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UNITED STATES SENATE

SUBJECT: AIR FORCE MILITARY AND CIVILIAN PERSONNEL PROGRAMS

STATEMENT OF:

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INTRODUCTION

Chairman Tillis, Ranking Member Gillibrand, Distinguished Members of this Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before this committee to talk about our Airmen. America's Airmen remain "Always There" providing Global Vigilance, Reach and Power to protect and defend our Nation. Our Airmen, Active, Guard, Reserve and civilian, have been engaged globally for the longest continuous stretch of combat in our Nation's history. As noted in the National Defense Strategy, we are facing a complex and volatile global environment with increasing disorder resulting from the decline of the long-standing rules-based international order under which we previously operated. Great power competition has reemerged as the central challenge to U.S. prosperity and security. In this environment, we must prioritize and resource what is most important to field a lethal, expertly trained, resilient, and rapidly adapting Air Force to meet today's and tomorrow's warfighting demands.

ACCELERATING READINESS

Our Airmen, both military and civilian, are our most important asset. Increasing end strength, as requested in the FY19 President's Budget, will allow the Air Force to better meet today's warfighting demands as well tomorrow's. Without continued end strength growth, readiness will decline and the Air Force will find it increasingly difficult to meet evolving Combatant Commander requirements.

End Strength

The Air Force appreciates the FY18 National Defense Authorization Act support for continued end strength growth to 675,300 Total Force Airmen. This growth allows the Air Force to compete, deter and win in a more competitive and dangerous international security environment. The Air Force's FY19 President's Budget continues that growth to 680,400 Total Force Airmen – 329,100 Active Duty, 107,100 Guard, 70,000 Reserve, and 174,200 Civilians. This growth will accelerate our readiness and provide more lethal Airmen to protect and defend our Nation.

Recruiting and Accessing

Readiness is first and foremost about the Airmen who make up your Air Force. Today only 25% of 17 - 24 year old men and women in the United States are eligible to serve—our prime recruiting pool. Despite this low ratio, the Air Force achieved its FY17 enlisted Active (31,000) and Reserve component (6,583) recruiting goals. The Air National Guard missed its enlisted recruiting goal by 280 Airmen (achieving 94% of the goal), but was able to offset this with increased retention.

The FY18 Air Force Active Duty enlisted recruiting goal is 29,450. Thus far, we have met 33% of the overall goal and have identified recruits with projected dates for basic military training at

55% of the goal. The FY18 Air Force Reserve enlisted recruiting goal is 7,240 with 31.6% already met. In summary, Active Duty, Reserve and Air National Guard are on track to meet FY18 enlisted recruiting goals.

The FY19 President's Budget Active Component enlisted recruiting target is 28,250. The FY19 Air Force Reserve enlisted recruiting target is 7,497 and the FY19 Air National Guard enlisted recruiting target is still being worked.

In FY19 the Active component officer recruiting target is 5,450, a 350 increase from FY18. The FY19 Air Force Reserve's is 1,253, an increase of 43, and the Air National Guard recruiting target remains steady.

The FY19 President's Budget increases Reserve Officer Training Corps scholarship funding by \$18.1M to allow the Air Force to offer 1,000 additional scholarships. We are confident we can meet our FY18 and FY19 recruiting targets.

The FY19 President's Budget also increases training capacity to "right-size" the student pipeline with a focus on critical skills production as identified in the National Defense Strategy. These increases address foundational disconnects in the training pipeline, fund instructors to boost pipeline capacity, increase Remotely Piloted Aircraft operations support and cyber mission capability. Specifically, we are adding 248 authorizations to assist in pipeline technical training in addition to adding 74 authorizations to increase Military Training Instructors and Military Training Leaders at Basic Military Training.

To further assist with overall pilot shortages, we are actively seeking retired pilots to return to active duty. As of the end of January, 22 applications are in the review process. Though not large numbers, these returning pilots will mitigate manning shortages and augment other programs to help restore our pilot inventory.

The end strength increases in this budget begin to restore squadron manning by filling gaps that were created by years of declining end strength.

Retaining Airmen and Families

While the Air Force is experiencing historically high retention rates in both the officer and enlisted corps, we do have pockets of retention challenges. For our enlisted career fields, we have lower retention for linguistic analysts, special operations aircraft maintenance, and nuclear medicine specialties. For officer career fields, retention is challenged for Pilots, Combat Systems Officers, and various medical specialties.

