

**DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE**  
**PRESENTATION TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS**  
**SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY CONSTRUCTION**  
**AND VETERANS AFFAIRS**  
**UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**SUBJECT: QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE MILITARY**

**STATEMENT OF: CMSAF JAMES A. ROY**  
**CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Wamp, Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to present concerns important to America's Airmen, their families and our United States Air Force. It is an honor and distinct privilege for me to join my fellow Service Senior Enlisted Advisors and represent some of nation's finest men and women.

Our Air Force is more than 682,500 strong--with more than 512,000 uniformed Airmen and more than 170,500 Air Force civilians.

We appreciate the incredible support of the Members here and from the entire House of Representatives, which continues to be vital to our successes. We greatly appreciate your efforts, actions and legislation that have led to the expansion of servicemember and veteran's pay and benefits. We also appreciate the visits by House members to our servicemembers in the field and to our wounded warriors in health care facilities.

Our Airmen are on the frontlines in a variety of theaters of operation, providing Airmanship skills to combatant commanders. They are deploying at an increased rate, leaving behind family and friends. We must make sure Airmen and their families are safe, healthy and well educated. We also have to ensure they are properly organized, trained and equipped for employment by combatant commanders. It's my honor today to tell you about what America's Air Force is doing on a daily basis.

## **STRENGTHENING THE NUCLEAR ENTERPRISE**

The Air Force continues to strengthen the nuclear enterprise, placing intense focus on ensuring the nuclear deterrence mission is executed with precision and reliability every single day. Secretary of the Air Force Michael B. Donley, Air Force Chief of Staff General Norton A. Schwartz and I have all visited the nuclear missile fields. We had the opportunity to speak with the amazing Airmen who provide the same round-the-clock nuclear deterrence that their

predecessors have for over 50 years. These Airmen are working diligently to achieve the standard of perfection the nuclear mission demands and the American public expects.

One of our most substantial efforts in strengthening the Air Force nuclear enterprise was creating a new major command. Air Force Global Strike Command was established to be a visible commitment to the nuclear enterprise, clearly aligning the Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) and nuclear-capable bomber forces under a single chain-of-command. This change provided the needed oversight and advocacy of the Air Force's nuclear forces. The command will enhance the effectiveness of our nuclear enterprise by focusing on developing and providing combat-ready forces for nuclear deterrence and global strike operations to support the President of the United States and combatant commanders.

The demand of the nuclear mission requires discipline and compliance with the highest of standards. It is imperative that Airmen at every level are focused on upholding our core values of Integrity First, Service before Self and Excellence in all We Do.

### **AIRMEN IN THE JOINT AND COALITION FIGHT**

More than 37,000 Total Force Airmen are currently deployed to 153 locations worldwide supporting combatant commanders. Nearly another 133,000 provide strategic mobility, space and missile capabilities, command and control, and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance to joint warfighters. In all, 56 percent of our active-duty force and 43 percent of the Total Force is on line to fulfill combatant commander requirements everyday.

More than 30,000 Airmen are deployed to the U.S. Central Command area of operations, with nearly 4,000 filling joint expeditionary taskings. Airmen are on the frontlines with their fellow Soldiers, Sailors and Marines in roles such as detainee operations, convoy operations and protection, explosive ordnance disposal, police training teams, military transition teams, civil engineering, security, communications, fuels, medical services, logistics, intelligence, and base operating support. They are part of the joint team, serving in whatever capacity needed by the

combatant commander. Together with our sister services, we are training and augmenting both Iraqi and Afghan security forces, rebuilding critical infrastructure, and providing medical services to these war-torn countries.

Our remotely piloted aircraft (RPA) platforms continue to increase the support to joint and coalition warfighters on the ground. Airmen are finding, fixing, tracking and attacking our enemies using Air Force Predators, Reapers and Global Hawk RPA aircraft. Our Predator operations alone have increased from 12 combat air patrols in 2007 to 40 today to support combatant commanders and warfighters. By growing the number of RPA operators and increasing the number of combat air patrols to 50 by fiscal year 2011, we are protecting joint and coalition interests around the globe.

