

STATEMENT BY

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BEFORE THE

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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, I am honored to appear before you to share the progress we are making in the mission of providing our Soldiers and their Families a quality of life commensurate with the quality of their service. Never before in the history of our Army have we asked so much of our Families. They make incredible sacrifices, and while remaining steadfast in support of their Soldiers, Families are showing the stress of seven years at war. In response, the Army continues to enhance programs and services to enable Soldiers and Families to become resilient and ready to address the challenges of deployment and separation.

As Director of Installation Services, I am responsible for Army housing, environmental programs, privatization initiatives, and support to Soldiers and Families. I feel particularly privileged to be entrusted with guiding and overseeing the Soldier Family Action Plan, which brings to life the Army's deep, authentic commitment to provide a supportive environment for those who are sacrificing so greatly for our Nation.

In her "First Lady's Message to Families," commenting on the people she had met on the campaign trail, Michelle Obama remarked, "I particularly cherished my visits with military Families all across the country...And if there's one thing I learned, it's that when our servicemen and women go to war, their Families go with them." She has learned what this Subcommittee and the Army have known for a very long time. They are serving side by side with our Soldiers, enduring their hardships, and providing the unconditional love and support that truly make our Army strong.

My statement focuses on a few of the programs we have in place for Active and Reserve Component Soldiers and Families in the arenas of Support to Families, Child, Youth & School Services, Community Support, Support for Single Soldiers, Recreation Programs, Support to Deployed Soldiers, and Measuring Success.

SUPPORT TO FAMILIES

In a February 27, 2009, speech to Marines at Camp Lejeune, President Obama referenced his wife's commitment to military Families: "My wife Michelle has learned firsthand about the unique burden that your families endure every day. I want you to know this: military Families are a top priority for Michelle and me, and they will be a top priority for my administration." Families have been, and will continue to be, a top priority for the Army.

Fiscal Year 2010 Budget Request: The Army has doubled its investment in base funding from fiscal year 2007 to 2010. The Army's request for fiscal year 2010 Soldier and Family Programs is \$1.726 billion. This increase will sustain funding for the Family programs in the out years.

From fiscal year 2009 to 2010, the funding for Family Programs increased by \$168 million. This funding does not include Overseas Contingency Operations funds. The Army leadership is committed to enhancing quality of support to Soldiers and Families across the Army and has funded enduring requirements in the Base Budget. This funding provides programs and services to Reserve Component Soldiers and Families 24/7; resources the Reserve Component Yellow Ribbon program; resources child care services and youth development programs to the DoD standard of 80 percent and 35 percent of demand, respectively; and funds Survivors Outreach Services, a standardized program for Family members of the Fallen for all Components that includes benefits advisors, additional financial counselors, and support coordinators to provide specialized services to survivors for as long as they need them. Additionally, the funding also supports Family Readiness Support Assistants to support the volunteer

Family Readiness Group (FRG) leaders down to the battalion level in fiscal year 2010 and out as well as Voluntary education and tuition assistance.

The Army Family Covenant: Recognizing that the strength of our Army comes from the strength of our Army Families, the Army leadership unveiled the Army Family Covenant in October 2007. The Covenant institutionalizes the Army's commitment to provide Soldiers and Families – Active, Guard, and Reserve – a quality of life equal to their level of commitment and service and recognizes the important sacrifices they make every day to defend the Nation. The Covenant compels the Army to improve Soldier and Family readiness by standardizing Soldier and Family programs and services, increasing accessibility to health care, improving Soldier and Family housing, ensuring excellence in schools and child and youth services, and expanding education and employment opportunities for Family members.

The Army Family Covenant is in its second year, and the commitment is enduring. The Soldier and Family Action Plan provides the roadmap to review and strengthen existing programs and services. Although there is much work to do, the Army has made significant progress in improving Soldier and Family programs; health care; housing; child, youth, and school services; recreation; education; and employment opportunities. We have closed the staffing gaps in Army Community Service, and we are systematically evaluating Family programs through surveys, feedback, and focus groups in order to calibrate services to address customer needs.