We appreciate Congress' generous support of special and incentive pays. The FY19 President's Budget includes \$1.2 billion for special and incentive pays allowing the Air Force to target critical skill shortages. Further it assists in compensating Airmen for hazardous duty or earned skill sets that are critical to our warfighting excellence. To ensure we are making the best use of our aviation bonus authorities, we will continue to use a business case model to target payments based on four main criteria: manning levels, retention, cost to train and the length of time to train.

The total force pilot shortage for fiscal year 2017 ended at 1,812 and was most acute in our fighter pilot inventory. This budget continues to address the pilot shortage by continuing the aviator bonus and allowing the Air Force flexibility to focus those resources to address our greatest needs. In addition, this budget adds required training production capacity in our formal training units to assist in rapidly producing new accessions to fill our cockpits. Finally, this budget permits implementation of a myriad of programs and policies designed to address assignment, promotion, operational tempo, and quality of life issues targeted to improve retention.

That said, monetary incentives are just one small piece of our retention portfolio. The majority of the retention portfolio are in fact non-monetary. Commanders have the authority to approve high year of tenure extensions for personnel in undermanned key career fields to retain much needed experience. We are adding flexibility into the assignments process for aviators by leveraging technology to improve our assignment matching system. After researching industry best practices, we implemented an information technology solution known as "Talent Marketplace." Talent Marketplace uses an algorithm, based on the Nobel-Prize winning National Medical Residency Matching Program, to assist in matching officers to available assignments. This algorithm takes into account 1) the officer's assignment preferences and 2) the hiring manager's ranking of officers being considered, and produces a match. While Talent Marketplace provides an automated "scientific" match at the beginning of the process, it then assists the Air Force's Personnel Center assignment team in applying the "art" to finalize the process. This two-pronged process approach of "science" and "art" assists with transparency in the assignment process and will assist with better managing talent. A demonstration of the Talent Marketplace concept was first tested with our Operations Researchers Analyst career field in the spring of 2017, with successful results. Incremental implementation is underway with Fighter Pilots and Combat System Operators for the summer 2018 assignment cycle. As funding allows, we will bring all officer and enlisted skill sets into the Talent Marketplace program.

Having a lethal, agile and flexible force, capable of winning in any environment, goes beyond solely the overall size of the force. It also encompasses looking after Airmen's mental and physical wellbeing and ensuring we take care of their families so they can focus on the mission.

Airmen must be able to withstand, recover, and grow in the face of stressors and changing demands. Our Airmen must be resilient to be fully mission-ready and lethal. The FY19 President's Budget increases support to Airmen and families through a variety of capabilities that drive mission readiness and improve the resilience and retention of our human weapon system.

Child and Youth Programs

Airmen cannot be effective if they are worried about their children. In FY19 we increased Child and Youth funding by \$53.6M for a total of \$114.2M. This funding will (1) expand child care for those needing childcare outside of normal duty hours, (2) provide fees to support 4,000 children who must use off-base child care, and (3) fund youth resiliency camps. The funding increase also includes 119 additional civilian child care positions across the Air Force; supplies, closed circuit television repair and replacement, and national youth partnerships such as Boys and Girls Clubs and 4-H.

Exceptional Family Member Programs

More than 33,000 Total Force Airmen have special needs families currently enrolled in the Exceptional Family Member Program and retention of these skilled Airmen is critical to readiness. To assist in the retention efforts, we are improving support to Exceptional Family Member Program families by increasing installation-level family support coordinators from 84 to 99, providing additional coordinator training, improving assignment management processing, and offering online information for Airmen and their spouses to assist in planning for future assignments. We are also increasing Exceptional Family Member Program Respite Child Care from 12 to 40 hours per child each month. These efforts, along with increased communication with our Exceptional Family Member Program families through quarterly webcasts, accelerate the readiness and lethality of the Air Force.

