

RECORD VERSION

STATEMENT BY

**JACK L. TILLEY
SERGEANT MAJOR OF THE ARMY**

BEFORE THE

**COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
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**ON THE
ACTIVE AND RESERVE
MILITARY AND CIVILIAN
PERSONNEL PROGRAMS**

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Good morning, Mr. Chairman and distinguished subcommittee members. It is an honor for me to appear before you on behalf of the magnificent men and women who wear the uniform of America's Army.

This is my first opportunity to address the Senate since being sworn in as the 12th Sergeant Major of the Army 21 months ago. When I took the position, my boss – Army Chief of Staff General Eric Shinseki – gave me a fairly simple set of marching orders. In short, he instructed me to get out among our soldiers and their families, to understand their needs and issues and to act as their biggest advocate and supporter as I represent them to him, the Secretary of the Army and other senior leaders throughout our government.

Since then, I have logged hundreds of thousands of miles of travel, visited and addressed tens of thousands of soldiers and families on repeated trips around the United States and to more than a dozen foreign countries.

I am proud of our Army, and on previous occasions testifying to your House colleagues, I assured them that America quite simply has the world's best Army. That pride and my opinion have both been validated time and again in the hours and days following the tragic events of September 11.

We are at war, and I'm sure you would agree that thus far, in what will doubtless be a very long struggle, the performance of our soldiers – as

well as our sailors, airmen, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen – has been outstanding.

I'd like to point out that not one service member had to deploy nor did bombs need to begin falling in Afghanistan for me to be justified in the pride I feel for our Armed Forces. I was in Washington on 9/11 and was quick in arriving on-scene after the plane hit the Pentagon.

Rather than go into detail now about what I saw that day, let me share how I expressed it during an October ceremony held to decorate and honor some of the heroes who emerged that day at the Pentagon: *“I saw Americans coming to the aid of their fallen comrades with little regard for their own safety. If I were to ask each of you about your contributions, I’m sure you’d tell me that they were no big deal – but I would tell you that they were a big deal. Not only did you serve your comrades well that day, you provided all of us with examples of honor and courage that will inspire us in the coming years and in the battles that await us in our war on terrorism. The things you showed us that day are what is good and right about our country, our Army, and the things we all stand for.”*

What I saw that morning made me proud – a pride I know all of you share. Later, as I traveled across the Army answering soldiers’ questions about 9/11, and trying to provide some context and perspective for the way ahead, I found myself talking often about what I saw that day.

I believe the soldiers I’ve spoken with have taken heart from what I have been able to share with them. Just as the heroic actions of countless fire fighters, policemen and other first responders inspired a nation, our men and women in uniform have been encouraged by the reactions that day of their fellow soldiers. Even though they worked at the Pentagon and weren’t armed at the time, they proved worthy of the legacy of quiet, calm and steady courage passed down to them by generations of their predecessors.

As a result of 9/11 and its aftermath, our Army is today stretched as thin now as it has ever been. I'd like to point out that I used pretty much those same words a year ago in testimony before the House to describe the Army's operational tempo. It was certainly true at the time, but I can assure you today's numbers dwarf those of just 11 months ago.

In January, our Army has about 124,000 soldiers permanently stationed abroad in Germany, Korea, Japan, Italy and other overseas locations where we have traditionally kept soldiers. This number has stayed consistent over the past couple of years, and I would also like to point out that this number includes more than 8,800 Army Reservists.

A year ago, the Army had slightly more than 30,000 soldiers deployed away from their homes and families on major exercises and operations around the globe. Today, that number is nearly 50,000 soldiers in some 55 locations, and it includes more than 11,000 National Guardsmen and another 8,520 Army Reservists.

Aside from places such as the Balkans, the Sinai, Kuwait, the Philippines and a number of other countries in Southwest and Central Asia, the Army in recent days has had soldiers operating in Turkey, Tunisia, East Timor, Cambodia, Vietnam, El Salvador, and Columbia.

Closer to home, the Army – to date – has more than 12,000 Army Reservists and National Guardsmen mobilized in support of the homeland security mission. Nearly half of them are securing key infrastructure facilities around the country, and more than 2,000 others have been tasked to help with the force protection mission at our bases in Europe.

I need to point out that all of these deployment and forward basing numbers do not reflect the number of active duty soldiers in every corner of the Army who are unavailable for their normal duties because they are helping with force protection on their installations. Although the numbers

fluctuate constantly based on threat assessments and other factors, I would – to give you a feel for the size of this task – tell you that in January, our Forces Command was using 4,000 soldiers daily to secure its 11 major stateside installations.

That number, I would add, doesn't include the military and Defense Protective Service who are in charge of the job. If increased measures were called for due to future threats or incidents, that number would grow to more than 11,000. The impact of numbers like that on the Army's readiness and training is obvious to everyone in this room.