The Army Family Covenant continues a legacy of service and support to Soldiers and Families. It reflects a continuum of Army dedication to sustain and partner with Soldiers and their Families to build an environment where they can prosper and realize their potential, all essential in sustaining an All-Volunteer Force.

The Army Family Action Plan: The Army recently celebrated the 25th Anniversary of the creation of the Army Family Action Plan (AFAP). On August 15, 1983, Army Chief of Staff General John A. Wickham published a groundbreaking white paper *The Army*

Family, which identified the need for the Army to increase support to its Families. General Wickham asserted that a healthy Family environment allows Soldiers to concentrate more fully on their mission. The Army was in transition in 1983, moving its programs from those which supported an organization composed mostly of draftees and short-term enlistees, to an all-volunteer, professional force, more than half of which is married. General Wickham set a new vision and course for Army Families that carries on to this day.

Created in 1980 through focus groups, AFAP was fully developed with the first official AFAP Conference in July 1983. Its mission is to help Army leaders address the needs and concerns of the Army Family from a grass roots perspective. The program uses Army Family representatives from around the world to identify issues that will improve the standard of living for Soldiers and Families. This feedback to leaders provides a way for policy change to become a tangible end-product for the Army Family. It addresses quality of life issues for Soldiers, retirees, Department of Army Civilian employees, and their Family members, and now includes Warriors in Transition (WT) and Survivors of Fallen Soldiers. The Army remains committed to AFAP as a means for Soldiers and Families to let the Army know what works, what doesn't, and what they think will fix it.

During AFAP's 25 years, 651 issues have been worked by the Army. Of those: 84 are active, five have been combined with other active issues; 442 have been completed; and 120 have been determined to be unattainable. AFAP issues have resulted in 110 legislative changes, 155 changes to Department of Defense (DoD) or Army policies; and 177 new or improved programs or services. Over 60 percent of AFAP issues impact all Services. The majority AFAP issues are related to force support (32 percent), followed by medical (21 percent), relocation (20 percent), Family support (17 percent), and youth (10 percent).

As a result of Congressional legislation passed in 2008, three of the most critical active AFAP issues were successfully resolved: Distribution of the Montgomery G.I. Bill

Benefits to Family Members, Paternity Permissive Temporary Duty, and In-State College Tuition. Thank you for hearing and supporting our Families' issues by passing this legislation.

Quality of life and support to Soldiers and Families will remain a primary focus through AFAP and the Army Family Covenant. AFAP will continue to support the Army Family as emerging quality of life issues are brought to the Army leadership for resolution. AFAP will continue to be the "Voice of the Army Family," taking on issues such as increasing support for Warriors in Transition and Survivors of the Fallen, refining Soldier Family Action Plan (SFAP) tasks, and reaching out to geographically dispersed Soldiers and Families.

Army OneSource: Army One Source (AOS) is the centerpiece of the Army's efforts to integrate Family Programs and services. It is the Army's outreach to geographically dispersed Soldiers and Families through technology and people (Community Support Coordinators). The web portal technology brings the latest information to Soldiers and Families, wherever they reside. It establishes a comprehensive multi-component approach for community support and services for Active, Guard, and Reserve Soldiers, Families, and employers throughout the entire deployment cycle. Soldiers and Families can connect to support services by personal touch (telephone or office visit) and the World Wide Web (www.armyonesource.com).

AOS is an Army asset integrator. It ensures Families – regardless of where they live or how they are related to Soldiers – have access to support before, during, and after deployment.

Survivor Outreach Services: Survivor Outreach Services (SOS) provides a standardized, multi-agency, decentralized approach to improving support for Survivors of Fallen Soldiers in communities closest to where Families live. The program standardizes services for Survivors and provides trained experts in benefits counseling, financial counseling, grief counseling, and casualty assistance. The SOS process also

places emphasis on the Soldier's responsibility to prepare, prior to deployment, for the possibility of death. This preparation involves the Soldier, the Soldier's spouse, children, and extended Family. The loss of life in combat operations is a reality we must address because readiness includes being prepared for that possibility. SOS supports Soldier and Family readiness during and after the painful and devastating experience of the loss of a loved one.

