

**STATEMENT OF
SPENCER KYMPTON
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER
THE MISSION CONTINUES**



**U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
& GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CONTRACTING OVERSIGHT**

JUNE 5, 2012

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Madam Chairman, Ranking Member Portman, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to participate in these important hearings. Based on my experience as a veteran, and my service at The Mission Continues, I believe that this subcommittee is doing work that is critical to the success of this generation of veterans.

Today, I am testifying as a West Point graduate and former Army helicopter pilot, and as a veteran who sought meaningful employment after military service. I now serve as the Chief Operating Officer of The Mission Continues, a national nonprofit organization, where we have worked with over 350 veterans to pursue successful transitions to civilian life.

Based on these experiences with veteran recruitment and retention, I believe that there are several key lessons that federal contractors and corporate leaders can apply to successfully tap into the great skills of today's veteran. Applying these lessons will strengthen their organization while building successful transitions for the veteran.

At The Mission Continues, we create successful transitions by engaging veterans in six-month community-service fellowships. Today, a Cavalry Scout mentors hundreds of children at the Boys and Girls Club; a Marine Corps sergeant helps his community prepare for disasters and emergencies through The American Red Cross; an Army Communications Specialist teaches English as a second language to immigrant children and their parents. We introduced these Fellows to a meaningful mission. We welcomed them onto a distinct team, and asked them to don a new uniform of service. As they serve, we provide them with living stipends and mentors.

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At the end of their fellowship, we will challenge them to mark their lifetime commitment to service by executing a service project in their community. After their fellowship, they move on to realize their post-fellowship goal of full-time employment, continued education, or an ongoing role of service in their communities.

Our experiences with these Fellows, and with more than a thousand veterans who applied for fellowships, have shown us this: when you connect veterans to a meaningful mission, ask them to join a distinct team, and challenge them with a set of goals that lead to definable impact, they excel. Just as they excelled in their military service, they again excel in their citizen service.

A primary factor in our selection and placement of Fellows is the passion they have for service. The Cavalry Scout serves at The Boys and Girls Club because he is fulfilled by mentoring youth. The Marine readies his community because he is passionate about emergency response. Reconnecting to a meaningful mission has been critical to their success.

Our Fellows are further enriched by the renewed connection to a team. As you know, all enlistees and officers take an oath to support and defend the constitution upon entering the military. They then join their military units, each of which possesses a distinct identity and strong traditions. Recently, we gathered more than 100 veterans and awarded them Mission Continues fellowships. We asked these Fellows to take a similar oath and join this distinct new team. In front of thousands of fans at a Major League Baseball game, wearing sharp royal blue Mission Continues polo shirts, standing at attention alongside their new comrades in arms, these Fellows proudly recited a new oath of service. They walked off the field motivated and eager to serve.

While they serve, we also require that our Fellows set and achieve goals; they each identify at least three goals for the impact they will have in their community. They identify a post-

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fellowship goal that will impact their own lives for years. We hold them accountable to those goals, and we partner in their success.

Roxley Pratt grew up in war-torn Sierra Leone. As a child, he marveled at the sentries guarding the U.S. Embassy there. He decided then that he wanted to be a Marine. Years later, after escaping a siege of his city and immigrating to America, he enlisted in the United States Marine Corps. He honorably served for six years, and his service included deployments to Iraq. Upon his return, people thanked him for his service, but when it came to landing a job, he struggled to get interviews. Unemployed and unable to translate his military skills at job fairs in Southern California, Roxley found The Mission Continues. Driven by his own experiences with homelessness and his personal responsibility to assist those less fortunate, he earned a fellowship with Habitat for Humanity. He has reconnected to a mission that is important to him. He is working on distinct teams – his team at The Mission Continues, his team at Habitat for Humanity, and the teams of volunteers he organizes. He is translating military skills to civilian skills. And he is excelling.

Roxley's story can be the story of this generation of veterans; it is a story of service in war and continued service at home.

Madam Chairman, we are grateful for your support and the support of this Subcommittee. I would welcome any questions that you or other Members may have. Thank you.