definition of hazing. With it promulgation all allegations of hazing will be reported to Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps (HQMC). This reporting requirement is not subject to, or dependent upon, the results of investigation used for determining whether or not allegations are substantiated.

In addition to the implementation of increased reporting requirements, MCO 1700.28B mandates the entry of all hazing allegations into the already existing Discrimination and Sexual Harassment (DASH) database. Once entered into the DASH database, all allegations will be tracked by HQMC from initial report to final disposition.

Finally, the definition of hazing has been refined to specifically describe actions or activities that may be considered hazing. Marines of all ranks participated in the revision process, which has resulted in a more refined definition that will provide increased clarity to junior marines.

In addition to providing a more comprehensive and presumably effective hazing policy, the Marine Corps has also taken the necessary actions to ensure that questions directly related to hazing are included on command climate surveys. The pur-

pose of this initiative is to proactively identify and address underlying issues within the command environment that may contribute to incidents of hazing.

7. Do you agree that increasing diversity will reduce instances of hazing based on individuals being different?

Answer:

Currently, we have not identified a linkage between hazing and race, ethnicity, or gender.

8. What are your Services doing to increase diversity?

Answer:

Four main points illustrate the Marine Corps' diversity strategy:

1. Identify, attract and retain the best.
2. Create a climate that allows marines to perform at their peak.
3. Assess and understand the eligible population and their influencers.
4. Remove institutional barriers that hinder opportunities

Executive Engagement on Diversity

The Commandant's Diversity Initiative includes four diversity task forces. These task forces have taken ownership of diversity challenges associated with ethnic minorities, leadership, women and service culture. Three-star executive sponsors are providing guidance and oversight of each task force. The task force concept represents a significant philosophical shift-from ignoring human variations to uncovering and understanding them in order to drive actions. Through research and discussion of key questions, marines assigned to the task forces will play a key role in charting the way ahead for diversity in the Marine Corps. In order to ensure all officers and senior staff noncommissioned officers have an opportunity to be heard regarding diversity in the officer corps, all have been invited to participate in an online survey. The survey is a supporting arm of the task force effort in that it addresses: Culture and Leading Change; Leadership, Accountability, and Mentoring; Race/Ethnicity; and Women in the Corps. Analysis of the focus groups' themes and other resources may be used to direct future diversity actions and initiatives.

Marine Corps Leadership Seminar (MCLS)

The Marine Corps continues to present the Marine Corps Leadership Seminar to university students and community influencers at venues across the nation. In calendar year 2012, the Marine Corps conducted 6 MCLSs and reached 242 students and 334 influencers. During the spring of calendar year 2013, the MCLS held 5 seminars and 1 reception which provided the opportunity for Marine officers to interact with a diverse audience of over 275 students and 40 influencers. The MCLS schedule included seminars at Virginia Commonwealth University, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, North Carolina State University, North Carolina Central University, and the Wake County Young Men's Leadership Academy, a magnet high school. The MCLS in conjunction with Marine Corps University is currently scheduled to visit the University of Washington's Daniel J. Evans School of Public Affairs in June 2013. In addition, leadership seminars are scheduled in Louisville, KY, in September and Atlanta, GA, in October. These seminars showcase Marine Corps leadership to diverse communities across the United States. The focus is on providing instruction and establishing dialogue with both student and faculty groups at colleges and universities. The intent is to offer participants an introductory understanding of the Marine Corps' unique brand of leadership. The MCLS accomplishes this by employing General Officers, active and retired, field-grade officers, company-grade officers and Staff Noncommissioned Officers to deliver personal leadership perspectives to each target audience.

Senator GILLIBRAND. It is something I want to work with you on. I also want to offer whatever resources you need. Any collaboration you need from the Senate on these issues I will provide because it is such an urgent issue.

Mr. GARCIA. Great.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thanks.

General JONES. Ma'am, one of the things we have done which is innovative is we have started embedding our mental health providers in the primary care facilities, not in the mental health clinic, but where you go for sick call, so that if you go in to see a doctor

and the doctor is questioning you about how things are going, and he feels like there is a mental health issue here, he does not need to take you down the hall to mental. He walks you across the hall to a provider within that little office of six or seven providers so no one knows that you are going to see someone, where you can be evaluated to see if there is a mental health issue.

We, like all the other Services, have found in the Air Force specifically there is no causal relationship between deployment, so we have to go after those things that do cause it. Relationships, financial problems, and legal problems are the top three things in the Air Force that cause it. The numbers will continue to be a challenge for us all, but we cannot take our eye off the ball.

We share your concern and your passion for this issue because it is just a tragedy we cannot afford to let happen in our Services.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you.

Senator Blumenthal?

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you. I would like to pursue a topic that a number of you raised in your written testimony, which is the transition assistance program (TAP), preparation for life after the military, which will be an increasingly important and prevalent challenge given the draw downs and the reduced numbers of active duty that are going to occur.

I assume that every one of the Services are at work on initiatives going forward, even beyond what you described in your testimony. So maybe I could ask each of the Services to expand on what you have given us in your testimony. We can just—in whatever order.

Mr. GINSBERG. Senator, this was a major priority of the President last year, and he launched into a veterans opportunity work, veterans employment initiative, that basically really directed the Services to look at our transition assistance up and down. That goes well beyond just redoing the TAP, which held a 3-day seminar. It was fundamentally enhancing it, adding new career tracks.

It also helps servicemembers be more career ready earlier on, to help start thinking about the transition and what they are going to do next even if they might be in the Service for 20 years. But as they go along, to always just be ready so that if for some reason through force management actions they find themselves in a transition, they will be prepared and be able to move out.

So we have applied manpower to this. We have applied resources. But it is an entirely redesigned program, again, presidentially directed that we will be rolling out in the months and years ahead.

[The information referred to follows:]

The Air Force is aggressively rolling out the redesigned Transition Assistance Program (TAP), and capturing monthly updates from installations Air Force-wide on the status of implementation. The Air Force was in compliance with the Veterans' Opportunity to Work Act by the 21 Nov 12 due date, with all active duty installations ready to provide the redesigned TAP.

The Air Force TAP assists our transitioning airmen to be competitive in the private sector during this period of challenging economic conditions. The overall goal of TAP is to provide separating or retiring servicemembers and their families the information, skills, and resources, as well as personal and financial wellness and life skills needed for a successful transition to the civilian sector. Prior to the re-design of TAP, the Air Force provided pre-separation counseling, workshops, and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits briefings to separating airmen.

With the redesign of TAP, there were major changes and improvements to the program. An example includes the increased partnership between the Department of Labor (DOL), the Department of Education (DOE), the Small Business Administration (SBA) with the Department of Defense and the VA to provide new courses to transitioning servicemembers. Also, Transition Goals, Plans and Successes (GPS), a 5-day workshop, is now mandatory for all separating servicemembers as part of the new program. Part of Transition GPS is a new 3-day curriculum on gaining employment administered by the DOL. Also part of Transition GPS, the VA benefits briefing has been revised and is mandatory for everyone. Other changes surround the policy on attendance. Airmen who do not already have confirmed employment or acceptance to school, must participate in one of the following workshops: Technical Track (Run by VA), Entrepreneurial Track (Run by SBA), and the Education Track (Run by the DOE). In addition, a capstone event is added to provide a time for the service to verify the airman has completed all components of TAP, has met the Career Readiness Standards, and has received the resources and information he/she needs to be successful upon separation. Ultimately, TAP will no longer begin at the time a servicemember decides to separate from the Air Force. With the redesign, TAP will start from the time an airman enters the Air Force and continue throughout the Military Life Cycle. Lastly, additional resources have been added to support the new requirements, to include manpower and funding.

Feedback from airmen who are separating or retiring and have attended the new TAP program has been consistently positive, and have found the program useful. Our stern focus on providing our Air Force personnel who are separating and/or retiring with the information, skills, and resources needed for a successful transition to the civilian sector continues to grow. We are committed to exploring new means of sustaining innovative, timely and relevant support to our airmen that have defended this Nation.

General MILSTEAD. For the Marine Corps, our effort to rebuild our TAP precedes the Veterans' Opportunity to Work Act. The Commandant started that. That was one of the Commandant's planning guidance. It was to fix TAP. It was broken terribly. It had not received any attention in 15 years.

We are actually stepping out now with the new program. It has a common module where everybody goes through. There could be somebody that is, say, an officer or enlisted. They get the same common presentations that they need on VA, those sorts of things. Then we bust them off to use the analogy of whatever your window is. If you are going to college, you go down the college path. If you are going to get into an entrepreneurship, you are going to open up your own business, you go down that path. If you are going to do a vocation or do something like that, be a truck driver, then you go down that path. If you are going to college, then you go down that path because you do not want to sit there—I do not need what you need, and you do not need what I need, and it is a waste of time. We constrict it to 1 week because after a week, you lose them.

Then, we are putting it online, and we are having the reach back capability for those that do not listen, sit there, they text the whole time because, you know what? They are going to Costa Rica and surf for 6 months. Then when they come back and then they decide, oh, my gosh, what was it they said, they can come back online. They can reach back in. So this has the Commandant—it is one of his top, top topics.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you.

Mr. GARCIA. The only thing I would add to that, Senator, is TAP, which we have known for the last decade and a half, is unrecognizable to this new regime. I will just caveat that the General's insights into the individual, specifically tailored tracks by saying there is a baseline that every transitioning member will get before

they go into those individuals chutes. They will be signed off on having received their full VA benefit package review, their full Department of Labor series of benefits and programs available to them there. Each of them will be advised on how their specific military specialty, their MOS, their Navy Enlisted Classification (NEC), translates into civilian industry in the private sector.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you.

Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. One thing I would like to add is, and I think General Milstead pointed to this, is that by virtue of going after this jointly, we are also stimulating some great innovation on how to deliver these products. You mentioned reach back and application, apps, so that the information is not just available to the person for a short period of time. It is available for a long period of time and can be updated and made more current, and, I think, more of interest to our members who are transitioning so they will pay attention, and they will have the resource for a longer period of time.

General BROMBERG. Senator, as my colleagues have said, totally different program, mandatory, 5 days. Great program.

As far as the Army, we have increased counselors to over 400. This year we have almost 700 counselors worldwide to help soldiers. We have 25 forward locations to help the Reserve component as they demobilize or as they leave Service and Reserves. We also have 76 locations for the Active component. Virtual capabilities have now been added. Virtual job fairs are becoming very popular.

In addition, the Army has wrapped this up in a Soldier for Life program where we are engaging industry in the communities. Many, many partnerships. I meet quarterly with 25 global companies to talk about removing barriers to veterans, and that has shown us a lot of product and a lot of great initiatives.

Lastly, a great initiative with the American Pipefitters. We have started a pilot up at Fort Lewis, WA, where they have actually taken soldiers while on duty time have trained, and they will become journeymen with a job guarantee when they complete the course. So great initiatives going forward.

Mr. LAMONT. Just to follow up on that, it is the credentialing that we are really trying to help with with some new programs. If you are a truck driver, for instance, in the Army, you may be very well qualified to receive a commercial driver's license in the State of Connecticut. Without having to go through additional training or pass a test, or what's the equivalent? We are trying to make sure that in many of these occupations, we can have a direct transfer, whether you are an electrician—what are your qualifications you would have to have in the various States.

We have any number of occupations similar to that, as you say, the pipefitter situation. In Illinois, for instance, the Heroes to Heart has a program with the teamsters, is very much focused on the over the road driver.

But those credentialing programs are going to be very, very important in moving them very quickly into the private sector.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. I would like to thank each of you for your information on this point. I think I do not need to tell you because you know it better than I, that this area is really so critically important, not only to our present service men and women, but also

to the veterans who are merging and have such contribution and skills to provide to our Nation. So thank you very much. I would like to follow up individually with you afterward.

My time has expired. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you to each of you for your extraordinary service, your very, extremely helpful testimony. We look forward to writing this year's authorization bill with your assistance. Thank you again for all you have done.

[Questions for the record with answers supplied follow:]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR LINDSEY GRAHAM

CIVILIAN FURLOUGHS

1. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Lamont, Secretary Garcia, and Secretary Ginsberg, I am concerned about the potential impact of civilian furloughs on the Services' critically important family support programs. If furloughs take place, do you expect any cutbacks in your operating hours at commissaries, exchanges, and child development centers or curtailment of morale, welfare, and recreation, Department of Defense Education Agency (DODEA) programs, Transition Assistance Program or military spouse employment programs?

Mr. LAMONT. As a result of funding reductions/furlough guidance, each commissary will close 1 day per week. Operations at 7-day stores will reduce to 6-day operations; 6 days to 5; and 5 days to 4. Stores will be closed 1 additional day a week unless adequate local nationals are available to remain open in overseas locations. HQ/Areas Operations will be closed to coincide with store closures. There will be no impact on operating hours at the Exchange.

As far as DODEA, furloughs will not affect the end of the 2012–2013 school year. Though furloughs will be in place at the start of the 2013–2014 school year, the number of days has not been confirmed. Regardless, DODEA will ensure that all students have a robust academic year. School staff will ensure students receive a full year of academic study even within a slightly shortened academic year due to the furloughs.

Transition counseling services are contracted by a fully-funded contract through 30 Sep 13. There will not be a decrease/delay in providing transition services to soldiers and their families. However, the program is overseen at most installations by Transition Services Managers (TSMs), who are civilian employees. Garrisons will have a civilian employee or military personnel available to oversee contract operations during the time the TSM is furloughed. At smaller installations, transitioning soldiers will utilize virtual counseling services to meet Veterans Opportunity to Work Act requirements.

Family and Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (FMWR) programs and services are currently frozen at fiscal year 2012 levels. Nonappropriated Fund (NAF) employees are currently exempt from furlough, which includes 2,637 full-time Child Development Center (CDC) and School Age Center (SAC) employees. These individuals will continue to maintain 5-day coverage of centers to accommodate the needs of soldiers and families.

Although NAF employees are the primary service providers for most FMWR programs and services, appropriated fund (APF) employees are utilized within Army Community Service (ACS) Centers and, in some cases, Community Recreation programs. These employees are subject to furlough and some services will be impacted. Installation Senior Commanders and Garrison Commanders will determine the optimum method of furlough implementation with the goal of minimizing disruption to critical soldier and family programs. Some of these key programs include spouse employment, victim advocacy for sexual assault and domestic violence, Army emergency relief, support to exceptional family members, child abuse prevention and intervention support, support to wounded warriors and their families, and support to survivors. In most cases, our ACS Centers plan to close one day per week during the furlough period. In order to mitigate the effect of furlough, ACS Centers will develop strategies to ensure 24/7/365 coverage for key services such as victim advocacy and child abuse/domestic violence response. We encourage our centers to rely on electronic resources such as Army OneSource and Military OneSource to provide information and link up service providers to our soldiers and families.

Mr. GARCIA. The Defense Commissary Agency has advised that the furlough may result in the closure of each commissary one day a week.

Nonappropriated Fund (NAF) employees are exempt from furloughs and there is no anticipated impact to Navy Exchange or Marine Corps Exchange operations.

There is no anticipated impact to operating hours for child development centers as child care providers are exempt from the furlough.

The Navy does not expect any significant disruptions to family programs. Navy Family Support Programs and Services will establish staggered staffing hours and utilize furlough-exempt personnel to minimize the service delivery impact. This will accommodate furlough days for GS staff and allow us to maintain uninterrupted support for family services such as, family readiness centers, Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) programs, spouse employment services, clinical counseling services, and financial counseling services.