SOS provides support to Casualty Assistance Officers to ensure Families receive the most current information on benefits and entitlements and have access to long-term financial and emotional support. Legal support for survivors includes estate planning, will preparation, probate planning, and assistance in preparing estate-related tax documents.

Service delivery strategies include a variety of modalities such as Web-based accessibility, outreach, face-to-face, and group services. SOS is available 24/7 with foreign language and special needs accommodation capabilities. Services are offered at stateside, overseas, and geographically dispersed locations.

Family Readiness Groups and Family Readiness Support Assistants: The Family Readiness Group (FRG) is a commander's program that includes unit Soldiers, civilian employees, Family members (immediate and extended), and volunteers. FRGs are critical to maintaining the strength, morale, and information chain for Soldiers, Families, and commands, and are vital to the morale and support of Soldiers and Families before, during, and after deployments.

FRGs provide mutual support and assistance and function as communication mechanisms, bringing accurate information to Families from commands, and serving as an informal chain of concern to bring issues back up to commands. Structured by the needs of the unit, some FRGs are large, active, and all encompassing, while others are small, tailored only to the immediate requirements of a non-deployed unit.

We recognized volunteer FRG leaders were overwhelmed with responsibilities. The Family Readiness Support Assistants (FRSA) are one way to mitigate the stress. FRSAs provide administrative and logistical support to volunteer FRG leaders and lend consistency to the unit FRG and rear detachment team. Primary missions of FRSAs are coordination of training for rear detachment commanders (RDC) and FRG leaders, maintaining the critical communication link between RDCs and FRG leaders, and ensuring the responsiveness of established community resources. The FRSA position is primarily designed to relieve the administrative burden placed on the volunteer FRG leaders.

There are 1,029 FRSAs – located in deployable Active, Guard, and Reserve battalions – who are paid employees and components of the commander’s Unit Family Readiness Program. As members of the brigade or battalion commander's staff, FRSAs coordinate FRG activities within units and update commanders on program status and services available to Soldiers and their Families. FRSAs link Family members with other Army support agencies and programs.

FRSAs assist with the preparation of pre-deployment and redeployment activities, schedule and coordinate Family readiness or unit-sponsored training, assist in development and distribution of unit newsletters, coordinate video teleconferences for Families and deployed Soldiers, and serve as links between garrison community agencies and units. FRSAs utilize AOS to gather information of value to the FRG leaders. The FRSA position remains in place even when the unit is not deployed, providing continuity in a world climate that requires units to participate in multiple deployments.

Virtual Family Readiness Groups: The Virtual Family Readiness Groups (vFRGs) provide all of the functionality of traditional FRGs in an ad hoc, online setting to meet the needs of geographically dispersed Families. The vFRG is a web-based system to conduct two-way communication between units, Family members, and Soldiers in theater.

The vFRG links the deployed Soldier, Family, FRG leader, unit and RDCs, and other Family readiness personnel on their own controlled-access web portal to facilitate the exchange of information and provide a sense of community, using technology to automate manual processes and provide enhanced services and communications. Unit commanders are responsible for maintaining vFRG content and user access. A new and innovative component of AOS is the eArmy Family Messaging System. The messaging system is a state-of-the-art multimedia tool for commanders to instantaneously communicate with Soldiers and Families by broadcasting a message through various communication devices to help fulfill their Family readiness mission. To date, the Army has established approximately 2,000 vFRGs.

Soldier and Family Assistance Centers: The Army developed Soldier and Family Assistance Centers (SFACs) at installations with Warrior Transition Units (WTUs). Centers provide a safe haven where Warriors in Transition and DoD Civilians and their Families can gather for mutual support and camaraderie to aid physical, spiritual, and mental healing. Services include transition support, financial counseling, child care and education counseling. SFACs act as a conduit for other federal, state, local and non-governmental agencies.

CHILD, YOUTH & SCHOOL SERVICES

Our Child, Youth & School (CYS) Programs are a key component of the Army Family Covenant because they reduce the conflict between mission readiness and parental responsibility.

