

Stenographic Transcript
Before the

Subcommittee on Personnel

COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES

UNITED STATES SENATE

HEARING TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON MILITARY AND
CIVILIAN PERSONNEL PROGRAMS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF
DEFENSE IN REVIEW OF THE DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION
REQUEST FOR FISCAL YEAR 2023 AND THE FUTURE YEARS
DEFENSE PROGRAM

Wednesday, April 27, 2022

Washington, D.C.

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7
8 U.S. Senate

9 Subcommittee on Personnel,

10 Committee on Armed Services,

11 Washington, D.C.

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13 The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 3:01
14 p.m., in Room 222, Russell Senate Office Building, Hon.
15 Kirsten Gillibrand, chairman of the subcommittee,
16 presiding.

17 Subcommittee Members Present: Senators Gillibrand
18 [presiding], Warren, Hirono, Tillis, Hawley, and
19 Tuberville.

1 OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND, U.S.
2 SENATOR FROM NEW YORK

3 Senator Gillibrand: Good afternoon, everyone. The
4 subcommittee meets today to receive testimony on the
5 military and civilian personnel programs at the Department
6 of Defense and the military services in review of the
7 Administration's defense authorization request for Fiscal
8 Year 2023.

9 This is the subcommittee's annual personnel posture
10 hearing that establishes a foundational record for the
11 committee of the Department's full range of activities
12 concerning matters affecting servicemembers, their
13 families, retirees, and the Department's civilian
14 workforce.

15 And it provides the Department the opportunity to
16 discuss their personnel policy priorities. For witnesses,
17 welcome. Thank you for appearing. And we will have two
18 panels today.

19 The first panel consists of officials from the Office
20 of the Secretary of Defense who cover the full range of
21 military and civilian personnel programs, the Honorable Gil
22 Cisneros, Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and
23 Readiness, Ms. V. Penrod, Acting Assistant Secretary of
24 Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, Dr. David J.
25 Smith, Acting Principal Deputy, Assistant Secretary of

1 Defense for Health Affairs, and Ms. Elizabeth B. Foster,
2 Executive Director of Force Resiliency, Executive Director,
3 Office of Force Resiliency -- same thing.

4 The second panel will include the Senior Personnel
5 Chiefs of Military Services, Lieutenant General Gary Brito,
6 Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1, Vice Admiral John B. Nowell,
7 Junior Deputy Chief of Naval Operations, N-1, and Chief of
8 Naval Personnel, Lieutenant General David A. Ottignon,
9 Deputy Commandant of the Marine Corps for Manpower Reserve
10 Affairs, Ms. Gwendolyn R. DeFilippi, Assistant Deputy Chief
11 of Staff of the Air Force for Manpower Personal Services,
12 and Ms. Patricia Mulcahy, Chief Human Capital Officer,
13 United States -- United Space Force.

14 Before I continue, I want to recognize Ms. Penrod, who
15 has appeared before the subcommittee on a number of
16 occasions, but for whom this hearing will be her last. She
17 is retiring imminently, I am told, after more than five
18 decades of service to the Department of Defense.

19 This includes 16 years as a senior executive in OSD
20 and 35 years in the Air Force, as both an enlisted Airman
21 and an officer working on behalf of our service members,
22 their families, and the civilian workforce who supports
23 them.

24 Thank you for your service, Ms. Penrod.

25 [Clapping.]

1 Senator Gillibrand: At this hearing last year in May,
2 I began by noting that our country has been in a state of
3 continuous war for nearly 20 years. And that with the
4 impending withdrawal of combat troops from Afghanistan we
5 were closing one chapter and beginning another. In the
6 year since, we have indeed seen a new chapter unfold with
7 continued resurgence of great power competition and
8 Vladimir Putin's unjustified, unprovoked, and unwarranted
9 war on Ukraine.

10 Coupled with the persistent effects of global
11 pandemic, increasingly sophisticated cyber and other
12 asymmetric tech threats, and the disruptive effects of
13 ecological degradation and changing climate, the need for
14 highly trained and capable military and civilian workforce
15 within the Department of Defense and throughout the Federal
16 Government has never been greater. We must commit to
17 meeting these challenges by developing, fielding, and
18 maintaining the world's most capable workforce.

19 I am going to submit the rest of my statement for the
20 record, and I turn it over to Senator Tillis.

21 [The prepared statement of Senator Gillibrand:]

22 [SUBCOMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 STATEMENT OF HON. THOM TILLIS, U.S. SENATOR FROM
2 NORTH CAROLINA

3 Senator Tillis: Thank you, Madam Chairwoman. Thank
4 you to the witnesses for being here. Ms. Penrod, given
5 your future plans, I look forward to your unabridged and
6 unbridled responses to our questions, but congratulations
7 again. The 2023 National Defense Authorization Act will
8 coincide with the 50th anniversary of the creation of the
9 all-volunteer force.

10 But I think it may be more accurate to describe the
11 military as an all recruited force because it takes a large
12 amount of resources to attract sufficient numbers of high
13 quality Americans to military service.

14 To put it bluntly, I am worried we are now in the
15 early days of a long term threat to the all-volunteer
16 force, a small and declining number of Americans who are
17 eligible and interested in military service.

18 Every single metric tracks the military recruiting
19 environment is going in the wrong direction. In most
20 cases, we are seeing the worst numbers in the last two
21 decades. Only 8 percent of young Americans have seriously
22 considered joining the military. That is the lowest number
23 since the late 90s and is 50 percent lower than it was
24 during the deadliest days of the global war on terror.

25 Perhaps most alarming, today, only 23 percent of

1 Americans are even eligible to enlist. That is down from
2 29 percent only a few years ago. We are fighting a war on
3 two fronts right now. On the one side, we have a shrinking
4 number of Americans who meet the minimum qualifications for
5 military service.

6 On the other side, those who are qualified, have
7 historically low levels of interest in putting on a
8 uniform. This two front recruiting war is already
9 affecting our military readiness. The Army plans to shrink
10 by 12,000 soldiers next year, not because they want to and
11 not because they were told to.

12 The new national defense strategy does not call for a
13 smaller Army. The Army is cutting in strength because
14 there are simply not enough recruits to go around. And the
15 other services are experiencing similar struggles at
16 varying levels. Ensuring our military is sufficiently
17 manned is the most important job the subcommittee has.

18 I intend to spend most of today's hearing asking our
19 expert witnesses what you intend to do and how we can help
20 address these growing challenges. Thanks again to the
21 witnesses for appearing before the committee. I look
22 forward to your testimony.

23 And Madam Chair, I do think we are going to have a
24 vote in the middle of this. Are we are going to do a tag
25 team so that we can keep things moving? So excuse us if

1 one of us have to leave the room momentarily. Thank you.

2 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you very much, Senator
3 Tillis. I would now like to call on Secretary Cisneros.

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1 STATEMENT OF HON. GILBERT CISNEROS JR., UNDER
2 SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PERSONNEL AND READINESS

3 Mr. Cisneros: Chairwoman Gillibrand, Ranking Member
4 Tillis, and members of the Personnel subcommittee, thank
5 you for the opportunity to testify before you today. We
6 are here to discuss the Department's greatest strength, our
7 people.

8 We are proud to represent the 3.3 million
9 servicemembers and DOD civilians who defend our Nation
10 every day and their families who serve alongside them. One
11 of Secretary Austin's earliest messages to the force made
12 clear that taking care of people is a National Security
13 imperative.

14 This Administration has shown both in their words and
15 actions, that DOD will invest in our greatest strategic
16 advantage. This commitment is evident in the Fiscal Year
17 2023 defense budget request and our personnel policy
18 efforts. While many personal -- personnel priorities are
19 reflected in the budget request, I will focus my remarks on
20 a few priority areas.

21 First, recruiting, economic security, support to
22 military families, Independent Review Commission on Sexual
23 Assault in the Military, or IRC, and suicide. To build and
24 maintain our global competitive advantage, we must recruit
25 quality applicants in an ever changing landscape. The

1 Department is in fierce competition for skilled, relevant,
2 and innovative talent. The labor market, exasperated by
3 the effects of the pandemic and the military, civilian
4 divide, creates a challenging recruiting environment.

5 You will hear from the services later today, but my
6 team and I are working closely with them to leverage all
7 authorities, resources, and tools to address these
8 challenges. The pay raise of 4.6 percent in the budget
9 request will enable recruiting, will appropriately
10 compensate our workforce, and support the overall economic
11 security of service members and their families.

12 I cannot stress this enough, the economic security of
13 our service members is critical to readiness, and in total,
14 the current military compensation and benefits package is
15 fair and compares favorably with the private sector. To
16 remain competitive, we must keep pace with private sector
17 wage, or keep pace with private sector wage growth, which
18 this pay raise does.

19 We are addressing rising housing costs by temporarily
20 adjusting the basic allowance for housing in high cost
21 areas, and thanks to your leadership, we are implementing
22 the basic needs allowance with the first payment scheduled
23 to go out in January 2023.

24 Our military families are vital to the readiness of
25 our force. We are broadening employment support to

1 military spouses by expanding the Military Spouse
2 Employment Partnership Job Search Portal. We are working
3 with all 50 States to improve State laws to ease
4 occupational license portability.

5 Likewise, the Department is addressing access to
6 childcare by increasing staff hiring, applying the \$15 per
7 hour Federal minimum wage to childcare workers, and
8 providing service members fee assistance to offset the cost
9 of in-home childcare. Taking care of our people goes
10 beyond compensation. We must eliminate sexual assault and
11 harassment to preserve readiness and support of a resilient
12 and cohesive force.

13 The entire Department continues to work to implement
14 the IRC's recommendations. Our budget request of \$489
15 million will enable us to invest in prevention to eliminate
16 those wrongs. We are committed to making cultural change
17 at every installation worldwide to tackle this problem.