Navy Morale, Welfare and Recreation activities, while implementing reduced hours of operation in all programs, including libraries, swimming pools and fitness centers, will minimize disruption by adjusting hours to peak usage periods.

The Defense Education Activity (DODEA) has indicated that furloughs will be in place at the start of the next school year 2013–2014. DODEA is planning an approach that will not risk a full year of academic credit for our students.

Furloughs will have no direct impact on the Department's ability to implement the new transition assistance program as directed by the Veterans Employment Initiative Task Force.

Mr. GINSBERG. Civilian furloughs will have a negative impact on our ability to provide, and maintain, a variety of services to our airmen and their families. Specifically, commissaries will close 1 additional day per week and MWR programs are projected to experience reduced hours of operation and/or closed facilities. Additionally, budget reductions will have a negative impact on our ability to timely transform our activities to make our Services more efficient.

With the exemption of 1,610 child care employees, we will continue to provide child care operations and minimize the impact to airmen and their families. Additionally, we do not anticipate Army and Air Force Exchange Service, TAP and Military Spouse Employment to be affected by furloughs.

2. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Lamont, Secretary Garcia, and Secretary Ginsberg, if civilian furloughs, in response to sequestration, impact the mission of the Military Entrance Processing Stations, then what options does your Service have to ensure your recruit accessions are not disrupted?

Mr. LAMONT. By shifting funding, the Army addressed the risk of accession mission failure in fiscal year 2013 and fiscal year 2014 due to sequestration. Civilian furloughs will not affect the ability of Army accessioning agencies to achieve fiscal year 2013 accession missions. If the U.S. Military Entrance Processing Command curtails operations in fiscal year 2013 due to civilian furloughs, some delays in contracting new soldiers for entry into the Army in fiscal year 2014 may occur. For example, the Military Entrance Processing Stations will be shut down for one day per week. This will significantly increase applicant travel costs and adversely affect the streamlined process of new recruits. The Army plans to mitigate these delays by processing these soldiers after the beginning of the new fiscal year.

Mr. GARCIA. Marine Corps - All service recruiting will be impacted by civilian furloughs at Military Entrance Processing Stations (MEPS); because 80 percent of MEPS personnel are civilians. The possible civilian furlough reduces their available processing capacity. Implementation of a 4-day processing week would likely degrade our accession efforts.

Navy - Navy ships its recruits from Monday through Thursday. We anticipate the furlough would shut down MEPS processing on Friday only. Therefore, Navy Recruiting accession mission may not be impacted as a result of planned MEPS furloughs in fiscal year 2013. However, with the planned 11 day MEPCOM furlough, Navy Recruiting would experience a New Contract mission shortfall of approximately 2,900 total new contracts for both Active component (AC) and Non-Prior Service Reserve component (RC). This shortfall represents approximately 15 percent of the remaining fiscal year 2013 New Contract mission of 19,675 (AC/RC). This shortfall would result in a 5 percent decrease in the Delayed Entry Program (DEP) posture for the beginning of fiscal year 2014. The reduction of the DEP posture from a target of 50 percent will increase our New Contract mission for fiscal year 2014. However, we anticipate meeting our accession mission in fiscal year 2014. If Military Entrance Processing Command (MEPCOM) furloughs continue into fiscal year 2014, MEPS capacity to process new contracts will be restricted and Navy's accession mission could be at moderate risk.

Mr. GINSBERG. As approximately 80 percent of MEPCOM employees are civilian, if fully implemented, the 11-day furlough (as announced on May 14, 2013) will have

a significant impact on MEPCOM's ability to process recruits and manage military accessions testing programs. Processing will be reduced from 5 days down to 4 days.

There are no options to overcome recruit processing disruptions as a result of the MEPCOM furlough. Another mechanism doesn't exist to qualify youth for military service. MEPCOM is the sole entity for enlisted accessions. The Air Force will adjust to the reduced processing capacity by tightly managing the available processing slots. The Air Force will ensure slots are first utilized to send fiscal year 2013 recruits to Basic Military Training (BMT), and then whatever slots remain will be prioritized to best meet fiscal year 2014 needs. These processing restrictions will force the Air Force to delay processing motivated applicants until slots become available at a later date.

INTEGRATED DISABILITY EVALUATION SYSTEM

3. Senator GRAHAM. General Bromberg, Admiral Van Buskirk, General Milstead, and General Jones, it is unconscionable that servicemembers must wait many months to receive a disability determination from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). While the Department of Defense (DOD) and the VA have made some progress in decreasing the amount of time it takes to get disability claims completed in the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES), more work must be done. What is your Service doing to help the DOD and the VA doing to expedite claims through the system?

General BROMBERG. To assist the VA in managing this additional workload, the Army is providing personnel to perform administrative procedures to allow VA adjudicators to focus rating activities. Army is also making additional entries into the Veterans Tracking Application to allow VA to better manage cases in Benefits delivery phase of IDES. VA estimates this assistance will provide a 10–15 percent increase in the number of Ready for Decision cases over the 90-day period. We continue to explore and implement other solutions that provide the information that VA needs to finalize their rating decisions in a timelier manner.

Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. IDES performance data for April 2013, reflect that the average time to complete IDES processing for sailors is 258 days, the fewest in DOD. This is measured against an IDES goal of 295 days, which was established to ensure sailors receive all appropriate medical treatment, due process, and transition assistance while undergoing disability evaluation. Sailors continue to receive pay and benefits while going through the IDES, which helps narrow any "benefit gap."

Navy is supporting the VA portion of the IDES process through efforts to provide the VA with a complete Service Treatment Record and by ensuring VA claim development and medical appointments are not missed. We are also participating in a joint-DOD/VA effort to improve timeliness in transferring information included in the DD Form 214, "Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty", which is needed to initiate benefits delivery.

Recent changes to the Transition Assistance Program and the Veterans Employment Initiative create a direct connection with VA counselors. As a result, awareness of benefits available through the VA is increasing, which may lead to an increase in the number of claims being filed prior to separation or retirement. Processing of such claims should be quicker since establishing service connection and access to medical records are typically easier before the servicemember transitions. Additionally, we have agreed to include an audiogram as part of our Separation Health Assessment (SHA) to establish a baseline for potential future VA evaluations.

General MILSTEAD. The Marine Corps does not own the IDES process. However, on behalf of our marines we have successfully undertaken various advocacy measures to reduce processing times. The Marine Corps is working to improve processing times in coordination with the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery through teleconferences with IDES stakeholders. Additionally, we have been providing Marine Corps leadership with detailed IDES information, which has resulted in their ability to work closer with the Regional Medical Commanders on specific issues impacting IDES performance. The Marine Corps has provided the Physical Evaluation Board (PEB) processing center with five enlisted marines, in excess of their authorized allowance, to ensure their authorized manning is kept at 100 percent. Additionally, four senior noncommissioned officers, above the PEB's allowance are being provided to perform field-level counseling and case processing assistance. Since, the Marine Corps began tracking the performance of marines processing through the IDES (June 2011), the number of cases exceeding the 100-day goal for the Medical Evaluation Board phase has decreased by 91.8 percent (610 cases down to 50). The Marine

Corps will continue to work to identify and execute methods to ensure claims process expeditiously in the best interest of the marine.

General JONES. The Air Force is committed to improving the IDES timeliness to better serve airmen as they rehabilitate, reintegrate or transition from military service. We are diligently working various measures to improve the IDES timeliness. We have realigned manpower and made hiring a priority within the Air Force Personnel Center to assist the PEB.

The Air Force has partnered with OSD and the VA to enhance IDES information technology (IT) to create a seamless and integrated system to improve IDES timeliness. While DOD and VA develop an enterprise IT solution, the Air Force is exploring short-term IT solutions to expedite the transfer of IDES cases between the Military Treatment Facilities (MTF) and the Informal and Formal PEBs. In addition, we have improved communications between the VA, the Air Force Personnel Center, and the Air Force Surgeon General to ensure consistency of IDES tracked data. Finally, the Air Force rolled out its IDES pre-screening initiative to ensure the right airmen are referred into the IDES. The IDES pre-screen process provides a centralized review at the Air Force Personnel Center's Medical Retention Standards Branch of potential IDES cases which may not meet retention standards. The intent of the pre-screening process is two-fold. First, to identify airmen who may be returned to duty (RTD), instead of entering the IDES, thus preserving resources and reducing hardship on the airman and the unit. Second, the process identifies airmen, who need a complete Medical Evaluation Board, and refers them to the IDES, preserving readiness and a fit force. The pre-screening process does not alter any stage of the IDES, airmen's rights remain intact and the Air Force ensures due-diligence. As of 10 Apr 2013, the Informal PEB adjudicated 978 cases referred into the IDES by our Personnel Center's Medical Retention Standards shop as a result of pre-screening. Of those, only 27 were returned to duty by the Informal PEB, for a 2.76 percent RTD rate, far below the 15–20 percent RTD rate historically seen prior to pre-screening implementation. We expect these major improvement strategies to improve the Air Force IDES timeliness by fall 2013.

4. Senator GRAHAM. General Bromberg, Admiral Van Buskirk, General Milstead, and General Jones, do you believe that the VA is doing all that it can do to decrease the amount of time for disability case reviews and claims adjudication?

General BROMBERG. Yes. I believe our partners in the VA are doing everything they can to decrease the amount of time for disability case reviews and claims adjudication.

Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. The delays in case review and adjudication are unacceptably long. At the same time, VA is coping with an enormous increase in claims being filed. We are very supportive of our VA partners in helping to decrease their disability case review and adjudication backlog. The Department of the Navy is moving ahead to support the VA's request to certify the Service Treatment Record completeness when forwarding for disability claim reviews. This will expedite the VA's ability for claim adjudication. Innovative solutions are always possible and we stand ready to assist the VA as they explore solutions for improvements.

General MILSTEAD. We are aware that the VA has objectives and key initiatives to reduce the case backlog. However, as a matter of protocol, the Marine Corps defers to VA for quantifiable data on their level of effort to decrease claims adjudication times. The Marine Corps Wounded Warrior Regiment, the military command charged with recovery care coordination for wounded, ill, and injured marines, regularly coordinates with VA on various disability-related matters. From an individual casework perspective, we find VA efforts to be complementary and oftentimes the actions of VA employees enhance our marines' recovery experiences, to include disability claims issues.

General JONES. DOD and VA have implemented several improvement strategies to improve the IDES PEB timeliness.

1. VA has added 109 personnel to reach 264 full-time equivalents for claims adjudication, and consolidated Army claims at Seattle Disability Rating Activity Site to reduce processing times.
2. VA has proactively engaged DOD to expedite adoption of Disability Benefits Questionnaires (DBQs) within the IDES Program.
3. To better support DOD and members of the Reserve components (RC), VA implemented a process to perform IDES Compensation and Pension examinations closer to the residence of RC servicemembers.
4. VA's Chief of Staff conducts bi-monthly internal Video Teleconferences (VTC) with Central Office and Field Executive staff to review IDES performance metric and discuss process improvement measures. VA also has joint monthly

VTCs with both Army and Navy/Marine Corps to discuss site performance and general collaboration opportunities.

5. VA's IDES leadership conducts weekly meetings with IDES leadership from Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), Warrior Care Policy, and the Military Services. These meetings have been occurring since July 2011.
6. VA Central Office personnel conduct periodic site visits to identify best practices and provide assistance.
7. VA and DOD routinely collaborate to improve and refine policies and procedures.

Air Force continues to collaborate with VA to improve the overall disability evaluation process. Despite improvements, challenges still remain and all of the DOD is committed to working diligently with VA to continue streamlining and improving the overall disability process.

5. Senator GRAHAM. General Bromberg, Admiral Van Buskirk, General Milstead, and General Jones, does the VA need additional resources to hire more claims adjudicators?

General BROMBERG. The Army does not know if VA requires additional resources to hire more claims adjudicators.

Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. The VA continues to balance their workforce. We are confident the VA presented their defensible resource requirements in the President's budget.

General MILSTEAD. We defer to the VA for information on their manning and resource requirements.

General JONES. The Air Force continues to collaborate with VA to improve the overall disability evaluation process. Despite improvements, challenges still remain, the DOD and the Air Force are committed to working diligently with VA to continue streamlining and improving the overall disability process.

PROTECTING PROSPECTIVE RECRUITS

6. Senator GRAHAM. General Bromberg, Admiral Van Buskirk, General Milstead, and General Jones, a recent tragic case in Maryland appears to have been a murder/suicide involving a prospective recruit and her recruiter. What guidance has your Service provided to ensure that prospective recruits and their parents or guardians are fully aware of the limits for relationships with recruiters?

General BROMBERG. Army Recruiter contact with newly contracted soldiers, prospects and applicants is highly restricted by Army policy. Recruiters who violate the regulations governing this contact are subject to disciplinary action, relief, or separation. Cards describing sexual harassment prohibitions and what the prohibited activities are for recruiters and applicants are given to all applicants upon first contact as well as to their parents. These cards are used by the US Army Recruiting Command in their recruitment of Regular Army and Army Reserve applicants. The Army National Guard has similar cards in development. In addition, all recruits in all the Army's components sign contracts which include descriptions of sexual harassment prohibitions and what the prohibited activities are for recruiters and members of the DEP.

Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. Navy Recruiting Command (NRC) provides applicants information on the first day of their enlistment into the DEP at MEPS. Additionally, recruiters and their supervisor also provide the same information to the future sailor and their parents or guardians during the 72-hour indoctrination. This policy is included in the Enlisted and Officer Recruiting Manuals. NRC also has a Fraternalization Policy Acknowledgement that details the proper behaviors of future sailors and recruiters, which all future sailors must read and sign.

At the time of DEP enlistment, NRC provides all future sailors a Standards, Transitions, Acknowledgements, Requirements, and Training (START) Guide. Recruiters and immediate supervisors are required to review the contents with each future sailor during the 72-hour indoctrination. The START Guide contains information regarding Sexual Harassment and Fraternalization. Additionally, the START Guide lists "Recruiter Prohibited Practices," which includes a prohibition on any relationship other than a formal, professional, relationship. Every Navy recruiter business card contains the following personal pledge from Commander NRC: "We at Navy Recruiting Command are committed to professional, honest, and respectful treatment of every prospect and applicant." Also included is the NRC headquarters number, which is answered by Admiral Gay's personal staff.

Finally, NRC is completing an intensive, updated SAPR Delayed Entry Program (SAPR-D) video presentation, which will be shown to every future sailor. It provides

training on the Navy's SAPR Program, fraternization and sexual harassment policies. The video clearly articulates and emphasizes the future sailor's rights and responses if they feel they have been violated or mistreated.

General MILSTEAD. The Marine Corps has enacted additional policy and products that augment long standing ethical standards and procedures between applicants and recruiters. We established the requirement that all officer candidates and members of the DEP read, sign, and certify a Statement of Understanding regarding sexual assault and sexual harassment. This document includes notification and reporting procedures, which are also included in our formal "Welcome Aboard" materials. Additionally, a required values-based training curriculum, which includes video vignettes and ethical decision discussions to include sexual misconduct, has been incorporated into the DEP for all accessions. All marines attending the Basic Recruiters School are provided formal instruction on an 'Ethics Package' that addresses specifically, relationship restrictions between applicants and recruiters, fraternization, sexual harassment, sexual assault, and alcohol issues and usage. Additionally a training product has been introduced for leaders at the recruiting station level to emphasize and reinforce ethics standards with their marines. This standardized product provides leaders videos and briefing points that require the interactive participation by their marines on the topic of instruction. All of the aforementioned were done to maintain and uphold the existing Marine Corps ethical standards of conduct between applicant and recruiter.