Garrison Child Development Centers and Family Child Care Homes have extended their operating hours to better accommodate the current high operating tempo. We have extended hours to cover weekends, evenings, and even 24/7 services and crisis care where necessary.

Soldiers who work an extended duty day are not charged for the extra child care hours. Families of deployed Soldiers receive child care discounts and 16 hours of free respite child care per month per child. The respite care is also available for FRG and FRSA personnel, Families of deployed, Exceptional Family Members, Warriors in Transition Families, and Survivor Families. This respite gives parents time to tend to personal needs or take breaks from the everyday stresses of parenting. Our Families are grateful for this well deserved service.

Families of our Warriors in Transition are especially vulnerable and we provide child care for them during medical appointments and support group meetings. Army Families of Fallen Soldiers receive child care during the bereavement period and special consideration thereafter.

When Soldier parents are absent, many children no longer have transportation that allows them to participate in after school programs and sports. The Army Family Covenant has enabled us to add more bus routes and transportation options to assist children in accessing these vital activities.

We are grateful for your support of our Child and Youth Construction Program which will significantly reduce our child care shortfall. Our Military Construction Program reflects this commitment: 42 Child Care Centers funded in fiscal years 2008 and 2009 with an additional 11 Centers programmed for fiscal years 2010 through 2014. In addition, we have used the temporary authority provided under the National Defense Authorization Act for 44 Child Care Centers in fiscal year 2008 and four in fiscal year 2009 with Operations and Maintenance dollars. Thank you for your support that enables the Army to rapidly meet installation child care requirements.

We are attentive to the need to ensure the health, safety, and well being of the children in our care and take great pride in the fact that in fiscal year 2008 all of our eligible Child Development Centers and Army School Age Programs were nationally

accredited. This is a milestone representing the culmination of years of hard work which addresses quality as well as quantity.

Initiatives used to transform the military child care system into a model for the Nation can be implemented in civilian communities to improve the quality of care for all children. In a report released on November 24, 2008, "Making Quality Child Care Possible: Lessons Learned," from the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRRA) military partnerships examined lessons learned from the military child care system that could be applied in the private sector. The report concludes that many of the basic initiatives implemented by the military can significantly improve the quality of child care in civilian communities across the nation. These initiatives include establishment of basic child care health and safety standards, routine inspections and oversight, and training and incentives for child caregivers.

Longer and multiple deployments are increasing the stress on our Families, and the support they need includes strengthening the connection with folks who teach and monitor our children every day in school settings. In the last year, we have added 40 more School Liaison Officers, which now total 140 throughout the Army, and increased the number of school districts to 380 that have signed a memorandum of understanding to help minimize academic disruptions for transferring military students. We have also expanded training to help school officials understand challenges faced by military students.

The Army is partnering with outside agencies on the following initiatives:

- DoD Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children (effective 2008) addresses the educational transition issues of children of military families. The purpose of the Compact is to remove barriers to educational success imposed on children of military families because of frequent moves and deployment of their parents.
- DoD and Department of Education Memorandum of Agreement (signed June 2008) creates a formal partnership between the two Departments to provide a comprehensive and cohesive structure for collaboration between two federal agencies as well as with local, state, and other relevant entities.

- DoD Education Activity Partnership Branch initiative is dedicated to promoting quality education for every military child regardless of their location or how often their Family moves.

I would like to emphasize that our CYS Services is a force multiplier that helps reduce lost duty time, impacts Soldiers' decisions to remain in the Army, and sends a message that we care about our Families. The Army considers these programs critical to mission readiness—our investment contributes to productivity and retention today as well as productive citizens in the future.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

The Army Community Covenant: Soldiers and Families are integral members of the communities in which they live. The Army Community Covenant, a companion initiative of the Army Family Covenant, is a commitment of support at the state and local level by individuals, organizations, and government agencies to Active, Guard, and Reserve Soldiers and Families. It is designed to develop and foster effective state and community partnerships with the Army to sustain and improve Soldier and Family quality of life.