### **END STRENGTH**

We are programmed to have an Active Air Force end strength of 331,700 at the end of this fiscal year. This will allow us the right size of force to meet mission demands, which continue to grow as we require Airmen for air, space and cyberspace operations.

### **RECRUITING AND RETENTION**

Airmen are our most valuable asset. We need the right number of Airmen with the right skills to support combatant commander requirements. We are firmly committed to organizing, training and equipping our Airmen to the highest possible standard.

Our goal continues to be to recruit the best and brightest our Nation has to offer and we are succeeding. Currently, 99.2 percent of our recruits hold a high school degree and 18.4 have some college completed despite the nationwide escalating high school drop-out rate. We also face significant challenges due to disqualification factors and an increasingly obese youth population, but we still recruit talented young men and women.

Our recruiters continue to meet mission requirements despite these challenges. One recruiter met a potential recruit who was living in an abandoned trailer because he had lost his

mother years earlier and his father was in jail. He had a high school degree and was able to pass the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery test, so he qualified for the Air Force. Because of his living situation, the recruiter was able to get the recruit to leave for basic training within days. That Airman is now having a successful career.

We are on track to meet recruiting goals for our Active Duty, Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard. In this fiscal year, 7,924 of America's young men and women destined for Air Force duty have completed or currently attend Air Force Basic Military Training (BMT). Additionally, there are 11,019 recruits "contracted" to attend BMT.

Recent aggregate retention results for Air Force enlisted members show we are exceeding or within tolerance for our retention goals for all Selective Reenlistment Bonus zones. While meeting these goals in the aggregate is encouraging, there is a continuing need to manage the critical and war-fighting skills through a properly sized bonus program to ensure required retention and manning. We are concerned about a number of career fields, including contracting, career enlisted aviators, command and control specialties, intelligence, civil engineers and public affairs.

Reenlistment bonuses are our most effective tool for retaining quality Airmen in these mission critical specialties. We appreciate continued Congressional support for these incentive efforts.

### **DEVELOPING AIRMEN**

Deliberately developing our Airmen is a key priority. Our Airmen must have a mix of skills so the Air Force can continue providing combat-ready, expeditionary forces to combatant commanders now and in the future

The Air Force is focused on providing the right expeditionary combat skills needed for our Airmen to fly, fight and win. It is critical that our Airmen have training and education to think with a global perspective and operate in an expeditionary environment.

## **QUALITY OF SERVICE**

The quality of service Airmen and their families receive is an overwhelming factor in how long they will serve. That is why we have designated July 2009 to July 2010 as the Year of the Air Force family. We have focused on four main pillars: health and wellness; Airmen and family support; education, development and employment; and Airmen and family housing.

Whether working on the installation or deployed fighting the war on terror, our Airmen deserve buildings and facilities of a high standard commensurate with the outstanding service they provide their country. Since 2000, and with the very generous support of Congress, the Air Force funded 76 military construction projects for child development centers and fitness centers totaling \$704 million. While this represents a significant investment by the Air Force, many requirements remain.

We thank the Congress for its historical support of funding for quality of service initiatives. Steady gains in these areas over the years have enabled us to retain skilled Airmen and develop them into the leaders we need for the future.

Our fitness centers continue to provide an opportunity for our personnel to stay in shape and burn off stress from work and deployments. The Air Force has funded 44 fitness center projects at a cost of \$447 million over the last 10 years. These projects have included add-ons to existing centers and replacing old and undersized facilities. We continue to construct and expand our facilities to meet the needs of our Airmen and their families and appreciate your support in funding these projects.