General JONES. Air Force Recruiting has instituted an aggressive and comprehensive program to inform and educate recruits and their parents on the subject of inappropriate behaviors, to include unprofessional relationships throughout the recruiting process. This program employs video, talking points, "Applicant Rights/Responsibilities Cards", and signed statements. The program clearly defines what constitutes an unprofessional relationship vs. professional relationship between recruits and their recruiters, and advises the recruits of their right and obligation to report suspected or actual cases. The program also outlines sources of assistance and steps to be taken to address concerns.

7. Senator GRAHAM. General Bromberg, Admiral Van Buskirk, General Milstead, and General Jones, what information does your Service require to be provided to prospective recruits to ensure that they have immediate access to assistance and intervention, if necessary, if they believe a recruiter is intending to take improper advantage of them?

General BROMBERG. Army Recruiter contact with newly contracted soldiers, prospects and applicants is highly restricted. Cards describing sexual harassment prohibitions and what the prohibited activities are for recruiters and applicants are given to all applicants upon first contact as well as to their parents. These cards are used by the U.S. Army Recruiting Command in their recruitment of Regular Army and Army Reserve applicants. The Army National Guard has similar cards in development. Applicants and recruiters are offered a hotline phone number on the card to report any violation of a safe and proper environment. In addition, all recruits in all the Army's components sign contracts which include descriptions of sexual harassment prohibitions and what the prohibited activities are for recruiters and members of the DEP. The contract also provides the applicant a recruiting agency senior leader's telephone number for reporting sexual harassment or prohibited activity violations.

Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. Each Navy Recruiting Station has posters with Navy Recruiting District points of contact if applicants or future sailors have any issues during the recruiting process for which they desire assistance from someone other than their recruiter. Posters include the Department of Defense Safeline phone number and NRC Inspector General hotline number. Every applicant receives a business card from their recruiter that contains the recruiter's information on the front of the card and the following personal pledge from Commander, Navy Recruiting Command (CNRC) on the back: "We at Navy Recruiting Command are committed to professional, honest, and respectful treatment of every prospect and applicant." Also included is CNRC phone number, which is answered by Admiral Gay's personal staff. We provide additional information at the time of Delayed Enlistment Program enrollment while at Military Entrance Processing Station, and again during the 72-hour indoctrination. Command Hotline and NRC Headquarters phone numbers are provided.

General MILSTEAD. The Marine Corps has introduced new policy and products that augment long standing ethical standards and procedures between applicants and recruiters. Our efforts include but are not limited to the expansion of ethics instruction at the Recruiters School, sustainment training for the recruiting force, and for all new accessions a mandatory recruiter-driven values-based training program

and written ‘Statement of Understanding’ that address sexual misconduct and reporting procedures. A Marine recruiter’s immediate supervisor is identified during the initial process as an applicant’s or parent’s primary point of contact for any concerns or complaints, specifically including inappropriate conduct. Renewed command emphasis combined with improved education and information for applicants and parents increases the safety of our applicants and reinforces confidence in Corps-wide actions directed toward the prevention of sexual assaults.

General JONES. Air Force Recruiting Service (AFRS) personnel are required to provide all applicants with an “Air Force Applicant Rights/Responsibilities Card” as early as practical in the application process before Military Entrance Processing Command (MEPCOM) processing. This card clearly defines professional relationships to potential applicants and provides guidance on how to report any violations. Recruiters are directed to discuss and train DEP recruits on expectations.

In addition, each applicant views a video discussing professional relationships—what is professional and unprofessional, as well as expectations of recruits as Air Force members and what they can expect from their recruiter and the recruiting process. By defining what is and is not acceptable, the applicant knows what is expected and what is expected of the recruiter. This enhances the Rights/Responsibilities card—if the recruit notices unacceptable behavior, he/she can then act on it by contacting local Air Force leadership or the contacts listed on the card.

Each recruit has the opportunity to discuss potential misconduct when they visit the Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS) for the first time. Here, away from his/her recruiter, our MEPS liaison completes a survey with each recruit and asks if there were any instances of misconduct or action/words that made the recruit uncomfortable. If so, leadership addresses the concerns with the recruit and investigates allegations further to determine if additional action is necessary.

Applicants will also receive periodic briefings from supervisors and squadron leadership during their time in the DEP. These briefings will further emphasize rights, roles, and responsibilities of all members as well as ways to report suspected or actual cases.

The survey process completed with the MEPS liaison in the recruiting process is repeated both in BMT and Technical Training. Essentially the survey becomes a cradle to grave document within the accessions and training continuum.

DEFENSE SEXUAL ASSAULT INCIDENT DATABASE

8. Senator GRAHAM. General Bromberg, Admiral Van Buskirk, General Milstead, and General Jones, DOD has told us they have achieved full-deployment of the congressionally-mandated Defense Sexual Assault Incident Database (DSAID). Is your Service providing data to populate the database?

General BROMBERG. Yes. The Army pushes the DOD required sexual assault data to DSAID on a monthly basis using our Sexual Assault Data Management System (SADMS).

Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. Navy uses DSAID as a centralized, case-level, database for the collection and maintenance of information regarding sexual assaults. Navy Sexual Assault Response Coordinators (SARCs) use DSAID as a case management system, entering information within 48 hours of a report of sexual assault (96 hours in deployed locations presenting internet connectivity issues). DSAID includes available information about the nature of assaults, the victim, services offered to the victim, the offender, and disposition of reports associated with the assault. Naval Investigative Service uploads final case disposition weekly into DSAID.

General MILSTEAD. Yes. Full migration to the DSAID was completed in October 2012.

General JONES. Yes, the Air Force is providing data to populate DSAID.

9. Senator GRAHAM. General Bromberg, Admiral Van Buskirk, General Milstead, and General Jones, what information, specifically, is this database providing your Services’ leadership concerning sexual assault incidents?

General BROMBERG. The Army provides the required sexual assault data to DSAID from SADMS on a monthly basis. This information includes the type of report (Restricted or Unrestricted), type of assault (rape, forcible sodomy, aggravated sexual contact, etc), gender and rank of victim and alleged offenders, location (on/off post), investigation status, disposition status (court-martial, nonjudicial punishment, adverse administrative action, et cetera.) and victim services provided (counseling, healthcare, advocacy, legal, et cetera).

Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. The DSAID is a centralized, case-level, database for the collection and maintenance of information regarding sexual assaults, which Navy

has been using since October 2012. DSAID includes information about the nature of assaults, the victim, services offered to the victim, the offender, and the disposition of reports associated with the assault. Over time, as DSAID becomes populated with more case data, it will increasingly provide the ability to identify and manage trends, analyze risk factors or problematic circumstances, and assist with actions and plans to mitigate risks.

General MILSTEAD. DSAID provides Marine Corps leadership accurate information on sexual assault cases and trends, which will inform assessments and decisions regarding future programs and training efforts. DSAID affords the Services enhanced ability to provide comprehensive and standardized victim case management, improved overall administrative functionality, and accountability in the tracking of victim services. DSAID also allows for the Military Criminal Investigative Organization data to be linked directly to a case, ensuring investigative data is accurate and allows cases to be transferred between military Services without re-creating case information, a functionality that was not provided for previously in each individual Service database.

General JONES. The DSAID provides information on the following: Restricted and unrestricted reports, safety concerns identified, if the victim assessment was completed, status of investigation, location of the assault (on/off base), victim relationship to offender, and demographic information of the victim.

10. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Lamont, Secretary Garcia, and Secretary Ginsberg, before this committee, DOD witnesses described the recently revised DOD-wide policy on the Sexual Assault Program to standardize prevention, health care, victim safety, training and response efforts, and to clearly convey the role of servicemembers and employees in sexual assault prevention and recovery. This committee is concerned that medical care providers were not fully aware of their obligations concerning restricted reports, including the obligation to withhold disclosure to the chain of command. What actions have been taken to ensure standardization with response to protecting the sanctity of restricted reports?

Mr. LAMONT. The Army follows DOD policy and requires our healthcare providers to notify a SARC when a sexual assault victim seeks care at a MTF. The SARC (if not present with the victim) will then respond to the victim as quickly as possible.

Health care providers are trained to safeguard the confidentiality of medical information and maintain it in accordance with current Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) guidelines regardless of whether the soldier elects restricted or unrestricted reporting. Improper disclosure of covered communications and improper release of medical information are prohibited and may result in disciplinary actions under the Uniform Code of Military Justice, loss of credentials, or other adverse personnel or administrative actions.

Additionally, each Army MTF has a Sexual Assault Care Coordinator (SACC), Sexual Assault Clinical Provider (SACP), and a SARC who train other healthcare providers and healthcare personnel on their requirements regarding the preservation of restricted reports

Mr. GARCIA. Bureau of Medicine and Surgery Instruction 6310.11A (Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Medical-Forensic Program) has been recently revised and signed on May 2, 2013. This policy establishes the training requirements for all health care providers who will complete medical-forensic examinations.

A subset of the multi-disciplinary policy revision working group has been convened to oversee and support implementation of policy guidance. The training is 14 hours in length and in a standardized format that supports health care providers in completing a Sexual Assault Forensic Examination (SAFE), reviews the SAFE kit and contents, chain of custody, preparing to be a factual witness and Navy specific policy guidance and reporting options. Restricted reporting is thoroughly covered in this training as well as the current medical response training required of all Navy Medical Department personnel. Documentation of completion is required and metrics have been established to support tracking of training implementation.

Mr. GINSBERG. DOD and the Air Force have established policy concerning restricted reporting cases as detailed in Department of Defense Instruction (DODI) 6495.02 and Air Force Instruction (AFI) 36-6001. Sexual assault policy pertaining to medical care is listed in AFI 44-102. All sexual assault cases are referred to a SARC who insures the victim is briefed on their options for reporting. If the victim elects restricted reporting, then all medical assessments are completed but no reporting occurs to command authorities. Documentation of the medical assessment is flagged to prevent unauthorized release. In addition healthcare providers are required to take standardized first responder training.

11. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Lamont, Secretary Garcia, and Secretary Ginsberg, what additional challenges do you see in attaining the required level of standardization?

Mr. LAMONT. I do not see any challenges in standardization that the Services and DOD, working together, have not already addressed. Two examples include the decisions by DOD to standardize SARCs and Victim Advocate (VA) credentialing requirements and train sexual assault investigators from all Services at the U.S. Army Military Police School.

Mr. GARCIA. Each Military Service has a unique culture and operating environment. Beyond that, sexual assault prevention, sexual assault victim support, and sexual assault criminal investigations and prosecutions are overlapping but separate areas of activity.

First, we need to better distinguish between specific activities that should be performed in just about the same way everywhere, and those where tailored approaches may be more effective. Sexual assault victim support is a good example of the former—victims should expect the same services everywhere. Sexual assault prevention is a good example of the latter—the Services need flexibility to implement strategies that work for them.

Second, we need to evolve beyond standardizing exactly how to do things, and instead explore performance-based standards for key aspects of our processes that are most important to those affected. That will be hard work, and it will require genuine collaboration. For example, we want to know what aspects of our victim support processes are most important to victims themselves, so we can focus on making them more personal and effective.

Mr. GINSBERG. DSAIDS is the system of record for all reports of sexual assault. The Navy and Air Force both update each incident (restricted and unrestricted) reported into DSAIDS while the Army uses their Sexual Assault Data Management System (SADMS) which interfaces with DSAIDS. Each Service participates on the OSD SAPRO Change Control Board (CCB) to ensure standardization and system improvements.

12. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Lamont, Secretary Garcia, and Secretary Ginsberg, what additional tools does your Service need in order to continue to reduce—with the goal of eliminating—sexual assault?

Mr. LAMONT. Continuing our partnership with Congress is necessary so we can work together toward our common goal of eliminating sexual assault. Recent legislation has facilitated that effort. However, it is our responsibility to establish the positive organizational climate and culture needed to appropriately prevent and respond to sexual assault.

An area where Congress may be able to assist is to establish programs in communities and schools that counteract the negative social influencers that contribute to behavior that may lead to sexual assault.

Mr. GARCIA. We need more expert resources for investigations of alleged sexual assault crimes. NCIS has come a long way in the past several years. They have implemented impressive special training, and they have hired criminal investigators with civilian expertise, but the workload impact of new requirements to investigate all alleged sexual assaults, regardless of severity, is daunting.

We also need to establish new, tailored, programs for sailors and marines who have been victims of sexual assault. We are in the early stages of developing such programs. Sexual assault victims have an especially high risk of re-victimization, and we must break that cycle by providing peer support and personal tools to help them succeed and fulfill their personal and professional goals without unduly labeling them or undermining their performance of primary duties.

We are in the process of expanding across the entire Navy Department best practices from local pilot projects involving focused, synchronous, SAPR efforts. We must maintain visible and consistent senior leadership engagement working across organizational boundaries to change our culture and re-shape the attitudes and behaviors of our sailors and marines. It will require dogged commitment and perseverance over a prolonged effort. Key to our success will be our ability to partner across the Department of the Navy uniformed and civilian leadership to identify common goals and standards while implementing effective solutions that work in various settings and operating environments.

Mr. GINSBERG. Air Force leaders have worked diligently towards the goal of eliminating sexual assault from our ranks. While there is no single tool to fix the sexual assault problem, we're attacking it from every angle. The Air Force is constantly evaluating our techniques and mediums to provide education and training content that will increase awareness of sexual assault and the importance of prevention, intervention, and victim care. Additionally, we are bolstering the investigative and

prosecutorial process to show we're serious about taking action against offenders, which we believe will increase confidence in the process. This is evidenced by the introduction of the Special Victims' Counsel (SVC), effective January 28, 2013, which has had the greatest influence on victim empowerment and willingness to cooperate in the military justice system. Prior to the implementation of our SVC program, the rate of change from restricted to unrestricted reports was 17 percent. Now approximately 55 percent of our victims assigned to a SVC change from restricted to unrestricted reports.

13. Senator GRAHAM. General Bromberg, Admiral Van Buskirk, General Milstead, and General Jones, some have suggested that it would be appropriate to incorporate standardized assessments of commanders' performance in prevention, investigation, accountability, advocacy and assessment of sexual assault response and prevention lines of effort. What is your assessment of the feasibility of implementing commanders' performance in service-specific performance appraisals?

General BROMBERG. It is very appropriate to assess all officers and noncommissioned officers (NCO) on their enforcement of SAPR principles including their establishment or support of a positive command climate. The current Officer and NCO Evaluation Report allows for comment regarding support of Equal Opportunity and Sexual Harassment. Army Regulation 600-20, Army Command Policy also encourages comment for this topic. The future Officer Evaluation Report (OER) and Non-commissioned OER will continue to stress this topic and will be further reinforced by the Army Doctrine Reference Publication 6-22, Army Leadership under the Leader Competency of Trust.

Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. Incorporating standardized assessments of a commander's performance in prevention, investigation, accountability, advocacy, and assessment of sexual assault response and prevention lines-of-effort, could be accomplished using the current Navy fitness report by amending our governing instruction to require such an assessment, or by revising the current form. Additionally, current Navy fitness reports evaluate an officer's performance related to Command or Organizational Climate/Equal Opportunity.