18 We are also steadfast in our commitment to suicide
19 prevention, and the well-being of service members and their
20 families, especially in light of the recent incidents
21 involving those assigned to the USS George Washington.
22 They are tragedies and we are working to learn more and to
23 ensure the Navy has every resource they need. We are
24 taking a public health approach, targeting the various
25 underlying risk factors and mental health stressors.

1 We are enhancing protective measures such as social
2 connections, coping skills and safety, and we are working
3 to address the shortage of mental health providers, which
4 is a national -- nationwide problem. This includes
5 providing care for anyone who needs it, whether this is in
6 our direct care system or using our private sector network.
7 One last issue. I would like to highlight our efforts in
8 the diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility space.

9 Enhancing the DEIA across our Department maximizes our
10 ability to recruit and retain top talent. Secretary Austin
11 recently designated me as the Chief Diversity and Inclusion
12 Officer for the Department. In this role, I will continue
13 to bring about long term changes and work to support the
14 factors that promote racial, ethnic, and gender diversity,
15 and inclusion.

16 I will take steps to ensure our total force has an
17 opportunity to achieve their professional goals and is a
18 cohesive and ready force that reflects the diversity of our
19 Nation. I shared a few of our major initiatives in my
20 remarks today, but I would like -- I would also like to
21 mention an approaching milestone.

22 Next year, we will celebrate the 50th anniversary of
23 the all-volunteer force. When this country eliminated the
24 draft, we did not imagine the success the all-volunteer
25 force would have in creating the most educated,

1 professional, and lethal military force in history.

2 As we look to the next 50 years, it is imperative that
3 we do not take what makes our military unparalleled and
4 unmatched for granted, our people. Thank you for your
5 continued support of our service members and their
6 families. We look forward to your questions.

7 [The prepared statement of Mr. Cisneros follows, Ms.
8 Penrod, Mr. Smith, and Ms. Foster:]

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1 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you very much, Mr.
2 Secretary. Secretary Cisneros, Section 1506 of the 2020
3 Defense -- 2022 Defense Bill requires you and the DOD Chief
4 Information Officer to assess the feasibility and
5 advisability of creating a national cyber academy to train
6 future civilians and military personnel for Federal service
7 in cyber information or related fields throughout the
8 Federal Government.

9 The assessment must be completed by this fall. Do you
10 believe that the national cyber academy would help us
11 obtain for civilian or military service the cyber talent we
12 need to meet national defense objectives over the next two
13 decades?

14 And while creating a national cyber academy is a long
15 term enterprise, in the near term, what do you think of
16 creating an RTC scholarship to serve as a program for
17 civilian students throughout the Nation, partnering with
18 appropriate colleges and universities in exchange for a
19 civilian service commitment?

20 Mr. Cisneros: Thank you for that question, Senator.
21 You know, cyber is one of the areas that I know all the
22 services, both on the civilian and the uniformed side, are
23 -- as I mentioned in my remarks, in a competitive,
24 competing for talent, you know, with the private sector, we
25 need more of these individuals. We are trying to recruit

1 the best and the brightest. I have spoken with the Chief
2 Information Officer.

3 They actually have led on this report. We are there
4 to support them. But we think anything that we can do that
5 will bring more people into Government service, hopefully
6 within the Department of Defense as well -- you know, we
7 are looking at all opportunities and anything that we can
8 do that would kind of help improve that and make it better.

9 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you. Ms. Foster, the
10 Department of Military Service has continued to implement
11 the recommendations of the President's Independent Review
12 Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military, particularly
13 those that address prevention, victim care, and command
14 culture and climate. Most of these recommendations do not
15 require legislation.

16 Nevertheless, we expect the Department to implement
17 these recommendations as quickly as possible within --
18 including within the reserve components. Please provide us
19 with an update on the Department's implementation and the
20 timeline for expected completion.

21 And do you expect to implement every one of the IRC's
22 recommendations, and if not, which are still under review?

23 Ms. Foster: Senator, thank you so much for that
24 question. As you know, implementing all 82 IRC
25 recommendations is a priority of Secretary Austin and all

1 senior leadership at the Department of Defense. In the
2 interest of time, I would like to provide a few highlights
3 on the prevention work that we are doing and the response
4 workforce.

5 So on the prevention workforce, as you know, one of
6 the key recommendations of the IRC was to stand up a
7 dedicated and specialized violence prevention workforce
8 that would look at addressing not only sexual assault and
9 harassment, but also suicide, domestic violence, child
10 abuse.

11 And so one of the things that we have done is
12 established the prevention workforce model, which is
13 essentially the infrastructure that will support this new
14 workforce, which we are building from the ground up. And
15 when we look at this workforce, we have to think, where are
16 these personnel going to be? What special skills will they
17 possess to do their job? What kind of training and
18 continuing education do they need?

19 What kind of credentials do they need to ensure that
20 this is truly a professional and standardized workforce?
21 So that is what we are doing on the prevention side. On
22 the response side, we are working really closely with the
23 services to redesign how we staff resource and
24 professionalize our response workforce so that we can
25 ensure that our victims are getting all of the care and

1 support that they need.

2 That includes things like eliminating collateral
3 duties so they can focus exclusively on this work. It
4 means looking at taking this out of the chain of command so
5 that there is no bias in the process. And we are working
6 very closely with the services on developing those
7 workforce studies right now that will allow us to implement
8 this.

9 And I am happy to provide you additional information
10 about other recommendations or your staff at another time.

11 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you very much. Dr. Smith,
12 the Personnel subcommittee recently held a hearing on
13 suicide prevention and behavioral health issues. At that
14 hearing, we heard from both DOD and outside expert
15 witnesses about the shortage of behavioral health providers
16 in DOD and in the Nation as a whole.

17 We continue to see increasing suicide rates in the
18 services, and we hear from constituents about problems
19 accessing behavioral health care, both for service members
20 and their families. This has become particularly acute
21 during the pandemic. Dr. Smith, what can be done to
22 increase access to behavioral health care?

23 What is DOD doing now and planning on doing in the
24 future to address the shortage of behavioral health care
25 needed by our military personnel and their families? We

1 also continue to hear that some of -- some do not avail
2 themselves of behavioral health services because of the
3 stigma attached seeking that type of health care. What is
4 being done and what can be -- more can be done to reduce
5 stigma of seeking behavioral health?

6 Mr. Smith: Thank you, Senator Gillibrand, for that
7 question.

8 [Technical problems.]

9 Mr. Smith: -- we are also adding psychiatric PAs,
10 along with nurse practitioners and licensed mental health
11 counselors, family and marriage therapists. We have also
12 started reviewing all initial appointments to make sure
13 that we are matching the needs of the individual to the
14 right level of provider to make sure that they are not
15 mismatched once they make their first appointment.

16 We have also, as I think you are aware, significantly
17 increased total behavioral health and have a goal to
18 increase another 63,500 visits over the next year. Now,
19 tele-behavioral health is truly contingent on the consent
20 of the individual and that the provider thinks that is the
21 right modality.

22 But we think that that is going to help increase
23 availability. I will point out that most of our NTFs meet
24 the access to care standards that we have set. And
25 actually, internally, we have a standard of 15 days. Most

1 are aware of the 28 day, but on average, across the system,
2 we are running at about 13.6 days.

3 But there are clearly exceptions that occur on a
4 monthly basis at various locations, and that is part of
5 where we hope the staffing model will help on that. You
6 mentioned the issue of stigma. We are working with PNR and
7 the rest of the Department to look at all of our
8 instructions to make sure that we review them and remove
9 any stigmatizing language that may be in them.

10 And I hope the fact that there is an increasing demand
11 signal for behavioral health is an indication that some of
12 our efforts are actually working. But I might defer to
13 some of my other colleagues to see if there are additional
14 issues to add to that.

15 Mr. Cisneros: Senator, I will just add on the stigma.
16 That is something that we have really been focusing on.

17 The Deputy Secretary holds the DWC, the Deputy
18 Workforce Council, where this has definitely been a topic
19 that has come up for discussion, where, you know, we are
20 trying to convince Commanders and everyone not to overreact
21 when somebody comes up with a problem that -- [technical
22 problems] -- says, you know, hey, I need help, I need
23 support. That is not a reason to take away their security
24 clearance.

25 So we have been discussing this all. All the services

1 are on board. It is something that we are working towards
2 to really kind of get it out there to really just
3 destigmatize it and really mean what we say, is like mental
4 health is health, and that people should have the support
5 to come forward when they need to discuss their mental
6 health.

7 Senator Tillis: Thank you, Senator Gillibrand.
8 Again, thank you all for being here. Ms. Foster, and
9 Secretary Cisneros and I spoke about this in my office
10 yesterday, with the IRC recommend -- the implementation,
11 you know, originally it was a shorter timeline, and Senator
12 Gillibrand was gracious to have a two year implementation
13 timeline. But in each of the service lines, this is going
14 to be a complex process.

15 And I know, Secretary Cisneros, I believe you said
16 that you would be having a program office, or a program
17 plan more or less put in place over the next month or so.
18 It is less of a question and more of an encouragement that
19 as you get that plan together, I think it would be
20 important to report back to this committee your progress
21 and any of the milestones that are slipping to the right
22 and the reasons why, so that we don't have to be reactive
23 when you come before the committee and report that maybe
24 you have ran into a few challenges for making the timeline,
25 and then what more we can do to potentially facilitate any

1 of the problems or challenges you may be running into.

2 Ms. Foster: Senator, absolutely. We would be more
3 than happy to engage with you on this. As you said, it is
4 quite complex. We are implementing 82 recommendations that
5 cover sort of the full spectrum of the Department. But I
6 think what we have done is we have built accountability and
7 evaluation into the process to ensure precisely what you
8 describe that we don't fall off track.