As I thought about the main points I wanted to make today, the top item on my list was simply to thank you – on behalf our soldiers and their families – for the positive strides in improving their quality of life in the past 12 months.

This list is long.

A year ago, my colleagues and I each brought before a House committee lists of remarkably similar issues that we had compiled based on our own observations and the feedback we receive while traveling extensively among our troops. They were concerned about how much they were paid, where they live and work, the kind of medical care they and their families receive, and what they can look forward to in retirement as they decide whether to spend 20-plus years in the military.

I can tell you it is apparent that our nation's leaders have been listening and that they have responded to a level we had hardly allowed ourselves to imagine.

Right now – today – in units, formations, barracks and households across the military, I assure you that soldiers and their families need look no further than in their wallets and out of their windows to see that life is getting better.

They received an unprecedented pay raise last month, and the amount of construction and renovation that is visible in practically every corner of the Army sends a tremendous signal to them.

I wish you and other lawmakers could have stood with me among our soldiers in recent months and heard the responses I received as I put to them this very simple question – “did you hear about your pay raise?” I trust you’ll believe me when I say it brings the house down. Often I say that our soldiers and families know what’s real and what’s Memorex, and I assure you this pay raise sends a very real message about how much their nation needs and appreciates them.

Another decidedly good news story concerns our housing. There is consensus within the Army that DoD’s approach to fixing our housing by raising Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) payments, building new housing, and renovating existing housing is working.

A year ago, I painted a rather bleak picture of seeing street after street of run-down family housing units at practically every installation I’d visited. Far too many of those houses are still there – I see them and so do soldiers and their families, many of whom live in them. But – as I noted earlier – we are also seeing vast amounts of new construction and renovation at the bulk of these installations.

Knowing that new houses are being built on another street or another post doesn’t – directly – do much for the morale of families living in cramped, decades-old quarters. But, they do see the amount of construction and renovation going on around them, and they do realize there is light at the end of the tunnel. They do read and hear about the amount and quality of housing going up at other posts. They also see first-hand the results of fixing and maintaining existing housing and other facilities.

As I've noted, the amount of new, Army-funded construction both in the states and overseas has done much for morale, but at several posts, a lot of the work being done in family housing areas is thanks to the Residential Communities Initiative (RCI).

To update you, Forts Carson, Hood, Lewis and Meade have seen or will soon see their family housing operations turned over to private contractors, and a number of other installations will be well into that process by the end of this year. We envision the process gathering steam, and by 2007, nearly 69,000 homes will be managed by the private sector on 27 different installations. That would be about 80 percent of the Army family housing in the continental United States.

For those of you who haven't had the opportunity, I'd ask you to visit a post like Fort Carson before you render judgment on the RCI program. I've been there, I've looked at houses – both new ones and older units being managed by the private sector – and I have talked to soldiers and families living in the quarters. I came away a believer.

The new houses are easily the best, largest and most thoughtfully designed I've seen in my more than 30 years of service. And I would – as a sergeant major – be happy to live in any of them.

I was also pleased with what I saw in the post's older quarters. While it's true that there is only so much that can be done with older houses, Fort Carson's project has spruced up existing units and dramatically increased the homes' appeal to newly arrived families.

Just as importantly, RCI is having an equally big impact on the repair and upkeep of existing homes.

A major complaint heard in recent years dealt with the age of our facilities and the time needed for post engineers to make routine repairs. At the privatized Fort Carson project, the number of maintenance workers

has increased from 17 to nearly 40, and they were averaging a 30-minute turnaround time on emergency work orders. That might not seem like much to a great many people, but to frustrated families accustomed to waiting days for repairs, it borders on the miraculous.

Another much-appreciated initiative has been the goal of eliminating by 2005 any out-of-pocket expenses for soldiers and families receiving BAH to live off-post. Currently, a little less than half of our married soldiers live on the civilian economy, along with a number of bachelor NCOs and officers. Today, slightly more than one in every 10 dollars they spend on off-post housing comes from their own pockets.

All of these things – new construction, better maintenance of existing facilities, the RCI and BAH increases – will hopefully combine to get the Army's family housing situation to where we think it needs to be. For the work that all of you did in making that happen, I thank you. As I stated earlier, it is being noticed, and I believe it is making a difference in quality of life, morale and retention.

The news is mostly good for our single soldiers and the barracks they live in. Everywhere I've gone in the past year, the amount of barracks construction and renovation I've seen has rivaled that in the family housing areas.

I have visited hundreds of soldiers both in the United States and overseas who couldn't say enough good things about their quarters. But, as is often the case with family housing and other facilities, it's either feast or famine – you either live in buildings 30 or more years old and poorly maintained, or you're among the fortunate who have moved into new or newly renovated buildings. As it was with families and their housing, our soldiers see and hear of barracks construction and renovation and believe their leaders understand the problem and are working to correct it.