General MILSTEAD. The Marine Corps Fitness Report system provides the official evaluation and record of an officer's performance and contains a section entirely dedicated to leadership. This section evaluates the commander's ability to set the example, communicate effectively, provide direction, and motivate, which includes his or her ability to develop, lead, and ensure the well-being of subordinates. Ensuring the well-being of subordinates necessitates that officers demonstrate a genuine concern for their safety—a characteristic rooted in the defining Marine Corps values of honor, courage, and commitment. The commander's efforts must enhance the concentration and focus of the subordinate on unit mission accomplishment, which includes setting an environment free of any criminal behaviors, such as sexual assault.

In line with the Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) memorandum dated 6 May 2013, the Marine Corps is exploring methods to assess the performance of our commanders in establishing command climates that foster dignity and respect. To this end, the Commandant has directed the development of new command climate surveys to be administered within 30 days of a new commander taking command and at the commanding officer's 12-month mark. Designed to measure the "health" of a particular command, the survey will cover a spectrum of issues, including sexual assault, and will be integrated with the ongoing efforts to stop all behavior-related offenses, including sexual harassment, hazing, and alcohol misuse. This initiative fulfills a specific provision in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) and the 6 May SECDEF memo, which also mandates that survey results be provided for review to the next level up in the chain of command.

General JONES. The current Air Force Officer Performance Report (OPR) already evaluates a commander on all leadership performance factors which include the implementation of the SAPR program within their units.

14. Senator GRAHAM. General Bromberg, Admiral Van Buskirk, General Milstead, and General Jones, the annual report on sexual assault at the Service academies revealed that many people who enter the armed services have experienced and report sexual assault or unwanted sexual contact that occurred before they entered the Service Academies or the armed services. What could your Service be doing to improve support to men and women in the accession process, to identify whether individuals have experienced sexual assault?

General BROMBERG. The U.S. Military Academy does not screen applicants for a history of sexual assault, but does provide all new cadets information about the Army's Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention Program.

When a New Cadet self-identifies during Cadet Basic Training, or subsequently over the course of their career as a Cadet, the cadet is referred to a SARC or Victim Advocate who provides essential support and care to the victim.

This support includes, but is not limited to, providing information on available reporting options (restricted and unrestricted), available resources to assist the victim in the healing process (e.g., on- and off-post counseling, chaplaincy, DOD SafeHelpline), and due process and investigation procedures (legal assistance and/or law enforcement to include Criminal Investigation Division—even if serving in a liaison role between civilian law enforcement and the military for off-post incidents).

The Victim Advocate provides continual support until the victim states that she/he no longer requires assistance or until departure from the academy, at which point she/he receives information about resources available after departure.

Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. Navy has a thorough application process, which includes detailed medical screening of applicants at Military Entrance Station and Processing Station (MEPS). Although not asked explicitly, are questioned by MEPS Chief Medical Officers using a Supplemental Health Screening Questionnaire to determine if they have experienced any significant abusive events in their life.

To improve support for men and women during the accession process, NRC has developed training focused specifically to indoctrinate them on military SAPR policies, to help prevent sexual harassment and assault, and to provide them with procedures to act on an incident that might occur. In addition to attending this training, there are a wide variety of products and resources (e.g., videos, posters, and brochures) recruiters use for local training programs and to increase awareness with the future sailors in the DEP.

The U.S. Naval Academy (USNA) also has a thorough application process, which includes medical screening of applicants. USNA ensures that each entering freshman is made aware of the services of the Academy's SAPR Office, including medical, counseling and advocacy, and legal assistance. All incoming plebes receive a SAPR indoctrination brief within 14 days of arrival. This session includes an in-depth overview of the USNA SAPR Program; a discussion on sexual assault, consent, types of reports, and services available; and stresses that these services are available regardless of when they experienced the sexual or interpersonal violence. Academy SAPR staff follow up with plebes, conduct refresher training, answer questions and again stress the availability of services.

As a result of findings in the most recent Service Academy Gender Relations survey, the USNA has implemented additional process changes for the entering Class of 2017 that will arrive this June. Specifically, during the Indoctrination-Day check-in each plebe will be asked in a confidential setting if they have experienced sexual assault prior to entering the Academy. Regardless of response, each plebe will receive a data sheet identifying available services and points of contact, should they desire to use them. This information will provide the SAPR Office and chain-of-command with real-time data on our at-risk population, and provide individuals information they can use to access services discreetly.

Navy is sensitive to the fact that asking explicit questions regarding sexual assault could lead to revictimization of an applicant, which is something that should be carefully avoided. DOD is currently conducting a review of the applicant accessions process as one aspect of the 2013 DOD SAPR Strategic Plan released by the Secretary of Defense on May 6, 2013.

General MILSTEAD. Sexual assault policies are explained to all members within 14 days of their entrance on active duty. The brief includes how to report a sexual assault and what supportive resources are available pertaining to care and justice. During the process, servicemembers are afforded the opportunity to speak to a Victim Advocate.

Servicemembers who were assaulted prior to entry in the military are provided the same resources and care as those who were assaulted during their service in the military. All victims are given the option to file a restricted or unrestricted report and, after exercising this option, are assigned a Victim Advocate and SARC and afforded medical and counseling services. If the case is unrestricted, it is referred to the Naval Criminal Investigative Service and the victim's command is notified.

General JONES. The U.S. Air Force Academy (USAFA) has programs in place to inform incoming cadets about available helping agencies and resources to assist them, along with information on how to access those services. USAFA makes every effort to provide an environment where these victims can thrive as they begin their military careers. In these instances, our goal is to ensure the victim's choices are honored and that they are comfortable coming forward to get help and report if they choose. USAFA will also cooperate to support the civil authority with jurisdiction

should the cadet pursue filing charges. Several initiatives are in place to help victims of trauma connect with support mechanisms.

Under the current program, basic cadets are briefed on sexual assault and associated helping agencies on day two after their arrival. This briefing addresses coping with assaults that may have occurred prior to coming to USAFA. The briefing also discusses the numerous resources available to include: SARC; chain of command; Military Guidance Officers—cadets trained to interface with other helping agencies; chaplains; counseling services; equal opportunity experts; medical providers.

Later in basic training, in conjunction with sexual assault awareness training, anonymous polls are conducted to get an idea of the number of basic cadets previously assaulted and to remind them of the resources available to them. Individuals are not asked to identify themselves to protect their ability to file a restricted report, if desired. Some basic cadets are unaware that they experienced a sexual assault until they receive the training and understand the Air Force definitions.

Similar to USAFA, Air Education and Training Command has an aggressive and comprehensive program for new recruits regarding proper relationships and to explain and educate them on their rights and how to report inappropriate conduct. In October 2012, AFRS rolled out its Dissuade, Deter, Detect, Hold Accountable (D3A) program to train recruiters and applicants alike on professional relationships. The D3A program is designed to baseline professional relationships from day one as they work through the recruiting process and follows them to BMT. Following initial professional relationship training, applicants are provided an “Applicant Rights/Responsibilities Card” and both the recruiter and applicant sign a “Professional Relationship Contract”. Professional relationship training is then reinforced at each stage of the recruiting process. Additionally, the applicant is provided the opportunity to address relationship concerns/issues through a “Professionalism Questionnaire” provided at initial Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS) processing and on “ship day” when they depart for BMT.

COMMAND CLIMATE ASSESSMENTS

15. Senator GRAHAM. General Bromberg, Admiral Van Buskirk, General Milstead, and General Jones, what percent of your commands conduct command climate assessments?

General BROMBERG. According to the records maintained in the Equal Opportunity Reporting System the Army is 80 percent on the completion rate for this fiscal year. Our units rely on the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute Organization Climate Survey (DEOCS), a web-based survey instrument, and it was offline from September 12 through mid March 13 due to budget issues which account for a lower rate. Units relied on the Army Research Institute paper and pencil survey during the time DEOCS was offline and this is a time consuming process and caused delays in meeting the mandated timelines in our regulation.

Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. All commanders are required to conduct a Command Climate Assessment (CCA) within 90 days of taking command and yearly thereafter. In fiscal year 2012, 90 percent of Navy commands participated in the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI) Organizational Climate Survey (DEOCS), before the system went down on 19 September 2012. However, the DEOCS is just one portion of a CCA. Echelon II commands are charged with tracking their subordinate command’s completion of the CCA. We entrust Commanders to hold their Commanding Officers accountable for 100 percent completion of the CCA.

General MILSTEAD. 100 percent. All commands conduct climate assessments in accordance with current DOD, Navy, and Marine Corps directives.

General JONES. All Air Force units have the opportunity and are encouraged to conduct climate assessments by the Equal Opportunity (EO) Office. EO Offices, on behalf of the commander, administer Unit Climate Assessments (UCA) on organizations that have 50 or more personnel (both military and civilian combined). For those organizations with less than 50 members, commanders are not afforded the UCA; however, they are able to utilize other forms of EO climate assessment such as Out and Abouts, Focus Groups, and Interviews. In addition, the Defense Equal Opportunity Climate Survey (DEOCS) is available through the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI) to gauge the climate of the organization. The difference between the UCA and the DEOCS is that contractors are permitted to be survey participants in the DEOCS.

The UCA is required every 2 years or upon commander’s request. With the passage of the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2013, the new requirements necessitate annual climate assessments and they must be completed within 120 days upon assumption

of command. The Air Force is currently revising Air Force regulations to reflect the new requirements.

16. Senator GRAHAM. General Bromberg, Admiral Van Buskirk, General Milstead, and General Jones, what are your Services doing to improve the regularity of command climate assessments?

General BROMBERG. We updated Army Regulation 600–20 in September 2012 to read “Company level commander (or their equivalents) will conduct a unit command climate survey within 30 days of assuming command (120 days for ARNG and USAR), again at 6 months, and annually thereafter. Assessments must include a facilitated small group discussion of topics. Company level commanders (or equivalents) may supplement any survey efforts with individual and group interviews, the analysis of unit records, and statistical information (awards, promotions, reenlistments, incidents of misconduct resulting in UCMJ, and EO complaint reports).” We report and track the compliance rates for command climate surveys.

Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. Every commanding officer is required to conduct a command climate assessment within 90 days of taking command and annually thereafter. The Navy will continue to track the completion of the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI) Organizational Climate Survey (DEOCS), by Echelon II command, on a quarterly basis.

General MILSTEAD. Current changes in the command climate survey requirements will result in commanders surveying their commands within 30 days via the Defense Equal Opportunity Climate Survey and annually thereafter. Results of the completed surveys will be provided to the next higher level command.

General JONES. The overall Air Force climate assessment is conducted annually. Current regulatory guidelines require units to conduct climate assessments in units once every 2 years and upon request by a commander. The NDAA for Fiscal Year 2013 has a requirement to conduct a climate assessment annually and within 120 days upon assumption of command by a new commander.

The Air Force is considering several courses of action on how to increase the regularity of command climate assessments with existing resources, including increasing the use of focus group interviews and various other survey assessments.

17. Senator GRAHAM. General Bromberg, Admiral Van Buskirk, General Milstead, and General Jones, what is your Service doing to evaluate the results of the command climate assessments to ensure necessary follow-up action?

General BROMBERG. Equal Opportunity Advisors assist the company commanders with accomplishing the command climate assessment by assisting with completion of a command climate survey, focus groups, evaluation of complaints requests for assistance (if any). Once the assessment is complete, EOAs assist the commander with developing a training plan to address any issues discovered during the assessment and provide guidance on the feedback required to the unit to complete the assessment cycle. Commanders and EOAs then brief equal opportunity training during Quarterly Training Briefings to their superior Commander. Additional command climate surveys will be reviewed by the superior Command on a research basis.

Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. Each Immediate Superior in Command (ISIC) ensures subordinate commanders assess their command climate within 90 days of assuming command with annual follow-up assessments during their command tenure. Every commanding officer is required to provide an executive summary of survey results and any intended actions, within 60 days of completing a command climate assessment. The ISIC also ensures necessary follow-up action on the results of command climate assessments. Additionally, we are constantly evaluating what we can do to increase the effectiveness of our leaders in command. A working group has been assigned to evaluate and make recommendations on expanding and reinforcing supervisory command relationships. By identifying potential or ongoing issues early, timely correction is likely to set conditions for a successful command environment.

General MILSTEAD. The Commandant of the Marine Corps has directed new command climate requirements to be administered within 30 days of a new commander taking command and annually thereafter, in order to continue fostering a positive climate within each Marine Corps unit. The survey covers a spectrum of personnel issues and will be closely integrated with ongoing efforts focused on reducing all behavior-related offenses. The results of the surveys will be measured in order to obtain accurate knowledge on the health of each command. To assure accountability, the results of the surveys will be shared with each commander’s next higher headquarters. The Commandant’s intent is to provide commanding officers with the necessary tools to identify high-risk behaviors and positively act on behalf of the health of their commands.

General JONES. The Air Force Climate Survey is conducted biennially and the results are out-briefed to the Secretary of the Air Force and released to the units. Commanders with ten or more respondents are provided survey results along with a guide developed by behavioral scientists from the Air Force Personnel Center, Directorate of Manpower containing specific recommendations and lists of resources to improve their unit climate. Leaders that use previous survey results to make improvements with the organization have yielded higher levels of agreement in all areas.

In addition to the Air Force Climate Survey, the Air Force has Equal Opportunity (EO) subject matter experts that conduct UCAs, analyze the results, and provide an out-brief to unit commanders. During the out-brief, EO professionals discuss recommendations and strategies for problem resolution and offer follow-up services to help resolve EO or managerial related problems. With the passage of the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2013, UCAs will be conducted annually, rather than biennially, and within 120 days upon assumption of command.

FEDERAL VOTING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

18. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Lamont, Secretary Garcia, and Secretary Ginsberg, what is your assessment of the performance of your Services' Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP)?

Mr. LAMONT. It is my assessment the Army has a very robust voting assistance program. We have a large network of Installation Voting Assistance (IVA) offices and Unit Voting Assistance Officers (UVAOs) who are providing voting assistance on a year round basis. In 2012, the Army voting assistance program had over 7,800 appointed and trained active duty UVAOs who provided information to eligible voters within their organizations. The Army also created Public Service Announcements that were seen overseas and state-side and participated in Absentee Voters Week and Armed Forces Voters Week to encourage eligible voters to register and vote. The Army voting assistance program has also successfully leveraged social media by using Facebook and Twitter, and established and maintain a vigorous communications strategy. We empower individual voters and continue to provide voting assistance and guidance to soldiers, civilians, and their dependents.

Mr. GARCIA. The U.S. Marine Corps has an effective Voting Assistance Program (VAP) and the Marine Corps is complying with the requirements put forward by title 10, U.S.C., section 1566 and the DOD FVAP. This assessment is based upon the results of 19 inspections conducted during calendar year 2012 and 7 inspections so far during calendar year 2013 at all levels of command. The Marine Corps VAP operates in accordance with established policies and procedures and is effective in assisting eligible voters. The Marine Corps is confident that servicemembers and their eligible family members were aware of all 2012 voting events and were provided assistance and documentation for all absentee voting requirements. The current Marine Corps order covering VAP was republished on 1 April 2013, and incorporates previously issued interim guidance as was required by changes to the law from the MOVE Act that passed as part of NDAA for Fiscal Year 2010 (P.L. 111-84) and updated DOD Instructions. The Marine Corps will continue to inspect, review, and provide guidance to update appropriate Marine Corps orders, policies, and procedures to ensure eligible voters have the opportunity to exercise their voting rights.