9 One of the ways in which we have done that is we are
10 building an Outcome Metrics Evaluation Report, which will
11 allow the Department to track progress on each of those
12 recommendations, recognizing that for some of those
13 recommendations, there is -- you know, it is not just done,
14 not done. There are many data points along the way.

15 And what we are doing with that report is that will
16 then come forward to the Deputy's Workforce Council, which
17 is chaired by the Deputy Secretary of Defense and the Vice
18 Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

19 That will come forward to that group on a quarterly
20 basis. And anywhere that we are falling behind, anywhere
21 where it looks like we are off track, that gives the senior
22 leadership of the Department an opportunity to engage with
23 all of the services and say, hey, what is happening here?
24 Why aren't we making progress?

25 Do you need additional resources? Do you need

1 additional authorities? And I think we would welcome
2 having that conversation with Congress as well. You have
3 been critical partners for us on this, and so we would like
4 to continue that conversation.

5 Senator Tillis: Thank you. Secretary Cisneros, the
6 DOD Equity Action Plan that was issued a few weeks ago.
7 Can you give me an idea of what specific programs or
8 actions are going to follow as a result of that action
9 plan?

10 Mr. Cisneros: Thank you for that, Senator. Look, I
11 think that we want to ensure that everybody has
12 opportunity, regardless of their sexual -- gender, the
13 color of their skin, that they are able to given an
14 opportunity within the Department of Defense to achieve and
15 to succeed, and also to do this within our DOD schools as
16 well, to celebrate the diversity of our families, of our
17 service members and their families that serve in the
18 Department of Defense to make sure that we celebrate the
19 many cultures that make up the Department.

20 But our equity plan is really about making sure that
21 there is opportunity for those that want it and to go out
22 there and going to work to achieve it, and really creating
23 that environment where we celebrate the diversity of our
24 force and that we are getting out there to ensure that we
25 know a diverse and integrated force is going to be stronger

1 warfighting.

2 Senator Tillis: I understand the objection --
3 objective. I think it is laudable. But I am getting more
4 into the implementation. I mean, would -- could we foresee
5 quotas, or I mean, how exactly would you implement this?

6 Mr. Cisneros: No, sir. We have no quotas. There is
7 no idea or thought of quotas. Again, when I say it is
8 about creating opportunity to make sure that everybody has
9 a fair shake and that everybody is given the same
10 opportunity to succeed. That is really what we are going
11 after, and that is what I have always talked about what
12 diversity is. Diversity is about creating opportunity, and
13 that is what I am working towards within the Department of
14 Defense as we move forward with this.

15 Senator Tillis: Okay. Thank you, Dr. Smith. I had
16 this discussion with Secretary Cisneros in my office
17 yesterday. I think we have got an inherent conflict when
18 we talk about removing the stigma. On the one hand, we are
19 rightfully asking men and women to come forward, seek help
20 and provision care to them.

21 On the other hand, and you have heard me state my
22 concern for some of the inflows of potential recruits, you
23 have a potential recruit come in who may have at some point
24 in time prior to seeking a career in the armed services
25 have behavioral health challenges, maybe anxiety or been

1 administered drugs. It is my understanding right now that
2 is a disqualifying event. Is that true?

3 Mr. Smith: Thank you for the question, Senator. It
4 depends on -- [technical problems] -- we certainly allow
5 folks who have had issues in the past, into the services.
6 If they are on medications, we require, in certain areas --
7 [technical problems] -- on those medications. But I can
8 certainly provide for the record more detail.

9 Senator Tillis: Yes, I would appreciate that. I
10 just, you know, I am just wanting to make sure we have
11 consistency over the life cycle, from the point in time
12 somebody is considering entering the service to the point
13 in time somebody exits and transitions to veteran status.
14 And I think those are just slight turning of the dial that
15 would be helpful for the overall challenge that we have
16 with removing the stigma and making sure people get the
17 treatment that they need.

18 And, Mister, or Secretary Cisneros, if I get a chance,
19 I wanted to go back to a discussion we had about childcare.
20 But we have two members here. I may have an opportunity in
21 another round. Senator Warren.

22 Senator Warren: Thank you very much. So we are here
23 to discuss the Pentagon's budget request for personnel
24 costs. In other words, the part of the budget that pays
25 for the people who make our military run. And some of

1 those people are Federal employees, but some of those
2 people are contractors.

3 Now, studies have shown that outsourcing can result in
4 the Pentagon paying double or even triple what we pay for
5 Federal employees to do the same job. The Defense Business
6 Board recommended cutting those contracts to help the
7 Department save \$125 billion. Now, contractors are always
8 going to be part of our defense workforce. But making good
9 decisions about when to outsource requires good data.

10 Secretary Cisneros, your office is required by Federal
11 law to help track data on the cost of contractors used by
12 the Pentagon. So let me just start with the basics, how
13 many contractors work for the Department of Defense?

14 Mr. Cisneros: Senator, thank you for that. But
15 regrettably, I do not have that information with me, but I
16 can take that for the record on the number of contractors
17 that we have on.

18 Senator Warren: Is it a publicly available piece of
19 information?

20 Mr. Cisneros: That I am not sure of, ma'am. I would
21 have to get back to you on --

22 Senator Warren: Well, let me put it this way. I
23 can't find it, and I looked hard on your website. I called
24 people. I tried to figure this out. And I think that is
25 the problem. The law explicitly requires your office to

1 develop guidance to track this information.

2 And I don't know how we can justify the kind of
3 spending the Pentagon asks for if we don't even know basic
4 things like how many people we have on contract and make
5 that number publicly available to all of us. There is no
6 doubt that you are required to collect it. I would just
7 like to see it and see it reported.

8 Now, we also know that it can be incredibly expensive
9 when the Department outsources its work for services like
10 administrative support, for food services, for deployed
11 troops, for weapons maintenance, or even for management
12 consulting. And the costs for these have grown enormously
13 over the past 20 years.

14 So that last year the Department spent \$214 billion on
15 service contracting. One of the big ways that the
16 Department estimates future costs is through five year
17 spending plans that lay out expectations for how much
18 different parts of the Pentagon are going to need in
19 various areas.

20 So, Secretary Cisneros, how much does the Department
21 expect to spend on service contracts over the next five
22 years?

23 Mr. Cisneros: Senator, it is my understanding that we
24 don't project contractor costs the way that we do with our
25 military and civilian workforce requirements. However, we

1 must take a, I believe you are right, a total force
2 approach and kind of looked at contracted services. And I
3 can commit that I will take this concern back to the
4 Comptroller and the COOP to make sure that it is addressed.

5 Senator Warren: Well, I appreciate your doing that.
6 You know, it shouldn't take somebody asking this question.
7 This should just be part of the planning that is already
8 baked in. We can't have good planning if we are not
9 looking at long term costs. And I got to say, five years
10 doesn't seem like hugely long term, but at least a start in
11 the right direction.

12 I think the taxpayers, and those of us who do
13 oversight, should know how much money the Pentagon expects
14 to spend on costly areas of the budget. And I think this
15 committee should know that. And I am going to be following
16 up on requests for information. I appreciate your
17 willingness to bring this forward.

18 Look, we have a defense industry where these
19 contractors have a long history of lining their pockets at
20 taxpayer expense. And if we are not collecting the data
21 and making smart decisions, then we are going to just
22 continue to see runaway spending without more effectiveness
23 in making our military work. So, thank you very much.

24 Senator Tillis: And, Secretary Cisneros, if you are
25 able to provide that information, I think it would be

1 interesting to stratify between sort of ongoing long term
2 positions, project oriented special services, things that
3 are unique to a specific project or outcome that roll over.

4 I think that is a better way to look at it because,
5 one, you can understand that we continue to be contracted.
6 And the other one, you can look at whether or not that is a
7 valid basis for bringing it inside. Senator Hawley.

8 Senator Hawley: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Dr. Smith,
9 can I start with you? Earlier this week, the VA announced
10 that it would presume service connection for nine
11 respiratory cancers that were resulting from or potentially
12 connected to burn pit exposure. This committee, as you may
13 know, held a hearing on this topic back in March.

14 Can you give me the DOD's estimate for the number of
15 individuals who would qualify for the presumption of
16 service, really the connection? Do you have any sense of
17 that?

18 Mr. Smith: Thank you for the question. I do not --
19 oh, thank you, sorry. I do not have an actual number. I
20 know that the definition is rare, means 6 per 100,000, I
21 believe. But I would have to come back. And yes, they
22 did. It is nine conditions related to high particulate
23 matter and --

24 Senator Hawley: And that brings the total, that the
25 VA has now designated as presumed service connection, to

1 what?

2 Mr. Smith: 12, I believe, relative to particulate
3 matter. Sinusitis, rhinitis and asthma was also made
4 presumptive, I want to say, three months or so ago.

5 Senator Hawley: Okay. Could you come back to me on
6 the numbers such as you -- or could you look into that and
7 get back to me for the record?

8 Mr. Smith: And the idea would be for us to predict
9 what we think the numbers would be --

10 Senator Hawley: Yes, given the likely exposure since
11 2001, give me some sense of the scope, the universe that we
12 are looking at here.

13 Mr. Smith: Yes, sir.

14 Senator Hawley: Great, thank you. Ms. Penrod,
15 shifting to you. This committee heard earlier this month
16 testimony relating to the tragedy of servicemember suicide.
17 I know the Department has been attentive to this, but the
18 GAO has reported a statistically significant increase, I am
19 sure you know, in active component suicide from 2015 to
20 2020. And that is true across all of the services. Let me
21 just ask for your view about why this issue persists,
22 despite DOD's attempts to address it?