I would tell you that our goal of having all of our soldiers in larger rooms with semi-private bathrooms, new furniture, adequate parking and recreational amenities is our top construction priority. Our goal is to make it happen virtually everywhere in the Army by 2009. With the passage of the fiscal year 2003 budget, about 77 percent of the money we need to reach that goal will be in place.

However, one specific area of concern would be our barracks in Korea. While there has been notable progress in all theaters, I still feel it will be too many years before soldiers in too many parts of Korea see the kind of housing improvements that are becoming common elsewhere. The differences I see there between today and when I served there as a first sergeant 14 years ago are remarkable, but the area still needs your attention to help ensure soldiers enjoy a reasonable quality of life while there.

Many areas of Korea are isolated, and we ask a lot of our soldiers assigned there. I assure you that funding for quality housing, dining facilities, gyms and things like Internet cafes and Internet access can go a long way toward maintaining morale.

I also need to again ask Congress for continued help in funding for our Sustainment, Restoration and Modernization efforts – an area that has been historically underfunded and results in a lot of the deterioration I've been talking about. This year, for instance, the Army was funded at 94 percent of its requirement. During the last fiscal year, it was estimated our restoration and modernization backlog was nearly \$18 billion. While some of our motor pools and work areas are first rate, too many older facilities are decaying and badly in need of repair and renovation.

The buildings, motor pools and recreation facilities where soldiers work, train, eat and relax are nearly as important as the rooms and housing units they live in. As is the case with pay, housing and

infrastructure impact our soldiers' morale and re-enlistment decisions in a great many ways.

Medical care is another area that is often a top concern for soldiers and families. For the most part the health care system has significantly improved. As I travel, I am happy to share that I am hearing fewer and fewer complaints about medical care in general and TRICARE in particular.

When I passed this along to our medical command, I learned that much of the credit for the improvements belongs in these corridors for recent funding increases. The money has allowed more services to be provided and reduced some out-of-pocket expenses once associated with TRICARE.

Before closing, I'd like to spend a moment on the importance of the Reserve Component to our Army and to our nation. When I became Sergeant Major of the Army in the summer of 2000, I began telling pretty much every group I addressed that – quite simply – we could not get the job done without the Guard and Reserve. As I recall, those are pretty much the words I used a year ago during my opening remarks to your House colleagues.

I thought we were stretched thin prior to 9/11, and I assure you that is doubly true today. We are fortunate – as our nation has always been – to be able to go to the bench and call on trained, motivated and ready Reserve Component formations to help carry the load.

Not since Operation Desert Storm has our nation asked so much of its citizen-soldiers. And – given the open-ended nature of the war on terrorism – it is not unreasonable to believe this conflict's use of Guard and Reserve forces could, in the end, prove to be larger than it was during the Gulf War.

What I would ask of you and your colleagues is the same thing I'm asking of leaders throughout the Army, which is simply to carry back to your states, districts and communities a message of thanks and support for our nation's reservists and guardsmen.

Sometimes, their hardship is overlooked as many endure significant reductions in pay and benefits to serve their nation, and many leave behind friends and families who are unaccustomed to lengthy separations.

Besides praising their contributions and thanking their families, I would tell you that their employers also deserve your heartfelt gratitude. Doing without a valued employee is never easy, but I am often touched by stories of employers who not only allow employees to serve as guardsmen and reservists, but who unhesitatingly support them when they are activated.

I was told recently of one Georgia reservist who was on the verge of getting an important promotion when he was called. Not only did his employer go ahead and promote him, but they continued to pay him – at the higher rate – even after he moved out to serve his country. I can't tell you what a strong signal that sends to soldiers, families and communities about the importance of our nation's Reserve Component and its soldiers.

We are learning new things everyday, and I would ask for your help if we come to you in the coming months asking for adjustments in the benefits and entitlements extended to activated guardsmen and reservists. As you look at these requests, I'd ask you to consider these Americans' dedication and sacrifice and help us take care of both them and their families.

I would also ask of each of you to not lose sight of another group of Americans I feel we can never hope to repay – our veterans and retirees. We have a great Army today in no small part because of the foundation

these men and women laid down for us. Please carefully consider the issues and requests they bring to you as you remember the sacrifice, risk and hardship they've endured for our country.

In closing, I would thank you again for everything you have done in the past year to make our great Army even better. Our soldiers and their families have noticed improvements in their pay and quality of life, and we continue to do remarkably well at recruiting and retaining the kind of quality soldiers we need, in no small part because of the efforts of you and your colleagues. We have the support of leaders like you, and soldiers know it.

I am proud of what our country stands for, I am proud of its Army and – as always – I am proud and honored to stand before you today on behalf of our great soldiers.