Mr. GINSBERG. The Air Force FVAP is a successful program within the department at all levels of command. In 2012, the Air Force Major Command inspection teams reviewed 134 Voting Assistance Programs at squadron, group, wing and command levels with just 12 discrepancies reported. All discrepancies were classified as "minor deficiencies" by the SAF/IG. As a result, the Air Force is confident we have an effective FVAP in place and military members have the resources to exercise their right to vote.

19. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Lamont, Secretary Garcia, and Secretary Ginsberg, what Service-specific initiatives have you implemented to improve compliance with FVAP and to maximize the opportunity for servicemembers to exercise their right to vote?

Mr. LAMONT. The Army welcomes the responsibility for providing voting assistance to our servicemembers, their family members, and our civilian employees. Before the 2012 elections, we made weekly phone and/or e-mail communications to IVA offices to ensure proper manning and updated any changes to office contact information. The Army continues to complete monthly phone and/or e-mail communications to the IVA offices. To maximize voter participation, over 7,800 active duty UVAOs

provided voting assistance at the unit level. They presented registration and voting information during meetings, training sessions, and formations. The UVAOs provided assistance and encouraged servicemembers to access the FVAP website for fast and efficient voter registration and assistance. Some of the Army voting activities for 2012 included participation in Armed Forces Voters Week and Absentee Voters Week with IVA offices setting up voting information tables in high traffic areas. To increase voter awareness and participation, the Army Voting Assistance Program uses Facebook, Twitter, public service announcements, print media, and mass e-mail distribution. The Army continues to use collaborative tools and information sharing with FVAP to push current and relevant voting information to our voting assistance personnel and eligible voters.

Mr. GARCIA. In addition to publishing a revision to the Marine Corps order on 1 April 2013, several steps were taken to increase voting awareness, improve compliance with FVAP and maximize voting opportunities for servicemembers. The Marine Corps released two video public service announcements for inclusion on all units annual training and Marine Corps movie theaters during the months leading up to the 2012 Federal Election. There are 18 IVA Offices established on bases and stations across the Marine Corps in accordance with FVAP directives, and every unit with 25 persons or more are required to have a Voting Assistance Officer appointed in writing by the Commander of the unit to assist and train all personnel in voting processes and responsibilities. Family member outreach for voting age dependents is also coordinated at Headquarters Marine Corps, and the Family Readiness Officer network is utilized to convey voting and election information to the spouses and other voting age dependents.

The 2012 election cycle saw a wide range of initiatives taken by the Navy to provide a better-than-ever level of support to voters. Efforts included the full implementation of the MOVE Act and establishment of an IVA Office at every Navy Installation, the engagement of senior leadership, strengthening of command level voting assistance programs, innovative marketing and awareness efforts, and training. The Navy took a holistic approach to ensure that voters were aware of elections and their rights and afforded every opportunity to register and vote absentee.

Mr. GINSBERG. The U.S. Air Force (USAF) Voting Assistance Program initiated several initiatives to improve compliance with FVAP and title 42, U.S.C.

1. The USAF made a change to Air Force Policy Directive (AFPD) 36-31 which effects the requirement for an IVA office in the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act, establishing the office as a voter registration agency within the installation headquarters organization reporting directly to the installation commander
2. USAF moved ahead quickly with changes to the AF Voting Action Plan in December 2009, implementing various requirements of the MOVE Act prior to OSD and FVAP releasing any guidance (i.e., service requirements for moving members and deployers immediately implemented).
3. USAF implemented the "Core Unit Voting Assistance Officer (UVAO)" position which is authorized by the installation commander's appointment letter for the IVA office. IVA Offices are given the authority to appoint up to four Core UVAOs to assist in the manning and workload of the IVA Office, which remains an unfunded mandate to date. Special training is required for IVA Office and Core UVAO positions.
4. USAF produced an "IVA Office Handbook" supplement to the "FVAP IVA Office Handbook" on 30 Aug 2010. To date, seven versions have been published. In May 2013, the Handbook contents are being incorporated into the AF Voting Action Plan so that IVA Offices and other IVA Office workers have a single document for the execution of the AF Voting Assistance Program.
5. USAF established an effective communication dissemination system from Service Voting Action Officer (SVAO) to IVA Office to UVAO to all Squadron members and their voting age family members. Any voting news items generated by FVAP were immediately passed on to voters through this streamlined network.
6. USAF IVA Offices are required to be clearly marked and advertised on base, giving voters a visible office; and UVAOs were not forgotten. 85 percent of voting assistance during the past quarter was done at the unit level by UVAOs.
7. USAF SVAO scripted a Public Service Announcement which the USAF Chief of Staff released in January 2012, encouraging military members, DOD civilians and their families to vote.
8. USAF SVAO implemented a new Staff Assistance Visit (inspection) requirement for IVA Offices to perform on all assigned UVAOs between Feb and March of every even-numbered year.

9. IVA Offices are instructed to partner with military and civilian personnel offices to have the IVA Office included on in/out-processing checklists for Permanent Change of Station (PCS) and deployment processing as well as for address changes.
10. USAF maintains an online website that allows IVA Offices and UVAOs to access all current documents and guidance; search for and submit "best practice" documents; and communicate via the forum.
11. USAF IVA Offices are encouraged to work with local election officials (LEOs) during biannual Armed Forces Voters Week and Absentee Voters Week events to invite the LEOs on base to assist in the booth for local voters.
12. USAF IVA Offices are provided an intuitive, stand-alone, forms-based "IVA Office's Database" for easy management of UVAO manning and training requirements as well as documenting UVAO "due-outs" (tasks), voters week plans and after action reports. Reports are generated at the push of a single button.
13. The USAF Voting Action Plan provides IVA Offices and UVAOs multiple tools to use in the execution of their voting assistance duties. These include instructions for ordering forms, posters, and banners online at no cost to their units; template voting assistance information forms; and a biannual chronological sequence of events.
14. Various other measures were taken following the passing of the MOVE Act: (a) IVA Office voicemail and email is answered within 48 hours (24 hours if within 60 days of a Federal election); and (b) USAF SVAO hosted a webinar to train IVA Offices on establishing and running IVA Offices (three webinars done to ensure time zones around the world were supported).

OPERATION TEMPO OVERSIGHT

20. Senator GRAHAM. General Bromberg, Admiral Van Buskirk, General Milstead, and General Jones, what is your assessment of your Services' Operation Tempo (OPTEMPO) reporting and how well are we meeting our OPTEMPO requirements to reduce stress on our servicemembers and their families?

General BROMBERG. Overall the Army is meeting its operational tempo, with the exception of the Army Reserve. The Active component goal is a ratio of 1:2 (time deployed vs. time home). The Active component is exceeding this goal with a ratio of 1:2.46. The Army National Guard is achieving the goal of 1:4 (time deployed vs. time home). The Army Reserve is continuing to improve and currently at a ratio of 1:3.5.

Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. Current Navy individual personnel tempo (ITEMPO) reporting is effective and we remain focused on reporting compliance and accuracy. In April 2013, Navy achieved 94.8 percent reporting compliance which included 98.9 percent of all Navy personnel represented in compliant activities. Additionally, we are in the process of improving our capability to analyze ITEMPO data for use in assessing ITEMPO days away from homeport and its relationship to stress on the force.

General MILSTEAD. For individual marines, we actually report and track Personnel Tempo/Deployment Tempo, for how much time marines are deployed or away from home. Our reporting is consistent with OSD's guidance on same. Our reporting indicates that generally both Active component and Reserve component marines are deploying for shorter durations and/or less frequently, which we expect will reduce the stress on our marines and their families.

General JONES. The Air Force is successfully meeting our operational requirements. We have approximately 186,000 Active Duty airmen supporting combatant commander operations. However, some airmen have a higher Operational Tempo (OPTEMPO) than others. We assess OPTEMPO within our career field stress assessment. Approximately 10 percent of our Active-Duty Force resides in stressed career fields, of which, OPTEMPO is a contributing factor. The Air Force prioritizes force management policy and programs, including bonuses, to maintain sufficient numbers of personnel in critical career fields to reduce stress and meet operational requirements. Additionally, we provide airmen a predictive deployment schedule, via the Air Expeditionary Force construct, so they can plan and prepare their families for their deployments.

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE TRAINING

21. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Lamont, Secretary Garcia, and Secretary Ginsberg, military members with language and culture training are essential to a

U.S. global force. The NDAA for Fiscal Year 2013 authorized the Secretary of Defense to transform the National Language Service Corps (NLSC) from a pilot program to a permanent program, and also to enhance the ability of our Federal agencies to hire people with strategic foreign language skills and as National Security Education Program awardees. What are your Services' goals with respect to the capabilities represented by the NLSC?

Mr. LAMONT. The Army continues to support and leverage the capabilities provided by the NLSC under the NDAA. Currently, the Army works with NLSC's recruiters to hire language proficient soldiers departing the Army to work at NLSC. We display NLSC advertisements on various portals targeting language qualified soldiers and civilians. Additionally, the NLSC provides an overview of their organizational opportunities to our O9L soldiers (native speakers of foreign languages who serve as interpreters) planning to depart military service. The Army is very active in supporting this program's growth. In addition, the Army leverages NLSC capabilities to fill short-term foreign language requirements that cannot be met within. Some of these categories include: role players, interpretation, translation and analysis, training (instruction), and administrative language support services.

In order to respond to increasing demands for foreign language skills, the NLSC plans to increase membership from the current 4,200 to at least 5,500 personnel along with the number of languages/dialects represented is expected to increase from 283 to at least 350 by fiscal year 2015. The Army continues to work with the Secretary of Defense to more actively expand the NLSC membership, reaching out to groups in which the government has already invested along with leveraging the capabilities of this organization.

Mr. GARCIA. Marine Corps - The Marine Corps recognizes the valuable service provided by the NLSC. In fact, Marine units have employed NLSC services on several occasions for operational and exercise support and foreign language instruction. As a matter of practice, however, the Marine Corps will seek assistance from the NLSC only after all internal Marine Corps options to satisfy language requirements could not be met through organic Service capabilities. For this reason, the Marine Corps has not set any specific parameters or goals for the employment of NLSC services. Rather, the Marine Corps requests NLSC assistance on an ad hoc basis similar to other language resources including the National Virtual Translation Center. The Marine Corps has implemented several programs to increase foreign language capacity and capability within its uniformed and civilian workforce, to include the Regional, Culture and Language Familiarization program for career marines; expanding the Foreign Area Officer program; and the creation of a Foreign Area Specialist program for senior enlisted marines.

Navy - Navy recognizes the broad range of language and culture capabilities provided by the NLSC, and finds particular value in their ability to satisfy short notice requirements. Navy has utilized NLSC resources for both standard fleet operations and humanitarian missions. NLSC personnel have served as interpreters/translators for multinational maritime exercises when service personnel either were not available or non-existent for the task.

In the future, Navy plans to formalize its process for filling ad hoc requests for language, regional expertise, and culture (LREC) support. To that end, and similar to Navy's employment of the National Virtual Translation Center, the NLSC will be included as an option when organic assets are unavailable or nonexistent. Therefore, the intent is not to establish explicit, quantifiable goals for usage. Navy will continue to train its own assets based on identified, validated, and documented requirements. For ad hoc LREC support requests, Navy will try to use sailors first and will consider other government options afterwards. Navy is pursuing several initiatives to enhance LREC capability within its force, but it is neither reasonable nor fiscally sound to invest in LREC training and sustainment to meet all contingency needs. Navy plans to coordinate as necessary with the Defense Language and National Security Education Office on any policies, procedures, or business practices to improve or better utilize the NLSC.

Mr. GINSBERG. The purpose of the NLSC is to have a pool of language-capable individuals available to support sudden and short-term requirements. The NLSC construct is not currently used to support the type of exercises and operations conducted by the Air Force. Rather, the Air Force meets its language needs by deliberately developing individuals to meet its requirements. The Air Force intends to encourage separating and retiring airmen who have existing language skills to join the NLSC.

MARKETING AND ADVERTISING

22. Senator GRAHAM. General Bromberg, Admiral Van Buskirk, General Milstead, and General Jones, one effect of sequestration was that DOD quickly moved to end service advertising, marketing, and outreach programs that have been used to aid in recruiting. What is your assessment of the value of funding these programs, and the projected impact to recruiting if these programs are not funded?

General BROMBERG. It is essential that the Army conduct a vigorous and sustained marketing and advertising program in order to recruit a quality force capable of handling 21st century mission challenges.

Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. Navy currently has an annual accession mission of over 45,000 officer and enlisted sailors with potential recruits dispersed throughout the country. Recruiting quality individuals is the first step in ensuring that we have intelligent, capable, high quality people in the future force. Paid advertising, marketing and outreach are critical components in our efforts to attain the proper recruiting mix. Working together to inform the American public of opportunities available in the Navy, they collectively communicate efficient and effective messages that favorably impact recruiting mission and contribute to end strength attainment in support of national security objectives. Further reduction in marketing, advertising, and outreach efforts and resourcing, would clearly present challenges to future accession goal attainment.

Specific impacts to recruiting are measured through leads and contracts with direct linkage to advertising efforts. In fiscal year 2008, 44.7 percent of Navy accessions (20,218 contracts) originated from advertising efforts. The national unemployment rate at that time was 5.2 percent. As the unemployment rate declines, recruiters will need more assistance from advertising-generated leads to meet accession goals. With current levels of unemployment, 22.64 percent of contracts (9,810) come from advertising. These are direct effects and do not account for the indirect effects that advertising has on influencing and reinforcing the joining behavior of our market.

Outreach programs, including Navy Weeks and Blue Angel appearances, allow the American public to directly interact with Navy representatives and afford them opportunities to observe examples of the technology and equipment sailors use in the daily performance of their duties around the world. These interactions prompt them to consider military service.

The value in funding paid advertising and participating in outreach events is derived from end strength requirements. Joint Advertising and Marketing Research Studies (JAMRS) indicate that 53 percent of armed forces accessions come from youth who, when asked if they would consider joining the military, had previously indicated "definitely not" or "probably not". Additionally, approximately 74 percent of high quality applicants indicated they initiated first contact with a recruiter. Advertising, marketing, and outreach events serve to drive these initial interactions by creating awareness and a positive image of the Navy and its career opportunities.

General MILSTEAD. In fiscal year 2012, 99.9 percent of Marine recruits were high school graduates and 74.8 percent scored in the upper half of the written military entrance exam. The quality of our applicants is higher than ever before. A critical requirement to continued success is our recruit advertising program. Our advertising program is used both strategically and tactically to deliver branded communications to support marines on recruiting duty, generate leads and create positive awareness that engages our prospect and influencer audiences. In total, recruiting a quality and representative force costs less than 1 percent of the Marine Corps' overall budget. Recruiter success is inextricably linked to operational and advertising support. Advertising creates awareness and drives consideration to serve in the military—it produces 'leads'. Advertising leads enable recruiters to efficiently focus their prospecting activities. Advertising dollars currently generate approximately 25 percent of all new contracts (enlisted) through numerous avenues, such as television commercials, enhanced area canvassing activities and social media outlets. A further loss of funding to advertising will ultimately lead to increased stress and reduced quality of life for Marine Corps recruiters most of whom currently work in excess of 60 hours per week. If advertising spending is cut back too much when recruiting is strong, potential long-term gain in awareness and propensity may be lost. The dramatic advertising cutbacks between 1986 and 1993 coincided with a considerable erosion of public awareness regarding military service.

