

Statement of

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**Executive Director
Military Impacted Schools Association**

before the

**House Armed Services
Subcommittee on Readiness**

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Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, the Military Impacted Schools Association (MISA) would like to thank you for the support you provide to our military families and for the opportunity to present testimony on BRAC and issues facing school districts that serve military children.

- MISA represents 60 of the most heavily impacted school districts in the United States
- There are 500,000 military children and their 2 million classmates that are served in public schools in the United States

MISA is proud to serve the children of our military personnel and their families.

When a military family receives orders for a new assignment, one of the first places they turn for information is the local school district.

When mom or dad deploys, one of the most important support systems is the teacher and local school.

School districts are an essential stabilizing factor in the lives of our military families. Our families are very anxious and concerned about their moves and deployments. And many times these feelings stem from uncertainty and lack of information.

While providing the support, school districts are also concerned with not having the information to plan in a timely manner and with the lack of funding.

Military Transformation

The military is going through a number of transformations as they continually strive to provide the best military in the most cost effective manner. Areas that have an impact on military families and the school districts that serve them include:

- Privatization of military housing
- Global Rebasing
- Army Modularization
- BRAC

Housing privatization, for example, is an excellent initiative to provide quality housing for military families. There were a number of unintended consequences with this program that MISA brought to the attention of Congress and they have been addressed. Thank you for ensuring that the following programs continue to be available for our military families: free and reduced lunch, Title I, SSI and food stamps.

Unfortunately in a number of cases school districts have planned for the project and then changes have been made that reduce the housing projects drastically.

Examples: Offutt AFB, Nebraska going from 2,600 to 1,600 homes
Little Rock, Arkansas going from 1,200 to 659 homes
Patrick AFB, Florida going from 552 to 164 homes
Hanscom, Massachusetts going from 784 to 459 homes

Global Rebasing: we have been told to anticipate 42,000 military children returning to the United States as a part of Global Rebasing and that about eleven military installations will be affected. This includes military installations like:

- Fort Bliss, Texas
- Fort Hood, Texas
- Fort Stewart, Georgia
- Fort Carson, Colorado
- Fort Drum, New York
- Fort Lewis, Washington
- Fort Bragg, North Carolina

We are talking about the need to build new schools to accommodate the tremendous growth. This takes time--a minimum of two years once the funding and approval has taken place. School districts have been working with DoD and the Office of Economic Adjustment to plan for this return.

Then two weeks ago we pick up a paper to see that all of the plans may be changing? There may be fewer troops returning to the United States and possibly only 30,000 military children going to the eleven military installations. School districts have been trying to address and plan for these needs for two years.

Again the **Army Modularization** plans interrelate with the Global Rebasing and all of the uncertainty surrounding who we will be serving, how many children we will be serving, when will we be serving them, how we are going to pay for the infrastructure and staff, and will it ever happen.

The **BRAC 05** report highlighted no net changes in troops at some of the military installations. However when you closely examine the numbers there is a 10,000 increase in troop level at one military installation and a 10,000 movement from another installation. The net change is minimal—but a 10,000 person change for a school district is a tremendous undertaking and requires resources.

We understand that there is a great deal to consider in planning for troop/military family movement—and school districts want to do everything that we can to support. It is important, however, to understand that each change, each decision, each movement has an impact on the local school district.

There are several factors to consider:

- If a military child transfers into a school district by January 15 the school district receives Impact Aid funding one year later
- If a military child transfers into a school district after January 15 the school district will have to wait two years to receive Impact Aid funding for that child
- If school districts need to construct additional facilities to accommodate additional children, it takes a minimum of two years to construct once the approval and funding is received
- School districts approve staffing contracts 6-9 months before the new school year
- Impact Aid is only funded at 60% of need according to the law
- DoD Impact Aid funding was intended to assist heavily impacted schools through some of the transitions. There was a provision in the funding that addressed the uncertainty school districts faced. There is no funding for this provision this year.

Educators are seeing a great deal of stress among our military families. Part of it can be attributed to the long deployments, but frankly a great deal can be attributed to the uncertainty of deployment, movement of troops, assignments, and manning levels. We are doing everything that we can to provide support and a stable environment.

The drawdown in the Air Force, buildup and reorganization in the Army, buildup in the Marines, and shifts in the Navy are not only being felt by the military services, but also by the school districts that serve military families. Just as our military must plan in advance to have the infrastructure in place to support the military missions, school districts must plan in advance to support the military families. We are asking for:

- Better communications in a more timely manner about what is happening so that we can plan and accommodate our military families
- Funding to assist in the military transformation processes. Specifically there was a provision in the DoD Impact Aid funding to assist school districts that had an increase or decrease of 250 military students or 5% in their military student population. Funding was authorized at \$15 million. In FY'06 \$7 million was appropriated and \$8 million in FY'07. There was no funding appropriated for the current year. It is important to restore the funding to \$15 million to assist school districts that are experiencing changes as a result of military transitions.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

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Bellevue, Nebraska

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Dr. John F. Deegan was named Bellevue's Superintendent of Schools in 1997. He began his career as a teacher and principal in Iowa in 1967. In 1973 he moved to Bellevue, Nebraska, where he served as an elementary principal, Administrative Assistant for Local, State and Federal Relations, and Assistant Superintendent for Business and Government Relations.

In 1997 Dr. Deegan was appointed Executive Director of the Military Impacted Schools Association. The Association, which represents school districts that serve military installations throughout the United States, was formed in Omaha, Nebraska, in 1986. This is a grassroots organization that works on funding, legislation, partnerships and smooth transitions for military families.

Dr. Deegan received his Bachelors degree from Iowa, and his Masters, Specialists and Doctorate degrees in Administration, Curriculum, Instruction from the University of Nebraska at Lincoln.

Dr. Deegan is the President of the National Association of Federally Impacted Schools, Chairman of the Impact Aid Reauthorization Task Force, a member of the Board of Directors of the Offutt Advisory Council, Metropolitan Omaha Educational Consortium, and Sarpy County Safety Program. He is a member of the Association of the United States Army, Air Force Association, Navy League, and National Military Family Association.

Dr. Deegan was selected to attend the National Security Forum of the Air War College, is an Honorary Member of the Nebraska and Western Iowa West Point Society, was named *Bellevue Leader's* 2003 Man of the Year, received the Bellevue Chamber of Commerce Distinguished Service Award, the Outstanding Educator award from the Nebraska Council of School Administrators, and the Champion for Children award by the Military Impacted Schools Association.

Dr. Deegan and his wife, Deanna, have five children: Alex, Mark, Andrea, Brian, and John.