Recharge for Resiliency

Air Force Morale, Welfare, and Recreation capabilities build skills and self-confidence, reduce stress, and enhance quality of life for Airmen and families. With our Morale, Welfare, and Recreation budget, we will implement new capabilities designed to drive unit cohesion, stability and resiliency in our squadrons. One capability highlight is our Recharge for Resiliency Program which was originally designed to provide Airmen and families an outlet to decompress and adjust after returning home from a deployment. In FY19, we are expanding Recharge for Resiliency to include activities commanders in the field can use specifically to build unit cohesion and drive squadron vitality. One such example is the Team Cohesion Challenge, an adventure race incorporating the four Comprehensive Airman Fitness pillars (mental, physical, social and spiritual). The event lasts approximately 4-5 hours and focuses on team building.

FOUNDATIONAL READINESS IMPERATIVES

The Air Force's core values--*Integrity First, Service before Self, and Excellence in All We Do*--are the foundation of all Airmen performance.

Wounded Warriors

The Air Force has 3,200 Wounded Warriors serving today. Our commitment to our wounded, ill and injured Airmen remains resolute as these Airmen, their families and caregivers deserve nothing less. As such, the Air Force Wounded Warrior Program provides world-class medical treatment along with physical, psychological, social and family healing through a variety of avenues to include recovery care coordinators that provide care management assistance. Our goal is to return Airmen to duty, whether back to their unit or to another opportunity to serve in uniform. For those who cannot return to duty, we provide personalized transition support from housing and education services, to employment and financial coaching.

Airmen with Invisible Wounds

Airmen with Invisible Wounds – Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Traumatic Brain Injury or other cognitive, psychological or behavioral disorders – experience unique challenges requiring an agile, comprehensive approach to support and care. The Air Force has 2,355 Airmen with Invisible Wounds. Recognizing these challenges, the Invisible Wounds Initiative began in 2016 with a complete review and revision of medical care and support programs along with a long-term culture change on how we care for Airmen with Invisible Wounds. Since then, we established a specific medical separation review to ensure individuals were diagnosed appropriately and received a thorough course of treatment before meeting a medical review board. We also developed a communication campaign to educate commanders and leaders at all levels on the challenges faced by Airmen with Invisible Wounds with the intent to bring clarity, understanding and open doors for more members to seek help rather than hide mental health issues.

Personal Violence Prevention and Response

Interpersonal violence and suicide are detriments to our Airmen, our culture, and our core values. These acts negatively impact victims, those who perpetrate, and their units. As a result, unit cohesion, mission effectiveness, and ultimately Air Force readiness are threatened. We are deeply committed to the prevention of interpersonal violence and suicide on all fronts from sexual assault, child maltreatment, domestic violence, to workplace violence. Should these events occur despite prevention efforts, we are committed to providing victims the care they need across a robust response system.

Effective prevention is necessary to accelerate readiness. Our prevention strategy involves leveraging cutting edge, evidence based innovations to deliver holistic prevention. We are in the

final stages of validating a tool that will screen for individuals with a high propensity for unethical decision-making and risk of engaging in counterproductive behaviors and integrity violations inconsistent with the Air Force culture and Core Values.

At our accessions sources we are adapting the best available interventions from civilian settings to develop tailored and holistic prevention for entry-level Airmen. At Basic Military Training, we are using mobile technology to provide prevention interventions matched to each trainee's unique risk profile. At the Air Force Academy, the Cadet Healthy Personal Skills program is showing tremendous promise in not only working to eradicate sexual assault but also fostering healthy personal and interpersonal skills to build resilience and exceptional leaders.

Across the Total Force, we are moving to the sustainability phase of our evidence-based bystander intervention approach. This integrated bystander approach combines sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, stalking, and suicide prevention, and reduces these forms of violence. Evaluation results indicate the approach is increasing hope, efficacy, and positive behavior changes. Final results from the 2017 DoD Annual Report on Sexual Assault will be released this summer; our early analysis shows promising indications of increases in sexual assault reporting. The complete analysis will be available late spring 2018.

We are also implementing Task Force True North, a comprehensive approach to increase help seeking behavior and decrease negative behavior outcomes. This approach embeds mental health providers within at-risk units. Bold initiatives are also underway to prevent suicide, sexual harassment and workplace harassment. These initiatives highlight scientific innovations in prevention, such as computer-based learning for suicide risk detection and intentional climate design to create environments in which workplace harassment is less likely to occur. Time-based prevention, an initiative designed to separate someone who is suicidal from the most lethal means to kill themselves, is also being developed to reduce suicide (i.e. free volunteer storage of personally owned firearms). Taken together, these innovations have the potential to result in substantial decreases in interpersonal violence and suicide.