There are many communities, organizations, and civic and business leaders across the country already supporting Soldiers and Families through a number of programs and initiatives. The Community Covenant recognizes that effort and advances initiatives like the Interstate Compact on Education Opportunity for Military Children, which replaces inconsistent treatment of transitioning military students with a unified, comprehensive approach that provides consistent policy in every state. Homes for Our Troops builds new homes or adapts existing homes to meet handicapped accessibility requirements for Warriors in Transition. These are just two of over 1,500 best practices highlighted on the Army Community Covenant Web site (www.communitycovenant.army.mil).

Since the Community Covenant's inception on April 17, 2008, there have been 102 covenant signing ceremonies in 37 states that included 22 governors, 39 Members of Congress, 103 state legislators, and 269 mayors.

SUPPORT FOR SINGLE SOLDIERS

While steadily increasing focus on Family issues in recent years, the Army has not lost sight of the 44 percent of the force that is not married—our single Soldiers.

Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers: The mission of the Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers (BOSS) program is to enhance the morale and welfare of single Soldiers, increase retention, and sustain combat readiness. BOSS is the collective voice of single Soldiers through the chain of command. The program also serves as a tool for commanders to gauge the morale of single Soldiers regarding quality of life issues. BOSS also sponsors a variety of activities before, during, and after deployment to maintain the morale of single Soldiers affected by increased operational tempo and deployment stress.

The BOSS program is facilitated through its three core components aimed at maintaining a balanced life: leisure and recreation, community service, and quality of life. BOSS affords Soldiers the opportunity to assist in planning and execution of recreational activities for single Soldiers and provides direction for Soldiers interested in performing military and civilian community service-related projects. Community service projects provide Soldiers valuable experience, skills, and a sense of community pride and ownership. In fiscal year 2007, 22 garrison BOSS programs received the President's Volunteer Service Award for efforts representing over 150,574 volunteer hours.

The BOSS program also serves as a tool to address many of the issues and concerns that our Army faces today. The program gives the Army the ability to tackle tough issues through peer-to-peer leadership. Single Soldiers assist the chain of

command in dealing with suicide prevention, sexual assault, and sexual harassment issues that single Soldiers living in barracks might experience.

RECREATION PROGRAMS

Soldier and Community Recreation dramatically improved service to Soldiers and their Families by standardizing and increasing the quality of fitness center equipment and Wounded Warriors sports programs, for both garrisons and deployed forces in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Warrior Adventure Quest: The Warrior Adventure Quest (WAQ) delivers high adventure recreation activities to help Soldiers transition to “new normal” and reduce the potential for high risk behaviors that are counterproductive to unit cohesion. It combines existing high adventure, high adrenaline activities with Battlemind to assist in mitigating the cumulative effects of sustained operations while mentally preparing Soldiers to reintegrate and begin focused training for the next requirement. This integrated process involves Office of the Surgeon General, the Substance Abuse Program, Suicide Prevention, Combat Readiness Center, Chaplains, the National Guard, Reserves, and Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR).

Warrior in Transition Sports Program: The Warrior in Transition Sports Program provides active-duty Soldiers who have life-altering injuries an opportunity to compete in state and national level sporting events by paying for their athletic attire, registration fees, transportation, lodging, and per diem. Physically impaired Soldiers can to apply for select competitions at which they believe they would be competitive. Selection is based on the Soldier’s prior experience and participation at local and regional competitions. Soldiers must qualify to compete in a state or national level sport competition for permanently physically impaired athletes.

Inclusive Recreation for Warrior in Transition Training: We have partnered with DoD, in conjunction with the Pennsylvania State University Outreach Programs, to

provide 12 "Inclusive Recreation for Wounded Warrior" training sessions over the next three years. This training is a four-day course designed to train staff who are recreation programmers/managers to successfully integrate active duty Warrior in Transition (WT) into existing MWR Recreation programs and services. This involves the ability to recognize the unique needs and characteristics of WT who have sustained war-related injuries and be able to respond to their needs. Students will also develop an "Inclusion Action Plan" to implement upon return to their installations and will be able to apply the knowledge learned in this course to successfully meet the recreational needs of active duty WT. A byproduct of this course is the ability to integrate retirees and Exceptional Family Members who may also have a disability. A total of 60 recreation staff from all Services (20 from Army) has been trained since the program's inception in January 2009.