23 Senator Warren: Senator, I am going to defer to Ms.
24 Foster --

25 Senator Hawley: That is fine. Go ahead. Sure, go

1 ahead, Ms. Foster.

2 Ms. Foster: Senator, thank you so much for the
3 question. And let me just say, first off, that these are
4 tragedies that have absolutely no place in our in our
5 force, and we need to continue our concerted efforts to get
6 after this. I think the reason that this issue continues
7 to persist is suicide is the result of a number of
8 different complex factors, so psychological, environmental,
9 social, behavioral.

10 And as a result of that, there is no one single fix
11 that we can have to address this. And, you know, this is
12 not just a problem within the Department of Defense. It is
13 a problem within the civilian community as well. But we
14 are taking a public health approach to urgently get after
15 this issue, and we are doing that through a few different
16 ways.

17 One of the ways in which I will highlight is, we are
18 standing up a dedicated and specialized violence prevention
19 workforce that is intended to address those risk factors
20 that we see that exacerbate this issue and enhance some of
21 the protective factors that are critical to getting after
22 this.

23 Senator Hawley: Got it. Thank you. That is helpful.
24 What do you think, in your view, the weak points are in the
25 Department's current efforts to address this issue?

1 Ms. Foster: Senator, I think that the science is
2 evolving rapidly on this issue. And so we are following
3 the emerging science and data on this, to address this, and
4 taking that integrated primary prevention and public health
5 approach to this issue. We absolutely have more work to
6 do, but we are moving quickly to take these steps.

7 Senator Hawley: Well, I am sure we will be talking
8 more about this. I mean, it is a huge problem, as you say.
9 It is unfortunately a growing problem. It does span both
10 the civilian and the military worlds, the service worlds.
11 And it is clearly something that we need to address in both
12 of those contexts.

13 So, I look forward to working with you more on that.
14 Mr. Cisneros -- Mr. Secretary, if I could just shift you in
15 my remaining moments here. As you might imagine, I have
16 received a lot of communication from constituents who are
17 concerned about military discharges as a result of the
18 COVID-19 vaccine mandate.

19 Can you tell me how many servicemembers, within each
20 individual service and across them, have been discharged as
21 a result of the vaccine mandate?

22 Mr. Cisneros: Thank you for that question, Senator.
23 You know, ensuring that all our service members are ready
24 and able to deploy and be part of our fighting force is an
25 important thing, and I know it is important to the

1 Secretary and a requirement that he has made.

2 In regards to the number of people that have been
3 discharged because of the COVID vaccine, I do not have that
4 exact number with me today, but that is something I can
5 take back for the record.

6 Senator Hawley: Great. Thank you very much. Can you
7 also find out what percentage across and within each
8 service were issued as a general discharge under honorable
9 conditions rather than an honorable discharge? Can you
10 find that out for me?

11 Mr. Cisneros: I can look into that, Senator.

12 Senator Hawley: Okay, great. And maybe you can tell
13 me this, how does the Department evaluate the character of
14 the discharge resulting from the vaccination requirement?

15 Mr. Cisneros: Well, right now, Senator, those that
16 are being discharged, if anyone is being discharged because
17 of refusal to take the vaccine, they are getting a, either
18 it is an honorable or the next level below that. And that
19 was dictated by the last NDAA that we followed, and so that
20 is what we have been doing.

21 Senator Hawley: And how do you distinguish, though,
22 between those two categories?

23 Mr. Cisneros: That, sir, is up to the services. They
24 process the discharges. They are the ones who make the
25 decision on the individual basis as to what is going on and

1 why it is an honorable or why it is not an honorable
2 discharge.

3 Senator Hawley: But surely, given that this is a very
4 widespread issue, and the numbers are pretty large, there
5 are some uniform criteria, I would think.

6 Mr. Cisneros: Sir, we have our -- we do. We have our
7 policy, the same policy for waivers and for whether it be
8 medical or for religious waivers. And that has been in
9 place for a while now. And that is the policy that we have
10 gone to the services and told them to make sure that they
11 are following these procedures. You know, with that, I
12 think Ms. Penrod can kind of give you a little bit more
13 detail on that.

14 Ms. Penrod: Sir, as with any discharge, a service
15 will look at the conditions around that discharge. So it
16 is not always straightforward. It could be other
17 circumstances with an individual case, and that is why we
18 need to -- it would be the services who would have to
19 answer that, why they would have a certain number of
20 honorable versus general discharges.

21 Senator Hawley: But am I right in thinking that when
22 it comes to this issue, I mean this distinction between an
23 honorable discharge or the general discharge under
24 honorable conditions, whereas it relates to COVID-19, there
25 is some set of uniform criteria that are governing these

1 decisions, right? I understand that you have to make a
2 case by case evaluation, but there are a lot of these cases
3 that are presenting the same basic sets of facts.

4 Ms. Penrod: Yes, but the services are looking at each
5 case individually. So they -- that is what they do. They
6 review these cases, and they look at all the circumstances
7 of the cases. That is not something we would be able to do
8 at our level.

9 Senator Hawley: Well, I understand that. I am just
10 trying to get the information. So I understand -- listen,
11 I am a lawyer. I mean, we assess -- the courts assess
12 cases on a case by case basis. That is what litigation
13 means. But you do it according to a standard rule. You
14 don't just make it up as you go along. I want to know what
15 the rule is, what the criteria -- does that make sense?

16 Mr. Cisneros: Yes, sir. And we do. We do have, you
17 know, procedures in place that have been there that govern
18 the waivers. And then, you know, as far as -- too, as far
19 as discharges go, there are procedures in place and
20 instructions that guide that. And that is kind of what the
21 services are following.

22 Senator Hawley: Can you give me that information?

23 Ms. Penrod: Sir, if I may. Sir, so it is really a
24 two-step process. If it is a religious accommodation, for
25 example. It is the -- up to the Department to determine

1 whether or not that is a sincerely held belief. In most
2 cases that is being passed. The individuals that have a
3 religious reason for not having the vaccine, that is
4 clearly passed.

5 The next step is, what is the impact to the health and
6 welfare of the service? Is there a safety issue? So that
7 is the next standard that they look at. For the services,
8 that is the standard that causes the concern, for the
9 safety and welfare of the service. And so those are the
10 standards.

11 Those are clear in policy. The procedures themselves
12 are different by service, and that is what we are reviewing
13 currently.

14 Senator Hawley: Got it. Thank you.

15 Senator Tuberville: Yes, thank you. I don't have any
16 other questions since mine has already been asked and
17 answered. But I will say this, my office -- I have got
18 five military bases in my State.

19 My office has been overwhelmed with phone calls and
20 letters. And some of these letters that I read are -- I
21 mean, break your heart about religious and health related
22 problems. I would say is as Senator Hawley said, you know,
23 we need to get some kind of relief from this. We need to
24 get somebody some answers so we can give our people answers
25 because it is all up in the air.

1 And, you know, people don't like their questions not
2 answered, especially when it is their livelihood. So I
3 would appreciate the same information you are going to --
4 Secretary, for Senator Hawley, and so we can pass that on
5 to our constituents. Thank you very much.

6 Mr. Cisneros: Thank you. We can provide that,
7 Senator.

8 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you. Both of you have an
9 opportunity for a second round, if you have more questions.
10 I am going to just ask one. Just last week, the Army
11 unveiled an expansive set of new policies aimed to create
12 one of the most consequential sets of quality of life
13 improvements ever for military parents, including expanded
14 leave and making it easier for pregnant soldiers to
15 continue their careers.

16 This new policy includes a 12 month exemption from
17 onerous military requirements such as postpartum body
18 composition, physical fitness testing, postpartum dress
19 uniforms, deferment from training and deployments, among
20 other things. This new policy also authorizes up to 42
21 days of convalescence leave after pregnancy loss and
22 authorizes parental leave for birth parents in the Army
23 Reserve and Army National Guard.

24 Secretary Cisneros and Ms. Penrod, what is your view
25 on this newly announced Army policy, and when you consider

1 requiring the other services to adopt a similar policy?

2 Mr. Cisneros: Senator, I think that when I saw the
3 message that they were coming out with this, I thought it
4 was great. And I think it is something that we definitely
5 encourage. You know, each service is different, each
6 services is trying different things.

7 I know the Navy for a while has granted leaves of
8 absence where service members could take time off, I think
9 up to like two years, you know, from active duty and then
10 come back after that. But we are for supporting anything
11 that is going to allow -- you know, improve our quality of
12 life of our service members and to make it better for them
13 and to make it more family oriented for them.

14 Ms. Penrod: Yes, Senator, thank you. What we do is
15 when a service announces a policy -- it is a very generous
16 policy. And again, we look at the support it provides the
17 family. We will then -- we always work and meet with the
18 other services and look at, well, how would you do this?
19 You know, what are the constraints for you to implement the
20 same? As Mr. Cisneros said, each culture is different.

21 And how would that impact readiness and mission of the
22 service? So this is something I think that each individual
23 service can speak to. But yes, when we see a great policy
24 or something that helps our service members, we absolutely
25 look at how can we expand that to the other services.

1 But once we have that information, if it looks like
2 something that all services can support, we usually do put
3 that in policy, you know, we will try to put that in
4 policy.

5 Senator Gillibrand: Great. And just one question for
6 Dr. Smith. This is something that Senator Tillis and I
7 have worked on. Last year's NDAA contained a provision
8 requiring independent analysis of recent changes to the
9 autism care demonstration program after families and
10 providers reported a myriad of concerns and disruptions in
11 care.

12 What is the status of the NASCM analysis? What --
13 will the analysis be complete before the end of the ACD on
14 January 1, 2024? And what will happen to the beneficiary
15 services when the ACD ends on January 1, 2024?

16 [Technical problems.]