We are committed to continuous improvement and critical evaluation of our systems. We will partner with external experts from academia, industry, other government agencies and non-profit organizations to improve our ability to support leaders in the field. We remain dedicated to implementing bold ideas that leverage technology and strategic communications to improve leaders' ability to support their Airmen and families.

DEVELOPING EXCEPTIONAL LEADERS AND TALENT MANAGEMENT

The Air Force continues to improve its Force Development processes to ensure alignment with the 2018 National Defense Strategy. Through that lens, we have been working hand-in-hand with our Joint Partners on several leadership development programs.

The deliberate development of Air Force leaders includes education, training and experience. Our enterprise-level development programs focus on improving leadership, management, and warrior ethos. They are designed to produce Airmen who possess the tactical expertise, operational competence, and strategic vision to lead and execute Air Force and Joint missions, now and in the future. The Air Force executes a senior leader development portfolio emphasizing the continued development of enterprise-level senior leaders (targeted for GS-15s, Senior Executives, Chief Master Sergeants, Colonels, and General Officers). Senior leaders' development is managed by specific officer, enlisted, and civilian management teams and the development portfolio consists of approximately 35 tailored courses and development opportunities annually.

We are examining our Professional Military Education to improve how we develop leaders capable of critical and strategic thought, clear communication, and adept in the art and science of warfighting. We will emphasize intellectual leadership and military professionalism, deepen our knowledge of history, embrace new technology and techniques to counter competitors.

We need Airmen with the right operational and international skills who can work with partner nations to meet global threats and challenges. The National Defense Strategy highlights the importance of "strengthening allies and attracting new partners." Critical to meeting this line of effort is developing a workforce with the skills to build partnerships, strengthen capabilities and capacities as partner Airmen. In tandem with Department of Defense efforts, we are assessing how we train and develop our Airmen to meet the demands of the increasingly complex Security Cooperation environment. We are working cross-functionally to build a Security Cooperation Workforce that is appropriately trained, certified, resourced, and managed to meet the dynamic, global challenges.

Performance Management

Today's threat environment requires agile, responsive military and civilian personnel management systems to ensure the Air Force continues to retain the highly skilled talent needed to defend the Nation. Cultivating workforce talent is a priority.

Enlisted

In our enlisted force, we are finishing a triennial review of our enlisted evaluation system since transitioning to the new system in 2015. The review centered around answering two strategic

questions: 1) “How do we get the very best out of our Airmen so they give their very best to accomplishing the mission?” and 2) “Are there any alternative performance management models that may be used other than Forced Distribution for promotion recommendations?” Initiatives include re-examining what is valued in documenting performance feedback, transforming the current evaluation form to more precisely document performance, developing an evaluation tool that encourages more candid performance feedback, and clarifying stratification rules to reinforce performance feedback. When completed, senior leaders can use the review’s recommendations as a baseline to ensure our Enlisted Evaluation System is reinforcing the development and feedback for our enlisted force. It is also an example of the deliberate and continuous process we use to strengthen the capabilities, readiness, and professionalism of our vital enlisted force.

Officer

Within our officer corps, we are looking into what we can do to enhance the Air Force’s ability to execute the right size and mix of capabilities required to meet and sustain emerging mission demands. Currently, we are exploring ways to transform officer performance management using the lessons learned from the transition to the enlisted evaluation system. In 2017, we began an initiative to look at officer performance management, which includes a deliberate review of our officer evaluation system and officer promotion processes. We have a dedicated team exploring various officer evaluation and promotion considerations which include starting at the foundation with thoughtful work focused on what the Air Force values in its officer corps. Building on that sturdy foundation, we are reviewing a number of initiatives to ensure our officer corps is able to meet strategic challenges.

The Department is reviewing proposed statutory changes for the FY 2019 National Defense Authorization Act to recruit, develop, promote and retain officers for today’s operational requirements. Once we have completed our review and obtained approval of our proposed changes not just within the Department, but also by the Administration, we will share these proposals with you and provide you with more details.