To support the Army Family Covenant, recreation programs such as bowling, golf, and libraries continue to offer opportunities to Soldiers and their Families. Army bowling centers are Soldier and Family entertainment centers, which offer a multitude of amusement options including glow bowling, party rooms, video arcades, billiards, and Strike Zone snack bar operations. Bowling centers provide discount bowling to Soldiers and Families affected by extended deployments. Bowling managers are being trained to coach adaptive needs bowling to better serve Warriors in Transition and others with adaptive needs. The Army Golf Program provides high quality sports and leisure activities for the Soldiers and Families and supports the MWR "First Choice" service standard.

SUPPORT TO DEPLOYED SOLDIERS

MWR supports America's Army wherever it serves. We maintain MWR facilities at 58 sites in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait, and Bosnia. Tens of thousands of deployed Soldiers have received portable pocket fitness kits that can be used at any time and any place. Popular with Soldiers, these kits contribute to their overall well-being as well as to the Army's war-fighting capability.

Recreation facilities include theaters, electronic games stations, traditional board games, ping-pong, and paperback book libraries that also offer preloaded audio books. Fitness facilities include pools, self-powered aerobic machines, cardiovascular and strength training equipment, and assorted free weight equipment.

MWR programs help Soldiers maintain physical fitness, alleviate combat stress, and foster readiness, as mission accomplishment is directly linked to Soldiers' confidence that their Families are safe and capable of carrying on during their absence until they return home from deployment.

Soldiers can take advantage of rest and recuperation programs offered at the Edelweiss Lodge and Resort, Hale Koa Hotel, and Shades of Green, which provide discounted guest room and food and beverage packages for Service members and their sponsored guests during mid-tour leave or upon return from either Afghanistan or Iraq.

MEASURING SUCCESS

We listened to our customers when they told us in 2007 that they did not necessarily want more programs, they wanted standardized programs that they could count on regardless of where they lived. Utilizing that feedback, SFAP to support Family programs and services, health care, housing, CYA Services, education and employment opportunities.

While we have come a long way in designing the future of Family programs, we fully appreciate and recognize that we still have much to do. In response to customer feedback, we are evaluating our programs and services utilizing a standardized disciplined methodology for capturing customer comments and using those responses to recalibrate and refine both the delivery and receipt of programs and services. Through a three-tiered feedback process, we gather the individual, constituent group, and corporate input to implement recommendations.

Feedback on SFAP outcomes are collected through forums such as the aforementioned AFAP. The SFAP Senior Review Group and the Soldier Family Readiness Board of Directors, co-chaired by the Secretary of the Army and Chief of Staff of the Army, provide senior leader guidance and direction for SFAP implementation. We are also closely monitoring results from several Soldier and Family surveys to determine the effectiveness of the Army Family Covenant. We are particularly interested in Soldier and Family satisfaction with the military way of life and their adaptation strategies to the challenges of Army life.

CONCLUSION

Under the Army Family Covenant, the Army is implementing aggressive improvements to a broad range of family-oriented, quality of life programs and services to address the dynamic needs of Soldiers and their Families. These improvements are focused on improving post-combat support to mitigate the accumulated effects of conflict and to equip and empower the Soldiers and Families of our expeditionary Army....the strength of the Nation.

We have invested the Nation's resources wisely, focusing on our Soldiers and Families in areas that enable readiness and resilience, while reducing the turbulence and stress that come with military life. Continuing predictable funding is crucial to sustain and preserve the All-Volunteer Force.

While we are moving in the right direction with the Army Family Covenant, we know there is much more to achieve. The Army remains determined to provide a strong, supportive environment where Soldiers and their Families can thrive. With your support of our fiscal year 2010 budget request, we will move closer to fulfilling our commitment to provide Soldiers and Families a quality of life commensurate with their level of service and sacrifice to the Nation.

Thank you for the privilege of appearing before you today. I look forward to your questions.