17 Mr. Smith: -- we at least support, and think is very
18 reasonable to do. It is supposed to be -- we are -- we
19 want it to be done clearly before the end of the
20 demonstration. And relative to what will happen at the end
21 of the demonstration, that is still internal discussions,
22 and a decision has not been made on that. So I hope that
23 answers your question.

24 Senator Gillibrand: Any additional questions? Go
25 ahead, Senator Hawley.

1 Senator Hawley: Just one more. Back to the
2 vaccination issue. Prior to last year's NDAA, and you
3 referenced the change in discharge status and decisions
4 that we legislated. Prior to that enactment, how many
5 service members do you know were dishonorably discharged
6 because they were unwilling to get the COVID-19
7 vaccination?

8 Mr. Cisneros: Senator, I don't have that number in
9 front of me right now. And we can get that for the record
10 too. That may be a better question for the services when
11 the next round as well.

12 Senator Hawley: You will get it for me, though?

13 Mr. Cisneros: I will get it for you.

14 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you. Thank you to our
15 panel. Your testimony is extremely helpful. And if you
16 want to supplement it in any way, you have about a week to
17 do so. Thank you so much. And we invite the second panel
18 up. Welcome to our second panel. I will just invite you
19 in order of your seating. So, Lieutenant General Brito,
20 you are first. If you would like to start us off.

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1 STATEMENT OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL GARY BRITO, DEPUTY
2 CHIEF OF STAFF, G-1 UNITED STATES ARMY

3 General Brito: Good afternoon, Chairman Gillibrand,
4 Ranking Member Tillis, distinguished members of the
5 committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before
6 you on behalf of the men and women of the United States
7 Army. I have submitted a statement for the record, and I
8 would like to highlight a few points from it now. The
9 Army's number one priority is his people, our soldiers and
10 Army civilians, families and veterans soldiers for life.
11 Nothing is more important for our combat readiness.

12 Our personnel programs and initiatives are focused on
13 promoting a culture of cohesiveness, dignity, and respect,
14 and within a safe environment where every individual can
15 advance as far as their talents and skills and desires will
16 take them. Talent management initiatives, modernization
17 programs, and policy are transforming the Army's personnel
18 systems. Ongoing 21st century talent management initiatives
19 and actions help us attract, acquire, and retain a diverse
20 and talented force from across the Nation.

21 Our nearly 280,000 Army civilians are an integral part
22 of the Army team, providing unmatched talent in critical
23 areas. To further support them, we have expanded
24 professional development and educational opportunities,
25 have extended our sharp services to all Army civilians as

1 well. Personnel readiness -- personnel readiness also
2 means creating an installation and environment that allows
3 our soldiers and their families to thrive.

4 The Army is committed to quality of life priorities
5 that include quality housing, barracks, childcare, youth
6 services, and meaningful employment for our spouses.
7 Resiliency programs and initiatives aimed at harmful
8 behaviors and supported by Congress are critical to help us
9 combat sexual harassment, sexual assault, and factors that
10 contribute to suicide.

11 The Army's SHARP and suicide prevention training
12 curriculum have both been updated. In addition, the
13 Behavioral Health Pulse tool was fielded the last year to
14 provide leaders visibility over many facets of behavioral
15 health. Other initiatives, such as fatality review boards,
16 support from our cohesive assessment team, improve leader
17 training and more, are helping to address the issue of
18 suicide across the total Army.

19 The Army Soldier for Life program continues to support
20 soldiers, veterans, and their families. The retired
21 soldiers are important to the Army family. Soldier for
22 Life is working to ensure that States and territories are
23 aware of inbound transitioning soldiers and their families.
24 The people of the United States Army, these men and women
25 who serve our Nation both in and out of uniform, along with

1 their families, are our strength and what makes our Army
2 great.

3 A diverse, talented, strong, healthy, and resilient
4 force is a most important indicator of our overall combat
5 readiness. Putting our people first, as a priority and a
6 philosophy, will continue to drive everything we do and
7 contribute to the quality of life and combat readiness.

8 Chairwoman Gillibrand, Ranking Member Tillis, and
9 members of the committee, I thank you for your generous and
10 unwavering support of our talented soldiers, civilian
11 professionals, and their families, and I look forward to
12 your questions. Thank you, ma'am.

13 [The prepared statement of General Brito follows:]

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1 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you so much. Vice Admiral
2 Nowell.
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1 STATEMENT OF VICE ADMIRAL JOHN NOWELL, CHIEF OF NAVAL
2 PERSONNEL, UNITED STATES NAVY

3 Admiral Nowell: Chairwoman Gillibrand, Ranking Member
4 Tillis, and distinguished subcommittee members, thank you
5 for the opportunity to appear before you today and to talk
6 to you as the Navy's Chief of Naval Personnel on our
7 personnel policy programs and initiatives. It is my
8 distinct pleasure and privilege to represent the sailors
9 who were on watch 24/7 in every corner of the globe, above,
10 on, and below the surface of the seas.

11 The demands of strategic competition, now more than
12 ever, require that we remain well ahead of our adversaries
13 who are persistently challenging our traditional
14 warfighting dominance. To do this, we must continue to
15 enhance our asymmetric advantage, our people. We must
16 consistently attract, develop, and retain the world's most
17 talented and skilled Navy combat force.

18 While we remain committed to attracting the best
19 talent our Nation has to offer, we are beginning to witness
20 an increased competition for talent. As was mentioned in
21 the first panel, last month, the unemployment rate dropped
22 to 3.6 percent, while wages continue to grow, resulting in
23 a very strong labor demand in all markets nationwide.

24 While we are trending to meet our Fiscal Year 2022
25 accession mission at the aggregate level, we will do so by

1 reducing delay in entry program from historic norms, which
2 will be challenging to sustain. To remain competitive, we
3 will continue to leverage our etalent teams, our large
4 scale digital recruiting presence with our Forged by the
5 Sea marketing advertising strategy.

6 And we do reach all zip codes and will continue to not
7 only leverage this, but also enlistment bonuses in our
8 relentless effort to attract the diverse and skilled talent
9 that we need. We continue to invest in trained, resilient,
10 and educated sailors who can outthink, outdecide, and
11 outfight any potential adversary.

12 In particular, we are developing our sailor talent
13 through initiatives such as Ready Relevant Learning,
14 Warrior Toughness, and our Culture of Excellence campaign.
15 Ready Relevant Learning fundamentally changes the way our
16 sailors train, transforming an industrial era training
17 model into a modern, agile system with tailored career long
18 learning continuum for each sailor.

19 Warrior Toughness is a holistic approach to developing
20 the tools needed for sailors to optimize their performance
21 in even the most stressful circumstances. And our Culture
22 of Excellence promotes a force wide environment of respect
23 and resiliency for our sailors to thrive in the face of
24 personal and professional adversity.

25 Driven by the overarching goals of maximizing

1 warfighting excellence and readiness, the Navy wide
2 campaign is directly led by the CNO, who leverages a Navy
3 leader development framework, which employs a data driven
4 look across all of our 17 warfighting communities with a
5 regular drumbeat.

6 Building upon the retention gains of the last few
7 years, we are committed to keeping the right talent and
8 experience in the right pay grades and specialties, while
9 remaining mindful of the current economic trends and how
10 they influence our sailors' career decisions. To enhance
11 retention, we continue to optimize our talent management
12 systems to provide greater flexibility to sailors in career
13 choice, development training, and assignments.

14 Our detailing marketplace assignment policy, which
15 will replace our existing seashore flow model, offers a
16 wide range of monetary and non-monetary incentives to
17 sailors primarily in sea intensive ratings right now to
18 encourage them to serve longer where we need them most at
19 sea. Commitment to continued investment in our sailors is
20 necessary to sustain a fleet. And we appreciate your
21 strong support on our compensation to include vital,
22 special, and incentive pays and bonuses, which now more
23 than ever, are needed to target specific skills.

24 And finally, transforming the Navy's internal
25 personnel business processes remains a top priority to

1 ensure we are delivering world class HR services to our
2 sailors and their families. Again, I think Congress, for
3 your support there. I remain inspired each and every day
4 by our sailors. I know that you do, too. And each and
5 every American can be proud of them and their families. I
6 look forward to your questions.

7 [The prepared statement of Admiral Nowell follows:]

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1 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you very much, Vice
2 Admiral. Next is Lieutenant General David Ottignon, Deputy
3 Commandant of the Marine Corps for Manpower and Reserve
4 Affairs.

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1 STATEMENT OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL DAVID OTTIGNON,
2 DEPUTY COMMANDANT FOR MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS, UNITED
3 STATES MARINE CORPS

4 General Ottignon: Chairwoman Gillibrand, Ranking
5 Member Tillis, and distinguished members of the
6 subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear
7 before you today to discuss your Marines. I have submitted
8 a written statement, so my opening comments will be brief.

9 We have to decisively stepped out on a talent
10 management design and modernization effort to increase the
11 lethality of your Marine Corps to fight and win when called
12 upon by the Nation. Talent Management 2030 was released in
13 support of the Commandant's Force Design Plan.

14 Accomplishing the course force design will not be possible
15 without highly skilled, mature, and mentally tough Marines.

16 The strategic plans are interdependent and
17 foundational to the success of the Marine Corps. The end
18 product will be a force that is better equipped to fight
19 and win in an increasingly high tech, complex operating
20 environment. The statutory authorities that Congress has
21 granted has streamlined some of these efforts, and we thank
22 you for your support. Other initiatives will require more
23 study and take time to implement, and we remain committed
24 to getting this right.

25 The way we recruit and retain our focus areas in

1 Talent Management 2030, and while we are on track to make
2 our accession goals, this is arguably the most challenging
3 recruiting year since the inception of the all-volunteer
4 force. Looking forward, we will need to be innovative and
5 adapt to these challenges and be agile in our approach.