We are transforming the way the Air Force delivers food service. We are focusing on a campus-style feeding food service for Airmen and their families while improving efficiency and providing significant savings. Our food transformation initiative addresses changing lifestyles, needs and preferences while improving program and facility standards. We plan on offering a variety of healthy options while keeping our warfighting capabilities at the forefront. We are

partnering with industry and are in the process of implementing the new transformation process at six bases, with future bases being evaluated.

### **ASSISTANCE TO SEVERELY INJURED SERVICE MEMBERS**

Caring for our wounded warriors is more than a priority; it's a lifelong obligation. These brave men and women put their service to country before themselves, and we must give them the care they deserve. More of our Airmen survive injuries than in past wars, but some of their injuries present significant challenges to the quality of life for both them and their families.

The Air Force Warrior and Survivor Care Program ensures our Airmen and their families have the support through recovery, rehabilitation, and reintegration, whether that reintegration be back to an Air Force specialty or into the civilian sector. For Airmen who move to civilian status, the program continues for as long as the families need, and assists with extended transition assistance, employment applications, civilian job searches, financial planning and assistance, relocation and integration back into civilian communities.

Our Air Force will continue to work with our joint partners, the Veterans Administration and the Military Severely Injured Center to make sure we are doing everything possible to care for these heroes and their families – it is our solemn obligation.

### **POST TRAUMATIC STRESS AND TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY**

The Air Force is taking an aggressive and proactive approach to track Airmen who may have post-traumatic stress (PTS) symptoms or a traumatic brain injury (TBI). Airmen learn about PTS, TBI and other deployment-related health issues via an education program used before and after deployment.

In addition to training, Airmen are also screened for TBI before and after deployment. Deployers are given a computerized assessment that measures cognitive abilities including reaction time and memory. The member is reassessed in theater if they sustain a head injury.

Scores are compared with baseline in order to aid with return-to-duty determinations, in conjunction with clinical assessment.

Airmen seeking help for deployment-related stress also have the option of being treated through primary care channels as the Air Force increases the mental health presence within the primary care setting. The goal of placing mental health providers in primary care is to enable Airmen to feel more comfortable seeking mental health assistance.

Airmen with common symptoms including sleep, energy, mood, or concentration difficulties simply see their primary care manager, just as they would for any other treatment. The primary care manager then refers the servicemember to the behavioral health consultant working in the primary care clinic. This process helps to normalize minor mental health treatment alongside other, more routine care. The goal is to reduce the stigma behind seeing a provider for stress, helping Airmen feel less isolated and more willing to ask for help.

### **CHILD CARE**

Child care continues to be one of the most important quality of service factors for our Airmen and their families. Quality child care facilities are a key component in assuring Airmen that their family is being cared for while they defend our country. Since 2000, the Air Force has funded 32 child development center military construction projects worth \$260 million and OSD funded an additional 55 projects totaling \$116.4 million. We are striving to reduce our shortfall in child development center spaces from 6,400 to zero by fiscal year 2012. While we have addressed the facilities and personnel needed, we are still trying to fund supplies and equipment.

Our child care programs also include Reservists and Air National Guardsmen by providing child care during scheduled drill weekends, and a child care subsidy when activated. While we face funding challenges in meeting every child care requirement, we are striving to provide quality child care options to all our Airmen.

## **AIRMEN EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES**

The U.S. Air Force has the most educated enlisted force in the world. Since April 25, 1977, more than 287,000 Airmen have earned a fully accredited associate degree, corresponding to their career field, through the Community College of the Air Force (CCAF).

Currently, 69 percent of our enlisted Airmen have college credit, 17 percent have associate degrees and 6 percent have a bachelor's degree. When you look at our senior noncommissioned officers, 36 percent have an associate degree, 17 percent have a bachelor's and 4 percent have a graduate degree.

In March, we rolled out the General Education Mobile program to make education more accessible for our Airmen. This program offers the five general education courses required for a CCAF degree through distance learning courses. This program is intended to attract those students who are struggling to get their general education credits filled because of numerous reasons, primarily the Air Force's high operations tempo. Distance learning will allow some of our more heavily deployed career fields to continue their education while deployed. Students at deployed locations must have Internet access in order to take online courses.