General JONES. The Air Force advertising, marketing, and outreach programs are a critical component to our mission—to attract the best and brightest youth of America. Reduced funding for these programs will jeopardize the Air Force's ability to meet career field and DOD quality requirements. Even though the Air Force has

greatly benefited from historic highs in the quality of accessions in recent years, initial indicators are signaling a potential shrinking market for high quality recruits per JAMRS "State of the Recruiting Market," briefing April 2013. That same study indicates that 47 percent of new recruits were undecided about a career path and were influenced within a year of joining the Service. The Air Force must continue to strategically advertise, market, and maintain outreach programs to target the highest quality recruits and to convert applicants that are less propensed to serve.

INTEGRATED ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORD

23. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Lamont, Secretary Garcia, and Secretary Ginsberg, DOD and VA have been working on an integrated electronic health record (EHR) for a number of years with very little progress being made towards a truly seamless transition of health information between the two Departments. In January 2013, VA decided to use VistA, its legacy system, as its core health record despite the findings of a recent study commissioned by the VA that identified many VistA deficiencies. We've been told that DOD has been evaluating existing solutions to determine the appropriate core health record to use. Has DOD coordinated its proposed EHR program with your Service?

Mr. LAMONT. Yes, the Army has coordinated with the Navy and Air Force in the review of the request for information submissions. This information was released to the public on February 8, 2013. Results and recommendations were briefed to DOD leadership and the three Service Deputy Surgeon Generals. Army functionals were active contributors in defining EHR Core capabilities.

Mr. GARCIA. Yes, DOD has coordinated with the Navy while analyzing and determining requirements for a proposed EHR program. We have participated in the review of the request for information submissions which were publicly released on 8 February 2013.

Mr. GINSBERG. Yes, the Air Force (AF) Surgeon General Chief Medical Information Officer has been involved in the Analysis of Alternatives (AoA) between VistA and other commercial electronic health records. Additionally, the AF Deputy Surgeon General has been a regular participant in DOD and Veterans' Affairs meetings regarding validation of requirements and evaluation of solutions. The Deputy Surgeon General has kept me and the Surgeon General updated.

24. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Lamont, Secretary Garcia, and Secretary Ginsberg, how much will it cost for your Service to field a new EHR?

Mr. LAMONT. Specific dollar figures would be better obtained by DOD Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation as the numbers are acquisition sensitive.

Mr. GARCIA. The Services do not provide funding to this effort as all funding is centrally managed through the DOD/VA Interagency Program Office (IPO), the organization responsible for oversight and coordination of DOD/VA information-sharing initiatives. The Navy remains focused on tri-service planning for the joint deployment of an integrated EHR which achieves maximum economies of scale and standardization of the business process of healthcare among the three Services.

Mr. GINSBERG. DOD's electronic health record cost estimates must be redetermined after the Secretary of Defense evaluates the results of the AoA. Prior cost estimates were based on a previous DOD and VA strategy that was determined by both Departments to be infeasible.

25. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Lamont, Secretary Garcia, and Secretary Ginsberg, what impact do you anticipate for your Services' medical readiness?

Mr. LAMONT. The integrated EHR provides a platform for a lifetime electronic health record from the time of accessions through a soldier's service and is a key enabler for seamless transition to the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

Deploying the integrated EHR will provide improved access to medical records data and improve readiness capabilities, such as improved immunization tracking. The integrated EHR will improve medical records extraction to support the IDES process. The integrated EHR must have full compatibility with readiness data systems for all Services to enable crucial bi-directional data exchange. Current systems require duplicate efforts that introduce errors and gaps.

Mr. GARCIA. A new integrated EHR should enhance the ability to assess medical readiness for our sailors and marines. While information can currently be viewed via the Bi-directional Health Information Exchange, a single integrated EHR will afford expanded access to the source of that health information; permitting quicker assessment and care coordination among healthcare providers.

Mr. GINSBERG. With a new electronic health record, data and documentation pertaining to individual medical readiness will be better integrated into clinical processes, enhancing our ability to provide timely health measures to sustain the readiness of the servicemembers under our care.

26. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Lamont, Secretary Garcia, and Secretary Ginsberg, do you believe the EHR must be deployable?

Mr. LAMONT. Yes, it is essential that the integrated EHR be deployable to support soldiers deployed to theaters of operation or contingency operations. A deployable integrated EHR will allow data input and visibility throughout the continuum of care from point of injury to DOD medical treatment facilities to VA treatment facilities. Documenting care in the deployed environment will enhance the accuracy of a soldier's medical history, which could affect future disability assessments and benefits determination.

Documenting pre-hospitalization care and assessment provides valuable retrospective data to conduct research to improve patient care to address preventable causes of battlefield death. Finally, a deployable integrated EHR also enables deployed providers to access the medical history of the injured soldiers, thereby improving the quality of care.

Mr. GARCIA. It is absolutely essential that the IEHR be deployable to support marines in the field and sailors at sea since a vast majority of marines and sailors spend significant portions of their careers deployed away from home station. A key feature of the integrated EHR is the ability to continue to document medical care in times of low or no network connectivity, and then synchronize data once a connection is restored so it is available for future use. To that end, the integrated EHR will provide one system permitting both the inputting of data and the visibility of that data throughout the continuum of care—from the initial point of injury through the Military Treatment Facility and on to the VA treatment facility.

Documenting healthcare in the deployed environment will enhance the accuracy of the medical history for our sailors and marines, which is key to ensuring they receive the right healthcare at the right time. Well documented healthcare is also critical for use in determining future disability assessments and benefits determination.

Mr. GINSBERG. In the Initial Capability Document approved by the Joint Requirements Oversight Council, the electronic health record should be deployable in theater and support the mobility requirements for en route care. The solution would eliminate the need for three separate theater electronic health record solutions and enhance continuity of care, even in "low-communication/no-communication" environments.

27. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Lamont, Secretary Garcia, and Secretary Ginsberg, what input has each Service had on the EHR program?

Mr. LAMONT. Army Medicine as well as the Navy Bureau of Medicine and Air Force Surgeon General have been involved in the integrated EHR program from the beginning. Army's contributions to the integrated EHR program include: requirements generation and support with Clinical Informatics, Capability Management, and Enterprise Architecture assets. The Army Surgeon General is a non-voting member of the Interagency Program Office Advisory Board, which is responsible for integrated EHR governance.

Mr. GARCIA. Navy Medicine is actively engaged and currently collaborating with our Army and Air Force counterparts, as well the Veterans Health Administration. The Navy has provided subject matter experts to work on the Capability Integrated Project Teams, Clinical Informatics Teams and Enterprise Architecture Teams as well as staffing to assist with the requirements generation process. The Navy Surgeon General is also a non-voting member of the DOD Integrated Program Office Advisory Board which is responsible for integrated EHR governance.

Mr. GINSBERG. The Air Force (AF) Surgeon General Chief Medical Information Officer has been involved in the AoA between VistA and other commercial electronic health records. Additionally, the AF Deputy Surgeon General has been a regular participant in DOD and Veterans' Affairs meetings regarding validation of requirements and evaluation of solutions. The Air Force Medical Service and AF Communities have provided more than 100 clinical subject matter experts for the functional and technical requirements process.

BENEFITS FOR SAME-SEX PARTNERS

28. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Lamont, Secretary Garcia, and Secretary Ginsberg, recently, former Secretary of Defense Panetta announced that DOD will expand benefits to unmarried same-sex domestic partners who declare a committed relationship, but will not extend those same benefits to unmarried heterosexual domestic partners. Do you agree with former Secretary Panetta, that when it comes to benefits paid for by hard-working American taxpayers, that DOD should favor same-sex domestic partners over heterosexual partners?

Mr. LAMONT. We support former Secretary Panetta's decision. Heterosexual couples, if they so choose, have the opportunity in every State to get married; currently, same-sex couples do not have this opportunity. The steps announced today are an effort to close the equity gap for benefits, consistent with current law. Once implemented, same sex domestic partners will be required to sign DD Form 683, (Declaration of Partnership) attesting to the committed relationship. Similarly, a DD Form 684, (Dissolution of Partnership) will be required if the relationship ends. Soldiers must notify their personnel official within 30 days of the dissolution and will be required to wait 6 months before entering attesting to another relationship.

Mr. GARCIA. As an assistant secretary of a military department, I am committed to supporting the requirements and priorities as determined by the Secretary of Defense. Many benefits for families in same-sex relationships remain restricted by law. Heterosexual couples, in contrast, have the option to marry and enjoy the full range of benefits. I am committed to working with OSD to ensure fairness and equal treatment and to taking care of all of our servicemembers and their families to the extent allowable under law.

Mr. GINSBERG. Heterosexual couples, if they so choose, have the opportunity in every State to get married, and their marriage is recognized in Federal law. Currently, same-sex couples do not have this opportunity (per Defense of Marriage Act), we can only recognize marriage between a man and a woman. The extension of benefits to same-sex domestic partners of military members closes the gap in equity for benefits consistent with current law.

29. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Lamont, Secretary Garcia, and Secretary Ginsberg, was your Service consulted to determine the cost impact of extending these benefits to same sex partners?

Mr. LAMONT. The respective Services were not consulted directly. However, the Joint Benefits Review Working Group, which includes service representatives, considered cost impact as part of the overall analysis and determined that the cost was negligible.

Mr. GARCIA. Yes. The Department of the Navy was included among the representatives in the DOD working group established by the Secretary of Defense which, among other things, determined the cost impact of extending these benefits to same-sex partners.

Mr. GINSBERG. Benefit subject-matter experts were consulted during the OSD-led Joint Benefits Review working group and the Air Force provided input via this working group and various other Senior Leader briefings and discussions leading up to the announcement of benefits extension. From a fiscal perspective, the benefits that are being extended are of negligible cost. Some are cost neutral and self-sustaining such as MWR Programs, and Commissary and Exchange privileges.

TOTAL FORCE MIX

30. Senator GRAHAM. General Bromberg, Admiral Van Buskirk, General Milstead, and General Jones, General Dempsey said, in his testimony last week, that DOD needs flexibility to keep the force in balance and, that everything must be "on the table" including the mix among Active, Reserve, and National Guard units. In view of the heavy wartime demand on the forces including the Reserve and Guard, what do you envision as a viable option to change that force mix for your Service?

General BROMBERG. The Army remains committed to the Army Total Force Policy. The Active Army, the Army National Guard, and the Army Reserve each serve vital roles in our National Military Strategy, and it is imperative that we use each component's strengths to best advantage to accomplish all of the Army's missions. We will carefully review force structure and mix changes as we gain more clarity on a future budget.

Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. Navy conducts a comprehensive review every programming cycle after reviewing all applicable strategies (e.g., Defense Strategic Guidance and Cooperative Strategy for the 21st Century Sea Power). Our program, as submitted, provides Navy with the optimal Active and Reserve component mix, by

which Navy can surge, regenerate and flex capabilities needed for current operations and future contingencies. This optimal mix is predicated on the assumption that the Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) Individual Augmentation demand for Navy personnel will continue to decline and that the Reserve component will continue to have the capacity to source those requirements. This strategy enables the active component to man our force structure units (i.e., ships, submarines, aviation squadrons, and other operational units) and provide forward presence required by the ongoing rebalance to the Asia-Pacific region.

Navy has leveraged some of the authorities enacted in the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2011, to more fully utilize the Reserve component to increase readiness and operational capacity. Specifically, title 10 U.S.C., sections 12304a and 12304b, allow involuntary access to Reserve component personnel in response to a major disaster or emergency (12304a) or to meet preplanned missions in support of combatant commanders (12304b). Trained and qualified reservists provide increased capability and capacity to meet strategic Navy requirements and enable us to transition to a force that can seamlessly integrate into an active unit or replace an entire active unit to perform routine operational missions. Additionally, we have successfully implemented continuum of service policies by which Reserve enlisted sailors have options for voluntary recall to serve on active duty for up to 3 years or to return to the Active component and resign their Reserve contracts. As we continue progressing from a strategic reserve to an operational reserve, opportunities for further adjustments in the Active/Reserve Force mix may become increasingly evident.

General MILSTEAD. While the Marine Corps is reducing the end strength of the Active component from 202,000 to approximately 182,100 for the post Operation Enduring Freedom environment, we do not plan to draw down its Reserve end strength. We believe the proportion of 39,600 reservists and 182,100 Active Duty marines is the right level for the foreseeable future.

General JONES. Total Force Task Force was formed to examine the operational impacts and cost factors associated with various approaches to total force integration. By identifying and implementing the optimum force mix of an Active, Reserve, and Guard component, we should be able to maximize operational effectiveness, better optimize total force efficiencies; and provide better stability over time to our Guard units, States, and Reserve organizations.

MILITARY COMPENSATION

31. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Lamont, Secretary Garcia, and Secretary Ginsberg, our Nations' historical experience of pursuing cost savings by cutting military compensation has demonstrated that periods of designed reduction in overall compensation levels resulted in retention problems. And those retention problems, especially in the context of generally improving civilian employment opportunities, meant Congress was required to come back and authorize catch up increases to help us keep the highly trained talents and skills that we need. What is your assessment of the impact of the President's proposed slowdown in military compensation on retention and recruiting in your Service?

Mr. LAMONT. The Army believes that a slowdown in the increase in military compensation can be accomplished without sacrificing recruit quality or member retention. Conditions appear favorable for slowing the increase in military pay. Recruiting quantity is being met and recruit quality is high; retention goals are typically being exceeded. Any unanticipated changes in circumstances, such as a significant improvement in civilian employment opportunities, could negatively affect Army retention and recruiting. However, at present and in the anticipated future environment, the Army does not believe that a slowdown in the increase in military compensation will adversely affect its ability to recruit and retain an adequate number of high-quality personnel.

Mr. GARCIA. Military compensation is highly competitive today, and the President's proposed slowdown in base pay is not likely to cause recruiting or retention problems in the near term provided recruiting bonuses and retention pays are preserved. The most recent Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation reported enlisted members were paid at the 90th percentile and officers were paid at the 83rd percentile relative to private sector counterparts with comparable education and experience. Just 13 years ago, both officer and enlisted personnel were below the 70th percentile benchmark, and DOD made deliberate investments in military pay to meet that threshold. In the current fiscal environment, there is room to slow down base pay growth, thereby helping to mitigate further cuts to force structure, readiness and modernization.

Mr. GINSBERG. At this time, the Air Force does not foresee significant challenges to our recruiting and retention efforts as a result of the proposed slowdown in military compensation. Our Force Management program is a tailored multi-year strategy focused on sizing and shaping the total force with the right balance of skills to meet current and emerging joint mission demands. The Air Force's strategy over the past few years has been aggressive, allowing us to meet congressionally mandated end strength requirements and maintain a high quality force by leveraging voluntary programs first, offering incentive programs where needed, and implementing involuntary actions when required. Due to the expected improvements in the economy and the importance our airmen place on overall compensation, our recruiting and retention will be increasingly challenged, particularly as the Air Force addresses the need for its highly technically-skilled force. These compensation challenges may require increased recruiting and retention incentives for our future force.

FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAMS

32. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Lamont, Secretary Garcia, and Secretary Ginsberg, General Dempsey testified last week that unsustainable costs and smaller budgets require DOD to examine every warrior and family support program to make sure we are getting the best return on our investment. How do you assess the investments our Nation has already made in family support programs, and suicide prevention in particular, in moving the needle with demonstrable positive return on investment?