Civilian

Our civilian workforce is essential to the Air Force’s mission and joint warfighting readiness. Recruiting and hiring top civilian talent is critical to our success. Civilian Airmen represent 25% of our Total Force. The vast majority of our Civilian Airmen, 94%, are at the tip of the spear in our depots and squadrons—not on headquarters staffs as many believe. The Air Force’s strategy to improve its civilian hiring process has four lines of effort: (1) Information technology—increasing reliability and automation, (2) Authorities—utilizing current authorities and expanding them as able, (3) Process Improvements and (4) Modest Additional Manpower.

In addition to these lines of effort, the Air Force recognizes the need for a more agile and flexible talent management system responsive to warfighter needs. Air Force Civilian Force Management leaders, partnered with other key stakeholders, have begun developing a concept plan for a pilot civilian talent management system, modeled after a successful demonstration project already in place.

The Air Force has also made strides in civilian workforce recruiting, developing, and retaining talent by launching an accredited Civilian Associate Degree in Leadership and Management Studies program, as well as implementing a Premier College Intern Program. The purpose of the Associate Degree program is to allow the 50% of Air Force civilians without a college degree to begin their educational journey. The degree enables personal and professional development, improves communication and critical thinking skills, and invests in building a cadre of future Air Force leaders. In FY19, the Premier College Intern Program will enable the Air Force to recruit top talent directly from college campuses via a summer intern program using direct hiring authorities to streamline the process. The intent is to recruit college students who have completed their junior year by giving them summer internships followed by a guaranteed civilian intern developmental position immediately upon graduation. The premier internship program will provide the Air Force with a strategic approach to target specific fields of study, build a campus talent pipeline and introduce the Air Force as an employer of choice. Our target for FY19 is 500—we currently have 415 acceptances. This approach ensures we will leverage the new Congressional hiring authorities and stay competitive with private sector companies like IBM and Google who hire directly from college campuses.

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY REFORM

The Air Force is modernizing the information technology infrastructure across its human resources systems to provide exceptional service to Total Force Airmen and their families. In a digitally connected world, our Airmen deserve the best Human Resource Systems available today. To improve these systems, our efforts are focused on providing all Airmen a modern cloud-based, mobile-enabled, self-service oriented digital experience. The way forward requires analyzing the Human Resource Management Information Technology portfolio which includes 115 talent management information technology platforms and 400+ applications, to identify business redundancies and opportunities for consolidation. At the foundation of this effort is our transition to cloud services which will enhance Privacy Information security. As we modernize our Information Technology platforms, we will increase our ability to make data-driven decisions.

MyVector

MyVector, is a web-based Total Force development platform and is an example of how we are evolving our Human Resources Information Technology capabilities to enhance support to Airmen in an efficient, agile, and cost effective manner. It underpins the force development for all Airmen and allows them to be actively involved in their own career development process. Presently, more than 176K Total Force Airmen, military and civilians, (15K more than last year) are registered on MyVector and more than 17K Airmen have matched mentoring connections. We are currently posturing the platform to accomplish Officer Developmental Education Boards, Enlisted deliberate development, and foreign language proficiency tracking capabilities.

Air Force Integrated Personnel and Pay System

Another example of modernizing our Information Technology platform is the Air Force Integrated Personnel and Pay System (AFIPPS). This program will enhance our already fully operational personnel system for all three components, Active, Reserve and Guard, by integrating payroll. Our strategy has greatly reduced the life cycle cost estimate of the program from \$1.8B to \$0.7B. It has also dramatically reduced risk by using our existing Oracle Electronic Business Suite platform, established system infrastructure and trained workforce. Contract award will occur early this spring and once completed in January 2021, the Air Force will have a fully integrated personnel and pay system that will meet all federal audit compliances and resolve existing pay issues Airmen experience today.

CONCLUSION

We must ensure our Airmen have the resources, training and tools to *compete, deter, and win* in an ever increasingly complex security environment. Resilient and ready Airmen, both military and civilian, are the foundation of the Air Force's readiness and lethality. Your Air Force will

remain “Always There” providing Global Vigilance, Reach and Power to protect and defend our Nation. We are committed to prioritizing and resourcing what is most important and look forward to partnering with Congress in our endeavors to protect and defend our Nation. I thank you for your continuing support of your Air Force.