Our Associate-to-Baccalaureate Cooperative (ABC) program is helping CCAF graduates apply credits toward a bachelor's degree at military-friendly schools. This program has grown since last year from 35 to 42 civilian higher-education institutions and offers 214 bachelor's degree programs. These institutions take all of an Airman's CCAF credits and apply them toward a bachelor's degree. Since its inception in June 2007, 112 bachelor's degrees have been awarded.

We've also had an overwhelming number of Airmen who have transferred their Montgomery G.I. Bill benefits to their dependents. This benefit helps families, but it also helps the Air Force retain our Airmen through the associated service commitment. We continue to recruit and retain Airmen who value educational opportunities for themselves and their families.

## **EXCEPTIONAL FAMILY MEMBER PROGRAM**

The Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) is how we assist Airmen and their families who have special needs, balancing mission requirements with family care responsibilities. We have more than 15,000 families in the program right now.

The Air Force has established EFMP assignments through the Air Force Personnel Center and Special Needs Identification and Assignment Coordination, delivered by the Air Force Medical Service, as two key prongs to the program. We recently added a third prong, EFMP-Family Support, which will provide information and referral services available in the base and local community. We are also finalizing a contract to provide respite care for EFMP families and adding EFMP family support positions at 35 Air Force installations that have 175 or more special needs families.

## **KEY SPOUSE PROGRAM**

The Key Spouse Program is an effective way to communicate with family members and is akin to the Navy Ombudsman Program and the Army Family Readiness Group. We aim to bridge the gap between the military spouse and the military chain of command to help build a greater sense of community within units, especially where families are separated or deployed.

Currently, 95 percent of commanders have chosen to participate in the program, selecting a volunteer spouse to serve in this important role. We have a total of more than 1,100 trained volunteers. We hope with increased emphasis and continued standardization, this program will become even more helpful.

## **EDUCATION FOR MILITARY CHILDREN**

Military life, frequent moves and extended separation during deployments present a host of challenges for our families. Nearly half of all service members are married and have children. Consequently, military families often weigh assignment decisions based on the quality of education from the local school systems for their children.

Twenty-seven states have passed legislation to establish an Interstate Compact On Educational Opportunity For Military Children to address educational solutions at the state, local, and school district levels. These compact states are working to solve issues dealing with class placement, records transfer, graduation requirements, immunizations, exit testing and allowing late entry to extra-curricular activities and sports teams. With 27 states on board, the compact now covers more than 81 percent of our military connected school-aged children. Another eight states (DC, ID, NE, NM, NY, PA, SC and TN) are already working their respective bills during their 2010 state legislative sessions. We are interested in seeing more states sign on to this Interstate Compact so children in military families are not penalized in school for their families' service to the nation.

We are making great strides in support for Air Force connected students attending public, private, DoD Dependent Schools, home and virtual schools. Currently 28 Air Force bases have locally funded permanent civilian school liaison officer positions and beginning in FY11, the Air Force will centrally fund 54 additional positions so that all Air Force bases will have the services of a full-time civilian school liaison officer. In addition, staff in the Airman and Family Readiness Centers provide school liaison support to leadership and families. Major commands and installations continue to work creative initiatives such as providing webcasts of graduations so parents can share these occasions while deployed. Additionally, a senior military officer or DoD civilian has been designated at each installation to advocate with local and state school administration and school boards for the interests of Air Force families.

### **IN-STATE TUITION**

On the issue of in-state tuition for military family members, I would like to thank Congress for recognizing the need to extend affordable higher educational opportunities to children and spouses of service members. Your passage in 2008 of legislation (effective July 2009) that requires all states to offer in-state tuition to families of military members assigned in

that state and extends that rate if the member is reassigned outside the state (provided the family member is continuously enrolled in school) has been a significant benefit to our service members and their families.