Mr. LAMONT. In late 2011, the Army adopted a portfolio approach to managing warrior and family support programs. This portfolio approach promotes a shift in the governance focus from individual program proponents to the entire group of related programs such as Suicide Prevention. In 2012, the Army piloted its first enterprise evaluation to assess how programs within the Health Promotion and Risk Reduction Portfolio contribute to specific strategic outcomes (Help-Seeking, Risk Reduction, Transition, and Resilience and Coping). The findings of this and future evaluations will focus on how programs could increase their ability to achieve the Army's strategic outcomes and improve our return on investment.

Mr. GARCIA. The Navy and Marine Corps continually evaluate the effectiveness of their programs to ensure the needs of our sailors, marines, and their families are being met. Assessment and research efforts help identify program deficiencies, program best practices and satisfaction. This insight enables the Department of the Navy to adjust internal programming and accurately direct external support to best serve sailors, marines, and their families.

The Navy actively participates in the Defense Suicide Prevention Office's (DSPO) program evaluation initiative. DSPO is conducting an analysis of the Services and the OSD Suicide Prevention programs in order to align and integrate programs, resources, policy, and strategy. The analytical method being utilized has the following three components:

- (1) Strategic Coverage: The Navy is supporting efforts to align and analyze suicide prevention programs to assess whether there are gaps in addressing the overall OSD suicide prevention strategic objectives.
- (2) Resource Allocation & Analysis: OSD and the Services are conducting a review of Suicide Prevention Programs to determine full costing of requirements/level of effort, funding amounts, and potential shortfalls. This review includes examining program duplication and AoA in an effort to reduce costs without significant negative impact.
- (3) Program/Portfolio Effectiveness: The DSPO recently completed an effort to establish a common framework and understanding of measures of effectiveness (MOEs), and ground rules, for Suicide Prevention Programs. The Services and OSD are examining measures of effectiveness and performance measures. This analysis will be used to realign existing program resources and ensure that highly ranked suicide prevention programs are implemented across all of the military Services,

Mr. GINSBERG. We have multiple forums that enable us to monitor the delivery of family support programs. Within our Airman and Family Readiness Centers, we have a very robust computer management system that provides us with real time data for our supported populations-service codes are used to record the type of support sought (e.g., financial management) and the system allows the provider to make notations of the visits. Additionally, the Air Force conducts biennial community assessments, through the Air Force Surgeon General, that provide valuable data on our ability to meet individual needs, and also collects information regarding

behaviors that may place an individual at risk. Further, the Air Force Community Action Information Board (CAIB), convened at the installations, major commands, and Headquarters Air Force, identifies community issues to emphasize the importance of taking care of airmen and their families. Since 1996, the CAIB process has focused extensively on monitoring, managing, and implementing suicide prevention best practices for use by commanders. Additionally, the CAIB provides detailed actions and discussions on sexual assault prevention, child and family maltreatment issues, and resilience. A significant outcome from the CAIB process has been the development and implementation of the Comprehensive Airman Fitness concept that concentrates exclusively on developing our airmen and families to become more resilient and better prepared to meet the unique challenges of military service.

TUITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

33. Senator GRAHAM. General Bromberg, Admiral Van Buskirk, General Milstead, and General Jones, I am pleased to learn that DOD has now reinstated the Tuition Assistance program, previously cancelled by the Army, Marine Corps, and Air Force in response to the administration's failure to plan for sequestration. How does Tuition Assistance enable your Active-Duty Forces to meet the professional development requirements described by General Dempsey to establish the Profession of Arms as the foundation for the Joint Force?

General BROMBERG. Tuition Assistance supports soldiers in completion of classes leading to Associate's, Bachelor's and Master's degrees as well as certificate programs. This off-duty voluntary education program develops critical and adaptive thinking skills soldiers and leaders need to make informed decisions. These skill sets allow the Army to learn faster and adapt more quickly than its adversaries and inable, necessary skills to meet the challenges of today's operational environment.

Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. Education is a critical strategic investment that enhances the overall effectiveness of our force. All assignments benefit from well-developed skills in critical thinking, problem solving in complex environments, and effective communications. Navy's unwavering support of the Tuition Assistance program, along with our numerous other educational programs and opportunities, support development of these skills and attributes across the force. Education becomes an asymmetric advantage in our ability to develop leaders who are able to innovate, adapt, and succeed in the planning and delivering of maritime joint warfighting and support capabilities.

General MILSTEAD. The Marine Corps' tuition assistance program is focused on providing exposure to higher education for our marines. We expose marines to the critical thinking, analysis and problem-solving skills that one learns through higher education. While we know that most of our marines will leave the Corps after their first enlistment, we value involving them in higher education for two reasons. First, if they stay marine and continue to pursue higher education, they will develop the cognitive skills required of thinking institutions, as described by General Dempsey. Second, if those marines leave the Corps and re-enter civilian life, they return prepared to pursue higher education, develop similar skills, and contribute to the advancement of society. Either way, our Nation improves its thinking and problem solving capacity.

General JONES. Military Tuition Assistance provides the financial means for our airmen to pursue higher education. In turn, higher education provides the educational background crucial in developing the critical thinking skills needed for practitioners of the profession of arms. This means our airmen are more able to work in the dynamic climate of today's conflicts. Additionally, higher education allows airmen to develop the critical ability to make connections between seemingly unrelated events or information and develop holistic solutions quickly and accurately. Military tuition assistance will continue to be integral to the recruiting, retention and readiness of our airmen. However, competing funding requirements will necessitate changes in fiscal year 2014 and beyond to ensure the financial health of the program.

SUICIDE PREVENTION

34. Senator GRAHAM. General Bromberg, Admiral Van Buskirk, General Milstead, and General Jones, our force is exceptionally well-trained on suicide awareness and prevention, and yet we still experience the tragedy of suicide at an unacceptably high rate. What is your assessment on whether the current level of training and leadership engagement is sufficient or whether it has inadvertently created a cli-

mate in which some vulnerable individuals may have contemplated suicide because we talk about it so much?

General BROMBERG. We continually assess our training for effectiveness. The Ready and Resilience Campaign requires an assessment of programs that support the campaign. The Army has not completed an assessment on the correlation of suicide prevention training and the incidences of suicides overall. Suicides are complex issues with a multitude of variables influencing each. The Army focus on identifying the early signs of suicidal behaviors and intervention skills remains the best option in attempting to reduce the number of suicides. There is no known direct correlation that the increase in suicide prevention training has created a higher propensity of soldiers to consider suicide as a viable option to their problems.

Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. The U.S. Surgeon General's 2012 National Strategy for Suicide Prevention recommends emphasis on resiliency in training, messaging and communications, as well as clinical practice guidelines. Navy's operational stress control training teaches skills that build resilience, navigate stress and identify resources that reduce risk of crises. By helping sailors develop life skills and promote comprehensive wellness—physical health, nutrition, fitness, proper rest, sound financial decisions, strong relationships and spirituality—suicide risk factors are reduced without explicitly discussing the subject. Navy's training is designed to foster meaningful discussion of stress and proactive ways to mitigate it and instill awareness of stress injury warning signs for those having trouble navigating through challenges.

Our strategic and tactical communications products provide best practices on how to discuss stress injuries that avoid risk of suicide. Adapted from the national suicide prevention resource center's recommendations, these Navy branded products are not only useful to guide training, but encourage leaders to engage in meaningful dialogue with their sailors, reinforcing the message that "It's okay to speak up when you're down." Finally, unit leadership engagement is critical to enable sailors to move beyond decades of negative psychological health perceptions and barriers, and to seek the help needed to remain resilient and operationally ready. Navy is confident that both the training strategy and leadership commitment to engage all aspects of suicide prevention will provide sailors and their families with the necessary tools to choose life.

General MILSTEAD. The Marine Corps continually evaluates the effectiveness of its suicide prevention training and makes periodic updates to incorporate the latest evidence-based practices. Our evaluation includes partnering with Federal agencies, academia and private industry in cooperation with Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury to study the effectiveness of our suicide prevention training.

To ensure that we do not inadvertently create a climate that talks about suicide too much, the Marine Corps adheres to the latest recommendations for reporting of suicide, which include offering hope and avoiding talks about suicide. We do not discuss suicide method, dramatic images, or act to glamorize a death. Discussing suicide carefully can correct myths and encourage those who are vulnerable or at risk to seek help.

General JONES. The current level of training on suicide prevention for leaders in the Air Force is appropriate. Suicide is one of the most challenging issues Air Force leaders at all levels face. The Air Force Suicide Prevention Program (AFSPP) is an effective evidenced-based, leader-led, community program that relies on 11 overlapping elements. The core of these 11 Elements is leadership involvement.

In 2011, as part of the Air Force response to the findings of the 2010 Volpe report on suicide in the military and the RAND report, "The War Within," enhancements were made to the 11 Elements of the AFSPP. One of the most critical enhancements was the development of a strategic communication plan to promote responsible reporting of deaths by suicide, encouraging help-seeking behaviors among all airmen, and removing barriers to seeking care. This was done to ensure that in our efforts to prevent suicide, the Air Force was not inadvertently promoting suicide. To that end, the Air Force Public Affairs Guidance (PAG) on Suicide Prevention was developed based on the World Health Organization's (WHO) "Preventing Suicide: A Resource for Media Professionals." The Air Force PAG provides guidelines on crafting suicide prevention messaging, responsible reporting information on death by suicides, delivering strength-based messages, championing responsible help-seeking behaviors in airmen, and modeling healthy behaviors and choices throughout our wingman culture. This approach is mirrored in annual training for all airmen and frontline supervisor training for at-risk career fields. Another enhancement was the development and issuance of comprehensive post-suicide and post-suicide-attempt guidelines. These guidelines assist leaders in the critical time after a suicide attempt or the loss of an airman to suicide to appropriately support the bereaved and

prevent additional suicides. Research shows that the time immediately following a death by suicide is a period of increased risk for friends, family, and co-workers of the deceased.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR KELLY A. AYOTTE

INTEGRATED DISABILITY EVALUATION SYSTEM

35. Senator AYOTTE. Secretary Lamont and General Bromberg, what must be done to further reduce the time it takes for soldiers to progress through IDES?

Mr. LAMONT and General BROMBERG. The Army remains committed to making this process more accessible to our soldiers and their families. Over the last year, the Army has devoted an extraordinary amount of time, attention, resources, and leadership to improve the Integrated Disability and Evaluation System. These include doubling the total number of personnel supporting IDES nationwide, establishing and enforcing Army-wide processing standards, placing a General Officer in charge of IDES overall, and establishing three Medical Evaluation Board remote operating locations to reduce the backlog of Reserve component soldiers. The results of those efforts are evident in our Medical Evaluation Board and PEB processing time metrics and will reflect in the average time for the entire process once the current backlog of cases have finished the process. However, this is still a very complicated process touching unit, personnel, medical, Veterans' Health, Veterans' Benefits, and finance systems. Short of complete overhaul of the system, we believe re-designing the existing process within the constraints of current statutes will only result in unnecessary turmoil and confusion and will likely result in another inefficient process.

36. Senator AYOTTE. Secretary Lamont and General Bromberg, what are the leading causes of delay?

Mr. LAMONT and General BROMBERG. The Army is meeting OSD's processing goals in all subprocesses of the IDES with the exception of the VA Preliminary Rating Stage and VA Benefits Stage. Recent process improvements in the Army's Medical and PEB processes have increased the average monthly input of cases to the Disability Evaluation System Rating Activity Site, creating a backlog. Until this backlog is eliminated, the Army will have difficulty meeting OSD's 295-day goal.

INVOLUNTARY SEPARATION

37. Senator AYOTTE. Secretary Lamont and General Bromberg, in your prepared remarks, you state that the Army will "need congressional support as it resorts to inevitable involuntary measures in the coming fiscal year." Why is it inevitable that the Army will need to utilize involuntary separations?

Mr. LAMONT and General BROMBERG. The Army must retain the very best soldiers to continue to succeed in performing our critical missions on behalf of the Nation. Our modeling has shown that current volunteer separation rates will not achieve the required end strength goals. Experience from the 1990s drawdown showed us that incentivizing voluntary separations prevented the Army from keeping many of its promising members. In addition, funding to support financial incentives for voluntary separations would be pulled from critical programs already significantly impacted by sequestration adjustments. For today's force shaping efforts, the Army is committed to deciding who we will retain and who must transition by putting in place a robust program of transition assistance for servicemembers and families. This will ensure all who must separate will have the tools needed to care for family needs and transition their hard won skills into our Reserve components or to civilian careers.

38. Senator AYOTTE. Secretary Lamont and General Bromberg, what level of involuntary separations do you anticipate in the next fiscal year?

Mr. LAMONT and General BROMBERG. Approximately 1,000 officers will need to be separated through promotion nonselection and Selective Early Retirement Board actions in fiscal year 2014.

39. Senator AYOTTE. Secretary Lamont and General Bromberg, in terms of grade, years of service, number of deployments, and military occupational specialty, what type of soldiers will be involuntarily separated in the coming fiscal year?

Mr. LAMONT and General BROMBERG. The Army expects to separate enlisted soldiers in the ranks of private through sergeant major, and officers at the grades of

captain through colonel. The majority of the members separating will have deployed and will span a range of specialties. We anticipate that many of these soldiers will be eligible to apply for Temporary Early Retirement Authority or regular retirement.

40. Senator AYOTTE. Secretary Lamont, General Odierno testified that if sequestration continues, the Army may have to reduce at least 100,000 additional personnel. During last year's subcommittee hearing, you said that the Army may have to involuntarily separate as many as 24,000 enlisted soldiers and up to 5,000 officers. Has your estimation changed or are those the numbers we are still looking at in terms of involuntary separation?

Mr. LAMONT. For the Army to achieve an end strength of 490,000, we expect to have to require the involuntary separations of approximately 6,500 officers and just under 6,000 enlisted over the period between today and fiscal year 2017. If sequestration remains in place, those numbers would have to be increased based on any additional end strength reductions required.

41. Senator AYOTTE. Secretary Lamont, consistent with current law, what is the approximate number of anticipated involuntary separations if sequestration continues until 2021?

Mr. LAMONT. The Army has not completed its analysis of sequestration impacts on the force. It would be imprudent to provide any numbers at this time.

42. Senator AYOTTE. Secretary Lamont, will the majority of involuntarily separated soldiers be retirement eligible?

Mr. LAMONT. Yes. Since Temporary Early Retirement Authority is available, we anticipate that the majority of our separating soldiers will qualify for a retirement pension and benefits.

REDUCED RECRUITING POOL

43. Senator AYOTTE. Secretary Lamont, Secretary Garcia, Secretary Ginsberg, General Bromberg, Admiral Van Buskirk, General Milstead, and General Jones, in Secretary Lamont's and General Bromberg's prepared remarks, they stated that "recruiting is expected to be more difficult in fiscal year 2014." You mention that "one in four 17-24-year-olds are eligible to serve in the Army without a waiver". You also state that "One in five youths age 12-19 are currently overweight, compared to 1 in 20 in the 1960s, and this trend is projected to grow to one in four by 2015." From a broad, national security perspective, what concerns, if any, do you have regarding a declining pool of eligible recruits?