6 I would like to highlight our commitment to the
7 implementation of the recommendations from the Independent
8 Review Commission approved by the Secretary of Defense.
9 Working closely with the Department of the Navy and the
10 Office of the Secretary of Defense, we are moving out
11 quickly to establish the Office of Special Trial Counsel,
12 as well as additive preventive workforce, and enhance
13 victim care, and support improvements.

14 We will continue to keep Congress informed as we make
15 progress. My final point today is that taking care of
16 Marines and their family remains paramount.

17 We continue to invest both in prevention programs to
18 reduce destructive behaviors across the force, family
19 readiness programs like parental leave, childcare, spousal
20 employment, and our gold standard Exceptional Family Member
21 Program, are essential to the readiness of our force. We
22 know that we recruit Marines, but we retain the family.

23 I am proud to represent your Marines, their families,
24 and our civilian employees, and I look forward to answering
25 your questions.

[The prepared statement of General Ottignon follows:]

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1 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you very much. Now I would
2 like to hear from Ms. Gwendoline R. DeFilippi, Assistant
3 Deputy Chief of Staff of the Air Force for Manpower,
4 Personnel and Services.

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1 STATEMENT OF GWENDOLYN DEFILIPPI, ACTING DEPUTY CHIEF
2 OF STAFF FOR MANPOWER, PERSONNEL AND SERVICES, UNITED
3 STATES AIR FORCE

4 Ms. DeFilippi: Chairman Gillibrand, Ranking Member
5 Tillis, distinguished members of this committee, thank you
6 for the opportunity to appear before you to talk about our
7 Airmen and families. Winning a 21st century fight requires
8 adaptable, resilient, innovative Airmen, comfortable
9 leading and flourishing as members of a diverse team.

10 The Air Force will leverage a 21st century tailor of
11 talent management force development and care solution
12 ecosystem to develop Airmen who can operate and succeed in
13 a complex environment. Our Airmen and families are our
14 greatest competitive advantage. We buy things, we invest
15 in people.

16 Over the past year, the Department of the Air Force
17 continued its focus on providing the absolute best care for
18 our Airmen, guardians, and their families, while taking all
19 steps necessary to create an inclusive environment where
20 everyone has the opportunity to reach his or her full
21 potential. The Department recognizes that despite strong
22 efforts over many years, we have not made significant,
23 measurable progress in preventing or reducing the number of
24 sexual assault cases.

25 We remain committed to efforts to combat sexual

1 assault in the ranks and are open to piloting research or
2 data informed prevention strategies that can reduce and
3 eventually eliminate sexual assault from within our ranks.

4 This year, the Department of the Air Force began
5 implementing the Independent Review Commission's
6 recommendations, increasing our full time response
7 advocates, adding additional oversight to support victims,
8 and increasing advocacy and support to sexual harassment
9 victims.

10 In response to the Department of Defense's concerning
11 trend -- suicide trends, the Department of the Air Force
12 established prevention priorities for 2022 that align with
13 the White House strategy for reducing military and veteran
14 suicides and nest within the prevention strategies
15 established by the Centers for Disease Control and
16 Prevention.

17 While we recognize risk factors for suicide are highly
18 personal and often a result of interconnected issues, our
19 analysis supports those leading indicators identified by
20 experts in the field to include relationship issues, stigma
21 towards seeking mental health care, and access to lethal
22 means.

23 We have taken targeted measures to address these areas
24 of concern. In order to provide support to Airmen who may
25 be hesitant to come forward, the Department of the Air

1 Force launched online Family Suicide Prevention Training,
2 and we have trained over 20,000 family members.

3 Additionally, in order to address access to lethal
4 means, we are working towards building a culture where safe
5 storage is commonplace, putting time and distance between
6 an individual in distress and access to lethal methods such
7 as firearms or medications. Recognizing a resilient
8 environment for our families is also important. We
9 strengthen efforts to manage our childcare programs more
10 effectively while increasing capacity within the system.

11 Further, the Department continues to assist Airmen,
12 guardians, and families with multiple solutions to support
13 financial readiness and opportunities to promote food
14 security across the force. Thank you for the recent basic
15 needs allowance legislation to better support the well-
16 being of those for whom food insecurity may be an issue.
17 The Air Force is balancing manpower readiness and force
18 modernization amid tight fiscal demands.

19 Our end strength demands -- our military and strength
20 reductions in Fiscal Year 2023 are commensurate with
21 proposed force structure and divestitures. In order to
22 execute the planned Fiscal Year 2023 manpower reductions
23 and not face involuntary force management actions, the Air
24 Force likely will end Fiscal Year 2022 between 1 and 2
25 percent below the congressionally mandated in strength.

1 Although the Department continues to experience high
2 retention overall, we are seeing challenges in critical
3 specialty capabilities we need future Airmen to have.
4 Therefore, we have focused on deliberate programs to
5 attract and retain military and civilian cyber talent as
6 well as other STEM areas of expertise. We appreciate the
7 talent management flexibilities you have provided to assist
8 us in these efforts.

9 To enhance our talent pool, our United States Air
10 Force Academy has taken measures to ensure all cadets take
11 courses with focus on cyber. In addition, through the
12 civilian premier college intern program, we recruit
13 approximately 500 diverse students annually who have -- and
14 have met our goal that 75 percent hold STEM degrees.

15 We understand it is equally important to execute
16 retention programs for these critical skills, so we
17 continue to utilize different career and developmental
18 flexibilities as well as targeted monetary incentives in an
19 effort to retain this talent. The Air Force achieved its
20 Fiscal Year 2021 recruiting goals, and we hope to do so
21 again in Fiscal Year 2022. But we may miss a goal based on
22 increased competition for talent, as well as continued
23 decline in propensity and eligibility of young Americans.

24 In conclusion, success against a peer threat demands
25 we maintain asymmetric advantage in the quality, education,

1 and training of our Airmen, and we are investing
2 accordingly. We have made progress, but the Air Force
3 still has work to do before we have an environment that
4 allows all Airmen and their families to reach their full
5 potential.

6 We continue to pursue every practical solution that
7 moves us closer to making this environment a reality, and
8 we look forward to continuing to partner with Congress in
9 our endeavors to do so.

10 I thank you for your continued support of your
11 Department of the Air Force and your Airmen, both military
12 and civilian, and the families who support them. Thank
13 you, and I look forward to your questions.

14 [The prepared statement of Ms. DeFilippi follows:]

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1 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you. Ms. Patricia Mulcahy,
2 Chief Human Capital Officer, United States Space Force.

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1 STATEMENT OF PATRICIA MULCAHY, DEPUTY CHIEF OF SPACE
2 OPERATIONS FOR PERSONNEL, UNITED STATES SPACE FORCE

3 Ms. Mulcahy: Chairwoman Gillibrand, Ranking Member
4 Tillis, distinguished members of the committee, thank you
5 for the leadership and support you have provided to the
6 United States Space Force, our Guardians, and their
7 families. It is a privilege to come before you today
8 alongside my service colleagues.

9 The cornerstone of our Space Force is our people. We
10 are purposefully building a service of Guardians capable of
11 securing the space domain, integrating deterrence, and
12 enabling the joint war fight today and into the future. To
13 attract, recruit, and develop this talent we need, we
14 crafted and published the Guardian Ideal, our human capital
15 strategic plan. Our approach is grounded in our values of
16 character, above all, connections through unity, commitment
17 to the profession, and the courage to be bold.

18 The Guardian Ideal modernizes our approach to
19 recruitment and retention, fosters connection among
20 Guardians, puts a focus on enabling a digital force, and
21 integrates wellness and resiliency. With our small
22 numbers, we believe it vital to strengthen the diverse
23 teams comprised of both uniformed and civilian guardians
24 with a tailored talent management approach. We are
25 competing for talent with the well-paid and dynamic space

1 industry.

2 Part of our vision to grow and sustain our active and
3 reserve force is by creating a new space component that
4 provides greater flexibility for our Guardians and
5 Commanders in the field. This approach could ensure our
6 members do not have to choose between their military
7 careers and their personal lives by encouraging continued
8 participation.

9 The space component would extend the continuum of
10 service, enable us to recruit and retain the exquisite,
11 highly technical force we need in an efficient and
12 effective and fiscally sound manner. Implementation would
13 be a groundbreaking approach to military human capital
14 management and build a component that improves warfighting
15 readiness with a consistent, coherent means to employ the
16 force.

17 Over the past two years, we secured a number of wins
18 for our Nation. I am proud of the more than 13,500
19 military and civilian Guardians who joined our ranks from
20 the Air Force, the Army, the Navy, and the Marine Corps, as
21 well as from across America. We launched recruiting
22 initiatives to ensure we are competitive for the STEM
23 talent we need.

24 We instituted improved interview questions to help us
25 determine the best fit for our future Guardians and to

1 reach into a more diverse applicant pool. We have
2 finalized our foundational warfighting competencies that
3 capture what all Guardians will bring to the team, and we
4 have developed occupational competencies for all of our
5 uniform space power disciplines.

6 We are using a boot camp approach to training software
7 coders, resulting in increased digital fluency and positive
8 impacts to mission accomplishment. And we are developing a
9 performance appraisal system with a more continuous
10 evaluation approach that captures the inputs of
11 subordinates, peers, and superiors to provide a more
12 comprehensive and timely picture of Guardian performance
13 contributions and alignment to our values.

14 We are appreciative of the existing military
15 compensation package, but with such a small, highly
16 specialized technical force, we often struggle to compete
17 with the high salaries commanded in the private sector.

18 The Space Force needs a compensation package that not
19 only recognizes the service of Guardians and their families
20 but provides the incentives necessary to recruit and retain
21 these highly sought after professionals. To that end, we
22 are carefully reviewing all current incentive authorities
23 and exploring innovative ways to retain talent, especially
24 of our experienced noncommissioned officers.