### **SPOUSE EMPLOYMENT**

Spouse employment in the military is a constant challenge for our military families. My own spouse had to deal with finding a job every time I received an assignment. For our junior Airmen, it is often a large part of the quality of life their family enjoys. A recent survey of military spouses reported that their work income constitutes about 48 percent of total family income.

Under a personnel rule that took effect September 11, 2009, some military spouses can now be quickly hired for federal jobs without going through the usual competitive process. This new rule facilitates the entry of military spouses into the federal civil service as part of an effort to recruit and retain skilled and experienced members of the armed forces and to recognize and honor the service of members injured, disabled, or killed in connection with their service.

Eligible individuals include spouses of active-duty servicemembers who have been called on to relocate. This includes spouses of Guardsmen or Reservists who've been called up for more than 180 days of active service other than training. Eligible spouses must be moving to another duty station accompanied by their servicemember husband or wife. Spouses of former servicemembers listed as 100-percent disabled and separated or retired, as well as widows or widowers of servicemembers who died on active duty and who have not remarried are also eligible.

These types of policies help to make sure our family members have access to careers and aren't adversely affected when our service calls upon our military members and their families to relocate.

## **UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION**

Expanding unemployment compensation to spouses of servicemembers is important to military families. When states support unemployment compensation this also allows spouses to take reasonable time to find suitable employment at the new location and gives them the time and resources necessary to obtain any new licensing or credential requirements. Currently, 36 states provide unemployment compensation to spouses who leave because of a military move, and we are looking forward to the day when all states properly compensate military spouses.

## **HOUSING**

The Air Force is committed to ensuring our Airmen and their families have quality housing in which to live and raise families. We believe our people deserve well-built and well-maintained housing. Through military construction (MILCON) and housing privatization, we are providing quality homes for our families. We will continue to privatize housing at continental U.S. bases, including Alaska and Hawaii. We will also renovate overseas housing as its inventory ages and requires sustainment and modernization.

Investment in dormitories provides high quality housing to our unaccompanied Airmen. The Air Force continues to modernize inadequate dormitories that house enlisted Airmen. In addition to repairing structural inadequacies in dormitories, our focus remains on ensuring we provide a structured environment where commanders and first sergeants serve as mentors in the care and development of our first-class Airmen. The dormitories are not just a place to sleep; they are a place for young Airmen to adjust to military life.

## **MILITARY CONSTRUCTION**

For the past several years, the Air Force has chosen to take risk in infrastructure in order to invest in modernization efforts. Though we intend to continue modernizing our force, we also expect to support our Airmen by renovating and replacing aging facilities in the coming years. We have prioritized our program to cover our most critical military construction requirements by

focusing on projects that support the Air Force priorities of continuing to strengthen the nuclear enterprise, partnering with the joint and coalition team to win today's fight, developing and caring for our Airmen and their families, modernizing our air and space inventories, organizations, and training, and in acquisition excellence. Again, the continued support of this specific Subcommittee and the entire House Appropriations Committee has been vital to the success of these MILCON programs.

### **SUMMARY**

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Wamp, Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to represent Airmen and their families by testifying today.

Our Airmen are doing incredible work, ranging from providing humanitarian aid to the Haitian earthquake victims in U.S. Southern Command to supporting U.S. Central Command on a daily basis in Iraq and Afghanistan. More than two-thirds of Airmen came in after September 11, 2001, which means the majority of our force has been at war their entire careers. They deploy longer than ever before and some need a second hand to count the number of combat tours they've been on. Despite this pace, our Airmen have shown amazing resiliency.

Also amazing is the contributions of Air Force families. They stoke the home fires while our Airmen are carrying out their warfighting mission. They are brave when extraordinary challenges attempt to weaken them. They are strong when worry about their loved one enters their mind. They are relentless when the drain of a deployment attempts to bring them down. They are the wind beneath our wings.

Thank you again for your continued support of our brave Airmen and their supportive families.