Mr. LAMONT and General BROMBERG. A declining pool of eligible recruits is a national security concern because it impacts the ability to field a quality, and diverse, All-Volunteer Force. This directly impacts readiness. While beneficial to the country, the steadily improving economic environment compounds the problem of the declining pool and adds to today's recruiting challenge. The Army has the mission to recruit over 100,000 eligible and qualified young men and women across all three of its components each year. The Army competes for these qualified youth with the other Services as well as colleges, universities, and industry. Of those who are eligible, only a small portion (8 percent) is interested in joining the Army. In order to convince this limited pool of the value of Army service over the other options available to them, Army marketing must be sufficiently resourced.

Mr. GARCIA and Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. Navy is concerned about the trends, but has no concern from a broad, national security perspective, as the remaining Qualified Military Available (QMA) pool is projected to remain relatively stable. QMA is the official DOD metric for eligibility. Based on a fall 2012 assessment by OSD JAMRS, the high quality, eligible, and propensed, target market is estimated at approximately 529,500, which will meet the DOD accessions requirement. Navy will meet accessions requirements in the foreseeable future without relaxing accessions standards.

Mr. GINSBERG and General JONES. The Air Force role in national security requires us to carry out activities conducted by the brightest and most capable airmen and our ability to seek out and recruit these individuals is critical to our success. A declining recruiting pool reduces the Air Force's ability to find the diverse mix of applicants to sustain our highly technical career fields. Based on current worldwide trends and threats, the Air Force projects increased requirements in career fields such as Cyber. These technical specialties depend on our ability to provide

sufficient numbers of qualified recruits to sustain these career fields over the course of a 20- to 30-year career.

General MILSTEAD. The pool of highly qualified eligible recruits has been declining for several years now and shows no sign of improving in the near future. The Marine Corps has been proactive in addressing this concern. The backbone of the Marine Corps' recruiting effort is the High School and Community College program in which we focus our recruiters' efforts on the most qualified youth; although qualified prospect numbers are diminishing they are presently adequate. Access to high schools and college campuses is critical to our recruiters being able to meet face-to-face with quality applicants. With about 75 percent of the market being unqualified for military service, recruiter access to these educational institutions is imperative. Adequately funding our recruiting efforts, specifically advertising and personnel structure, will enable the Marine Corps to avoid mission failure in the coming years.

44. Senator AYOTTE. Secretary Lamont, Secretary Garcia, Secretary Ginsberg, General Bromberg, Admiral Van Buskirk, General Milstead, and General Jones, is the declining recruit pool a long-term trend we should be concerned about?

Mr. LAMONT and General BROMBERG. Yes, the declining long-term trend of young Americans who are eligible to serve in the Army is a concern. The United States is facing a national security challenge—not only a military recruiting problem. Recruiting is expected to be more challenging in fiscal year 2014; the Army and the Nation still face challenges such as rising obesity rates and decreasing high school graduation rates as we recruit the All-Volunteer Force. Today, fewer than one in four 17- to 24-year-olds are eligible to serve in the Army. More than 20 percent of high school students fail to graduate and one in five youths, 12–19 years old, are currently overweight. This trend is projected to grow to one in four by 2015. Recruiting soldiers to meet the challenges of the 21st century will prove increasingly difficult due to these changing U.S. demographics. Trends such as increased requirements for technological proficiency, increasing obesity and a reduced interest in military service not only limit the recruiting population, but potentially prevent some of the best and brightest from serving in our ranks and benefitting from an Army Strong foundation. The Army requires quality prospects that can adapt and operate in complex environments; the declining recruit pool is concerning as it may impact future capabilities.

Mr. GARCIA and Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. Navy is concerned about the trend in obesity, increase in substance abuse, and the general lack of military awareness; however, analysis of the data indicates that the recruit pool is relatively stable through 2020. The size of the age 17–24 youth population is projected to increase between 2020 and 2030. Analysis of OSD JAMRS data suggests that, even with QMA factors applied to gross census numbers, the recruit pool remains large when compared with the projected number of DOD annual accessions of approximately 150,000; therefore, it is not expected to impact accession goals.

Mr. GINSBERG and General JONES. Yes, a declining recruiting pool threatens the Air Force's ability to meet future national security requirements and marketing data, provided by the JAMRS, indicates that this trend is growing.

General MILSTEAD. Yes, for the sake of our national character as well as national security. Based on ethnicity or race, between 21 to 42 percent of young Americans did not graduate from high school in 2012. Another 10 percent cannot join the military because of their criminal records. When weight problems are combined with educational deficits, criminal records, and other disqualifiers, such as asthma or drug abuse, 75 percent of Americans 17 to 24 years old are unable to join the military.

45. Senator AYOTTE. Secretary Lamont, Secretary Garcia, Secretary Ginsberg, General Bromberg, Admiral Van Buskirk, General Milstead, and General Jones, will your Service be forced to lower standards in order to recruit a sufficient number of people?

Mr. LAMONT and General BROMBERG. The Army has no plans to lower recruit quality standards to achieve its goals.

Mr. GARCIA and Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. Navy does not need to lower its accession standards. NRC's analysis of the data indicates that the recruit pool is relatively stable through 2020. The age 17–24 youth population is projected to increase between 2020 and 2030. Even with QMA factors, the official DOD eligibility metric, applied to gross Census numbers, the recruit pool remains large when compared with the DOD projected annual accessions of approximately 150,000. Based on a fall 2012 assessment of OSD JAMRS data, the high quality, eligible, and propensed, tar-

get market is estimated at approximately 529,500, which will meet the DOD accessions requirement.

Mr. GINSBERG and General JONES. It is too early to determine if the Air Force will need to lower standards in the future to meet accession goals. We have enjoyed a robust recruiting environment in recent years mostly due to the relatively high unemployment rate and a struggling economy. This recruiting environment has produced inflated quality indicators such as a higher than normal number of applicants qualifying in the highest mental aptitude test categories. We will continue to monitor our recruiting trends as the economy improves and other factors continue to shrink our recruiting pool and make adjustments if we feel it is necessary to meet production goals.

General MILSTEAD. The Marine Corps has not, and does not plan to reduce our quality standards or enlistment criteria. Quality standards were maintained when the Marine Corps expanded in size during the recent decade. Studies and research confirm that quality applicants are an investment that ultimately saves money due to lower attrition—specifically, more individuals will complete their enlistment—which helps stabilize our recruiting accession mission. Most importantly it provides the highest caliber of force capable of adapting and succeeding on 21st century battlefields. Lowering standards to chase short-term gains in meeting accession missions leads ultimately to higher costs, a less capable force, and negative implications for national security.

46. Senator AYOTTE. Secretary Lamont, Secretary Garcia, Secretary Ginsberg, General Bromberg, Admiral Van Buskirk, General Milstead, and General Jones, how can programs like the National Guard Youth Challenge Program increase the number of eligible recruits?

Mr. LAMONT and General BROMBERG. While the mission of the Army Reserve National Guard (ARNG) Youth Challenge Program is to intervene and assist 16–18 year old high school dropouts, the impact on expanding the ARNG recruiting market is minimal. Many of the National Guard Youth Challenge participants have law violations and would thus require misconduct waivers. Very few program participants join (14 percent) and many may not qualify if they do receive a GED or high school diploma.

Mr. GARCIA and Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. The National Guard Youth Challenge Program (NGYCP) is recognized as a Tier II education program by OSD. Per fiscal year 2013 DOD quality standards, 90 percent of total force non-prior service accessions must be Tier I High School Diploma Graduates (HSDG). Navy's higher quality standards require 95 percent to be Tier I HSDGs. Navy does access some NGYCP participants, but is limited by the academic quality standard. Absent modification to Tier I and Tier II HSDG standards, or increased academic performance on the part of NGYCP applicants, and applicants of similar programs, the NGYCP cannot increase the number of eligible recruits.

Mr. GINSBERG and General JONES. The Air Force agrees that national and local level programs such as the NGYCP can be effective in generating potential recruits by providing a means to qualify otherwise disqualified youth. The NGYCP is a community-based program that leads, trains, and mentors at-risk youth so they may become productive citizens. Many of these at-risk youth have other disqualifying factors prohibiting them from serving in the Air Force.

The Air Force has found it more cost effective to use our resources to generate awareness and interest for our programs by targeting youth still in school. The Air Force currently participates in various national-level sponsorships that focus on STEM and targets mechanically inclined youth, as well as the many local-level programs with involvement of our 27 squadrons and approximately 1,100 recruiters. The intent of our efforts is to educate youth and influencers on the high tech opportunities in the Air Force, and formulate a favorable impression of the Air Force as a viable and noble career option for youth.

General MILSTEAD. The Marine Corps does not utilize programs like the NGYCP for expanding eligible recruits. Our source for our quality applicant resides in the traditional high school market. Applicants from the high school market consistently have lower attrition, score higher in qualifying test scores for classification to military specialties, and have fewer moral issues compared to applicants with alternative education credentials.

WOMEN IN SERVICE REVIEW

47. Senator AYOTTE. General Milstead, from a Marine Corps perspective, can you provide an update on the Women in Service Review?

General MILSTEAD. We are on track to have the new policy fully implemented by the deadline of 1 January 2016. We are continuing to follow a two pillar approach as we implement our plan in a deliberate, measured, and responsible manner. The first pillar is the opening of closed MOSs; we are nearly complete with the full review and validation of all physical standards for MOS qualification. Throughout this summer and fall, we will be testing 800 male and female Marine volunteers on MOS physical tasks and looking for correlations to our Physical Fitness Test (PFT) and Combat Fitness Test event performance. Following this research, we plan to have a physical screening mechanism in place to aid in MOS classification by the end of this year.

Our research at the Infantry Officer Course is ongoing. Over the last six months, four female lieutenants have volunteered for the course but none have completed it. An additional four lieutenants have volunteered for the course this July.

The second pillar of our plan is the opening of closed units. This process was initiated in 2012 with the approved "Exception to Policy." Currently, 48 female Marine officers and staff noncommissioned officers have been assigned to 19 previously closed battalions (Artillery, Amphibious Assault Vehicle, Tanks, Combat Assault, Combat Engineer, and Low Altitude Air Defense); continual assessment of this program will shape expansion to full integration by 2016.

SUICIDES

48. Senator AYOTTE. Secretary Lamont, Secretary Garcia, Secretary Ginsberg, General Bromberg, Admiral Van Buskirk, General Milstead, and General Jones, in Secretary Lamont's prepared statement, he discussed the serious problem of suicide in the Army. He states that, "The Army had 324 potential suicides during 2012—the highest annual total on record." New Hampshire's Deployment Cycle Support Care Coordination Program has received national recognition and has achieved tangible results on this front—not only in preventing suicide but also in assisting servicemembers and their families in the areas of mental health care, employment, and homelessness. In 2012, program care coordinators intervened successfully in 29 suicide risk situations. Are each of you aware of New Hampshire's Deployment Cycle Support Care Coordination Program?

Mr. LAMONT and General BROMBERG. Yes, we are aware of the New Hampshire Deployment Cycle Support Care Coordination Program. The Army National Guard partners with the legislatively mandated Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program, which helps National Guard and Reserve component servicemembers and their families nation-wide, connect with their local support community before, during, and after deployments. All National Guard and Reserve components hold events and activities to provide servicemembers and their families training, information on child and youth programs, available benefits, resources, and services. The National Guard mandates servicemembers to attend Yellow Ribbon events, and family members are strongly encouraged to attend.

Mr. GARCIA and Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. Yes; the Department of the Navy is aware of New Hampshire's Deployment Cycle Support Care Coordination Program and the successes it has reported since its inception. Many of the core elements of this program are duplicated in the Navy initiatives and programs that support sailors, marines, and their families throughout the deployment cycle and transition to civilian life. The Navy applauds the National Guard for providing comprehensive protective initiatives that assist guardsmen with navigating stress. We continually review best practices of all Services and components to identify those that can be tailored to fit the needs of sailors, marines, and their families.

Mr. GINSBERG and General JONES. We were not aware of New Hampshire's Deployment Cycle Support Care Coordination program. We appreciate being made aware of the program and our subject matter experts are reviewing it for potential application to the Air Force Suicide Prevention Program.

General MILSTEAD. The Marine Corps is aware of the New Hampshire Deployment Cycle Support Care Coordination Program. We are pleased that the program provides support to the National Guard members prior to, during, and post deployment.

The Marine Corps' Community Counseling and Prevention Services provides similar programs such as Operational Stress Control and Readiness, Deployment Cycle Training, and Third Location Decompression events, which are intended to prevent, identify, and manage combat and operational stress-related issues and increase access to mental health care by breaking stigma, raising awareness, and providing education and resources to support marines. Combat and Operational Stress Control

principles are embedded in training that reaches the total force supporting marines in theater, in garrison, and at home.

Additionally, the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program (YRRP) has been incorporated into the Marine Corps overall Unit, Personal and Family Readiness Program. YRRP, which was developed for National Guard and Reserve servicemembers and their families, is one of the many tools available to our units to ensure our marines and family members are well equipped to deal with the many challenges facing them.

49. Senator AYOTTE. Secretary Lamont, Secretary Garcia, Secretary Ginsberg, General Bromberg, Admiral Van Buskirk, General Milstead, and General Jones, are each of your Services looking to the National Guard for best practices that can inform your Services' efforts going forward?

Mr. LAMONT and General BROMBERG. Yes. Potential best practices provided by the National Guard are shared across the Total Force. Senior Army Leaders and Commanders also share potential best practices, lessons learned, and identify trends and themes implemented across the Army during monthly Vice Chief of Staff of the Army-led Suicide Senior Review Group meetings in an effort to help mitigate suicides and reduce risky behaviors. These lessons-learned and potential best practices are also posted on the Army G-1, Army Suicide Prevention website at: www.preventsuicide.army.mil.

Mr. GARCIA and Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. Yes, the Department of the Navy collaborates with all the Services suicide prevention offices (SPO), including the National Guard, to identify the best practices and successes of individual programs. Collaboration is realized through group engagements with SPO representatives and the DOD Suicide Prevention and Risk Reduction Committee monthly meetings. Best practices are carefully considered for inclusion into Navy and Service initiatives to improve support to servicemembers and their families.

Mr. GINSBERG and General JONES. The Air Force works collaboratively with the Guard and Reserve through the CAIB and the Integrated Delivery System (IDS) at each level of the Air Force (Headquarters Air Force, Major Command, and installation). CAIBs are cross-functional forums created to identify and resolve or elevate to the next appropriate level those community issues that impact readiness or affect the quality of life of Air Force members and their families. The IDS functions as the action arm of the CAIB and develops a comprehensive, coordinated plan for integrating and implementing community outreach, prevention, and resiliency programs, such as suicide prevention.

Also, all components of the Air Force (Active Duty, Guard, and Reserve) are actively engaged with the Defense Suicide Prevention Office in helping shape suicide prevention efforts across DOD through the Suicide Prevention and Risk Reduction Committee, the General Officer Steering Committee on Suicide Prevention, and other working groups and committees. The Air Force also continues to collaborate with our sister Services to leverage the full extent of our internal resources, combining our experiences and best practices to improve our suicide prevention efforts across the force.

General MILSTEAD. The Marine Corps shares all of our resources, plans and findings with our sister Services, including the National Guard, through the Suicide Prevention and Risk Reduction Committee chaired by Defense Suicide Prevention Office. Additionally, we look to our sister Services and the National Guard for best practices to inform our prevention efforts. We regularly compare our initiatives to the best practices registry sponsored by the Department of Health and Human Services through the federally funded Suicide Prevention Resource Center.

[Whereupon, at 11:13 a.m., the subcommittee adjourned.]