25 We recognize that attracting and retaining talent is

1 not about compensation alone. It is also about providing a
2 sense of purpose and an inclusive culture. We are actively
3 engaging and involving Guardians at every step in creating
4 and building our culture that recognizes the value and
5 contributions of all Guardians, military and civilian.

6 We believe that our unique culture and mission, with a
7 new space component construct, combined with quality of
8 life programs and a well-structured compensation package,
9 will allow us to attract and retain the Guardian talent we
10 need.

11 Although I am pleased with the progress we have made,
12 we have much work to do in this third year of building our
13 Space Force. We will continue to focus on our innovative
14 approaches to talent management, developing leaders and
15 warfighters, and we count on the support of Congress to
16 develop and field this new component that will capitalize
17 on the diverse talent of our Nation's Guardians to secure
18 America's interests in space and enable joint operations.

19 Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

20 [The prepared statement of Ms. Mulcahy follows:]

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1 Senator Gillibrand: Thank you all for your testimony.
2 I would like to start with, Ms. Mulcahy, about the Space
3 Force. Can you tell me what your complement is currently?
4 How many civilian personnel and how many military personnel
5 you have, and what is your goal?

6 Ms. Mulcahy: Yes, absolutely. Thanks for that
7 question, Madame Chairwoman. Today we have 7,051 military
8 Guardians, and we have 7,875 civilians. We will plus up a
9 little bit on the civilians, too, next year, and by the end
10 of September, we should be at 8,400. We are still gaining
11 some units from within the Department.

12 So, for instance, in Fiscal Year 2023, the Space
13 Development Agency will come from OSD into the Space Force,
14 and we anticipate being as high as 8,600 military in Fiscal
15 Year 2023.

16 Senator Gillibrand: And is it difficult for you to
17 retain the best talent because of things like lack of
18 salary competition to vis-a-vis the Facebooks and the
19 Googles of the world?

20 Ms. Mulcahy: Yes. Thanks for that question,
21 Chairwoman. Our concern right now is that all of our
22 military Guardians, when they came over, took a two year
23 service commitment, and those start to come up in the
24 September, October timeframe of this year.

25 So we are staying connected to our Guardians, and we

1 so far don't hear or see the numbers different than when we
2 were part of the Air Force and managing our space
3 operators. But we are concerned because we know that the
4 space industry is very lucrative and that is where a lot
5 our NCOs go.

6 Senator Gillibrand: And you don't have a designated
7 service academy, so do you receive cadets and graduates
8 from all the service academies? And what is the general
9 break out of that?

10 Ms. Mulcahy: Thanks for that question too. The last
11 -- and this will be year three that we will have cadets
12 come from the United States Air Force Academy. The numbers
13 have been, this year we are planning 102. Last year, they
14 were 106. So just about that number. The first year there
15 were 96. This year will be the first year that will have
16 two midshipmen come from the Naval Academy.

17 And in working with the Army, it will probably be next
18 year where we will have our first cadets come from the
19 Army.

20 Senator Gillibrand: From the West -- from West Point?

21 Ms. Mulcahy: From West Point.

22 Senator Gillibrand: I ask this because our first
23 panel, we asked about the cyber academy. One of the things
24 that Senator Tillis and I and members of the Intel
25 committee have worked on is the cyber academy for the

1 civilian workforce. Since obviously recruiting the top
2 cyber digital talent, the best mathematicians in the world
3 is a tough order. But we have something like 40,000 to
4 60,000 open cyber and digital positions in the Federal
5 Government today that we cannot fill.

6 And so looking at our long term goals, we believe that
7 creating a national cyber academy, a four year degree for
8 civilian workforce, for the Federal Government would be the
9 appropriate next step to fill spaces within CIA, NSA, NGA,
10 Treasury, Commerce, but also Space Force.

11 And so I would like to know your thoughts on whether a
12 national cyber academy would be useful to you to recruit at
13 least your civilian personnel, but I could see creating
14 coursework specifically designed for Space Force personnel,
15 both military and civilian. And I would like your thoughts
16 on whether we should try to create that in this year's
17 NDAA.

18 Ms. Mulcahy: Yes. Thank you for asking that,
19 chairwoman. Absolutely, we are on the hunt for cyber
20 talent. I know in particular, our Air Force Academy has
21 really increased in their curriculum what we are doing in
22 cyber and cybersecurity.

23 And in our university partnership program, we
24 specifically have looked at universities that not only meet
25 what we are looking for in space research and space talent,

1 but also digital and cybersecurity. The idea of an academy
2 that would specifically be targeted for civilians, I think
3 is a really interesting one and certainly would help us in
4 the Space Force. As I gave you the numbers were about a 50
5 percent military, 50 percent civilian.

6 Senator Gillibrand: Yes, that is what I --

7 Ms. Mulcahy: So I think that could be -- yes, ma'am
8 --

9 Senator Gillibrand: That is what I thought. The
10 other reason I suggest this is because we are going to use
11 the current partners we have in the -- in academia that we
12 already partner with through one of the NSA programs, as
13 well as two other programs, one is a DOD program, and the
14 other one is a National Science Foundation Program.

15 These are very small programs where they will use
16 existing relationships with schools like MIT or Stanford to
17 basically have an ROTC style educational relationship. So
18 you can be trained at these private institutions, but in
19 exchange for your tuition, you will serve five years. Is
20 that something that would be useful to the Space Force?

21 Ms. Mulcahy: I think, absolutely, Chairwoman. We,
22 with the help of the Air Force, have established four year
23 scholarships at some 11 institutions, 2 that you mentioned
24 in particular MIT and Stanford, and others that, again,
25 will produce the kind of talent that we are looking for in

1 the Space Force. So I think that could be very helpful,
2 for the civilian side as well.

3 Senator Gillibrand: Grateful. I would like you to
4 perhaps collaborate with the work that Secretary Cisneros
5 has been tasked to do with Chief Information Officer in
6 Section 56 of the 2022 Defense Bill to opine on the
7 benefits of the National Cyber Academy to train future
8 civilian and military personnel. I would like you to
9 submit to that review your views in writing so that they
10 have the benefit of your thinking on how this could be of
11 use to Space Force needs in the future.

12 And I have questions for each of the witnesses today
13 that I will submit for the record that you can answer by
14 letter, because I have to go vote now. And so I will let
15 Senator Tillis ask his questions and close this hearing.
16 So I just want to thank you for your extraordinary service
17 and for all you are doing for our men and women who are
18 serving so bravely.

19 And without your leadership and your absolute
20 attention to their needs and their education and their
21 well-being, we would not have the amazing force that we
22 have today. So, thank you very much. Senator Tillis.

23 Senator Tillis: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you
24 all for being here. I have a general question for all the
25 witnesses, and then I have got a few service line specific

1 questions. I am curious, Senator Hawley asked this of
2 Secretary Cisneros, and General Ottignon, you and I talked
3 about it yesterday, can you just go down the line and tell
4 me the number of people who have been separated as a result
5 of their refusal to get the vaccine, and if you have the
6 information or even just can speculate, occupational codes
7 or series that have been most affected?

8 General Ottignon: Thank you, Ranking Member Tillis.
9 Sure, I have those numbers. If you want, I can submit them
10 for the record or I can give them to you very quickly.

11 Senator Tillis: Just real quick.

12 General Ottignon: We have separated 1,968 Marines.
13 71 percent of those were given a general discharge. 28
14 percent were given an honorable discharge. That is total
15 force between active and reserve. I don't have the exact
16 number of -- by MOS specialty. I can provide that for the
17 record. But what I can tell you is, I watch that very
18 closely. I can tell you there are no operational impacts
19 across the force for readiness.

20 There is no one community that has signaled an
21 inference where a leadership, an NCO, or a young, enlisted
22 Marine is not present because of that. I think it is
23 important to note that 97 percent of the force is
24 vaccinated. The other part of the force that is not
25 vaccinated, a large portion of that is in our enlisted

1 training pipeline that is moving through the system. The
2 Administration catches up behind it.

3 So I think it is just important to note that as we go
4 through this process, we would want every Marine to get a
5 vaccination. We think readiness is paramount. The Marine
6 Corps is a 9-1-1 force as you charge us in law. And so it
7 is important for us to recognize that health and safety,
8 the Government's compelling interest here is so very high
9 for readiness and for health and safety of the force. And
10 these numbers -- I wish every one of these young Marines
11 would have a vaccination.

12 And as I mentioned to you before, the Commandant has
13 offered an enlistment code for anyone that is discharged,
14 the ability to return to service. If for some reason down
15 the road here, they recognized that they would want to come
16 back in, there is an opportunity for that Marine to do
17 that.

18 Senator Tillis: Thank you. General Brito.

19 General Brito: Thank you. Thank you, Ranking Member
20 Tillis. We have 345 soldiers that have been discharged
21 today for refusal to get their mandatory vaccine. Of those
22 345 soldiers, 9 have received honorable discharges. The
23 remaining 36 have received general and under honorable
24 conditions. I would like to know, similar to my Marine
25 counterpart, 98 percent of our force has been vaccinated.

1 We do continue to look strongly in conjunction with
2 the Religious Freedom Act to ensure that no soldiers rights
3 are being violated. And also, as mentioned in the panel
4 earlier today, look at the safety, health, and welfare of
5 the unit, individual, and the operations that he or she may
6 be supporting as well.

7 Senator Tillis: Well, thank you, General. Has the
8 Army also taken the position that the Marines have, that if
9 a separated service member has buyer's remorse, wants to
10 come back, that they are welcomed back?

11 General Brito: We will certainly look at them, sir,
12 within the context of the law to allow them to, through the
13 legal process, look at the content -- the contents of the
14 discharge, but yes. And I would like to note that a
15 thorough, deliberative process is conducted with a soldier
16 both in the staff and counseling before he or she does make
17 that decision.

18 Senator Tillis: Okay. Admiral Nowell.

19 Admiral Nowell: Sir, thank you. As of the 21st of
20 April, the Navy has approved 798 separations based on COVID
21 vaccine refusal. All of those, the characterization has
22 been honorable. The way that we designed the process to
23 get to a fully immunized force as quickly and as equitably
24 as possible really provided that path. But we, like the
25 other services, believe that vaccination remains the most

1 effective way to protect the force.

2 There have been no impacts to talent management. But
3 I will tell you, as General Ottignon, General Brito have
4 mentioned, we don't want to lose a single sailor to, you
5 know, to this. So we continue to beat the drum on
6 vaccinations. And we are pretty proud that about 99
7 percent of the active component is vaccinated, sir.

8 Senator Tillis: Thank you. Ms. DeFilippi.

9 Ms. DeFilippi: Thank you. Today, 287 Airmen have
10 separated from the Air Force. Of those, 281 have separated
11 under general and under other honorable conditions, one
12 entry level and five honorable. Like the other services,
13 we are sitting at about 98 percent vaccination rate. The
14 remaining service members are going through the process of
15 having their request for accommodation adjudicated.

16 The Air Force remains focused on ensuring that we are
17 deployable at any point in time. And so we too are
18 interested in making sure that those that separated solely
19 for the reason of a vaccine are able to re-enlist if they
20 are able to comply with their vaccination requirements.
21 Thank you.

22 Senator Tillis: Thank you. Ms. Mulcahy.

23 Ms. Mulcahy: Yes, thank you for that question,
24 Ranking Member Tillis. We have not separated any Guardians
25 from the Space Force at this time. We too also enjoy a

1 high 98.2 percent vaccination rate.

2 And we, too, if we were to separate someone solely for
3 the reasons of refusing the vaccine, would consider them if
4 they would take it to come back into our ranks. And I must
5 also echo that this is absolutely a readiness issue, as
6 well as it is just a health and safety issue as well.

7 Senator Tillis: Thank you. General Brito, does it
8 seem reasonable -- it doesn't seem reasonable to me, I
9 don't know, maybe for various reasons, reasonable for you
10 that only two soldiers can meet the criteria for religious
11 accommodation out of thousands of requests?

12 General Brito: Senator Tillis, I would like to
13 mention that we do have an extremely deliberate process to
14 review both the medical and religious exemptions for COVID
15 exemptions. For medical, again starts at the usual level,
16 the field level, and all the way up to the chain of
17 command.

18 And any exceptions are monitored through our Surgeon
19 General. For our religious exemptions, the same again, a
20 trained -- a very deliberate process, starting with a unit
21 level leadership all up to the highest level if necessary,
22 for exemptions, and definitely in an adherence with the law
23 of the Religious Freedoms Act as well.

24 Reasonable or not, I can say that we do have a very
25 deliberate process to make sure the decision is equitable

1 to the soldier in accordance with his or her rights and
2 law, and in accordance with the health and safety of the
3 unit and the unit that they support.

4 Senator Tillis: Well, it is similar to a question
5 from Senator Halley. It would be helpful if we could get
6 just the guidelines or the rules that you go through to
7 document that process. I think that would be helpful.

8 General Brito: I certainly will, Senator.

9 Senator Tillis: Ms. DeFilippi, of the Airmen and
10 Guardians who were separated, how many were already in the
11 process of separation or planning to retire?

12 Ms. DeFilippi: I will need to take that for the
13 record and come back to you.

14 Senator Tillis: I was curious just to see how much
15 that is adjusted for that being the likely outcome for some
16 number. I mean, but to a person, you are saying that the
17 numbers are not one -- that the reduction in numbers should
18 not affect readiness, that the lack of vaccine could have
19 an impact on readiness. Am I hearing that right from all
20 of you, just head shake?

21 Ms. DeFilippi: Yes.

22 Senator Tillis: Thank you. General Ottignon -- I am
23 sorry, I always flip the consonants. Can you talk a little
24 bit about the Talent Management 2030? I know that the
25 Force Design 2030 plan has gotten a lot of attention. You

1 and I talked about a bit about this on our call yesterday,
2 but could you talk a little bit about it? And I am also
3 curious whether or not you have the programs and
4 authorities required to execute?

5 General Ottignon: Senator Tillis, thank you for that
6 question. And as I mentioned in my opening remarks, the
7 Talent Management 2030 was in concert with the overall
8 Force Design of 2030 that General Berger issued to the
9 force.

10 It is unique in a sense that we recognize that in all
11 domain, an ability to sense and make sense, an ability to
12 operate forward, inside a weapon exclusion zone, have the
13 ability to be a standing force, provide capabilities that
14 the Marine Corps would need for the future fight, would
15 have to look a little differently in the way we look and
16 recruit and retain our talent.

17 And that is really where the Commandant kind of moved
18 out. It recognized three big pieces to this. That we knew
19 we were going to have to build and retain the right force.
20 We knew we were going to have to manage it differently.

21 We know that today's talent, today's Marines, we were
22 trying to find -- we are trying to find ways to create that
23 ability to have the transparency and options available to
24 Marines to manage their career so that their opportunities
25 are present when they need them in order to return on the

1 investment to us later in the enlistment.

2 And then finally, it really was a call to arms that we
3 needed to inform and interface with our Marines, and it
4 would require modernization of our IT systems. So it was
5 pretty -- it is a very comprehensive outlay of things that
6 the Commandant has directed.

7 There are two or three things in there, I think, that
8 are evolutionary or revolutionary in a sense, that are a
9 different way to approach, that get a lot of attention. I
10 think in the media. The Commandant has opined that we are
11 going to have to look at how we mature the force. Where
12 does that return on the investment occur?

13 Either is it upfront and enlistment or can I get more
14 out of a young man or woman, because the amount of money
15 and time that goes into the education and exquisite talents
16 that we think we need? The other one was an opportunity to
17 look at how do we go after, as the chairwoman remarked,
18 about some of the all domain type of skill sets that we
19 wanted.

20 Could lateral entry, for example, where a marine has
21 the ability to move within the Marine Corps or an ability
22 to come in and an opportunity to the service, where we
23 recognize that the authorities already given to us by
24 Congress, that allows us to assign that individual after
25 they have gone through recruit training or officer --

1 attending school, the opportunity to the level into the
2 job, let's say into cyber, what have you.

3 This seems to have some momentum. We have internships
4 with local universities. We have 18 students that will
5 participate in cyber units within the Marine Corps. And we
6 have 20 midshipmen from the Naval Academy that will spend
7 their summer with us. So there is some growth in there.

8 All of these things to say, Senator, is that this
9 program recognizes the need to raise our bar in order to
10 meet the challenges of what we think is going to be a
11 highly complex environment that we are going to have to
12 fight in.

13 Senator Tillis: Thank you. Ms. DeFilippi, the Air
14 Force has undertaken several initiatives to improve the
15 quality of your Exceptional Family Members Program. That
16 is something that I have worked with on Senator Gillibrand
17 for several years now on this subcommittee. Can you
18 describe the central assignments of the Air Force, what
19 they are utilizing now?

20 Ms. DeFilippi: Thank you very much. We are very
21 proud of the work that we have done to take what was a very
22 -- a very much a failing program and move it to one that is
23 on the path to being successful and helpful to individuals.

24 What we have done over the past 18 months or so is to
25 take the burden off the members, so whereas they had to do

1 90 percent of the work to ensure that their exceptional
2 family members could be cared for, the Air Force, through
3 our central cell now does most of the work related to
4 ensuring that families are placed in positions -- in
5 assignments that can support their needs.

6 We have done that by using automation to ensure that
7 family members can enter information one time and build on
8 that instead of recreating the file each and every time.
9 And also by co-locating the specialties that are required
10 to make decisions about how appropriate assignments are for
11 families in the same workspace so that they can collaborate
12 with each other to get to the right outcome.

13 And we would be happy to provide additional details if
14 you so desire. Thank you.

15 Senator Tillis: Thank you. I think that that is an
16 area that is a good practice. And it is something that we
17 will continue to look at the other service lines to
18 continue to build on that. But I do think it is a best
19 practice that has a lot of potential to be replicated.

20 Ms. Mulcahy, you know, you recruit the service member
21 and then you retain the family. Can you talk a little bit
22 about what the -- the Space Force is doing, particularly
23 for military spouse employment and family support?

24 Ms. Mulcahy: Yes. Thank you so much, Senator Tillis,
25 for that question. Two things that we are doing is, when

1 it comes to our -- all of the STEM positions that we have
2 in the Space Force, in our civilian complement, we have
3 quite a bit of direct hiring authority. And so what we do
4 is communicate to our spouses that if they have their
5 resumes in USA Job, when these positions come open because
6 they are a direct higher authority and we are in contact
7 with our Guardians, we will just push the opportunity to
8 them.

9 This is a new program for us. It is probably just
10 under 60 days now and we have already had two use --
11 successful use cases with our small force. We are very
12 excited about this and moving out further on it. On the
13 other end, on more of the career end, with what we have
14 learned over these last two years of being in COVID, we
15 think that there is more opportunity to maximize certainly
16 telework, but also remote assignments for folks and use of
17 remote work.

18 And so we are very deliberately looking at what
19 positions for a Guard -- the military member, to be going
20 between about seven different installations and where
21 perhaps there are opportunities that the family member
22 could stay in the position and work towards a career by
23 working remotely.

24 So those are two parts of where we are very focused.
25 And we know that, again, we recruit a Guardian, but we

1 definitely retain the family. And so we are focused on
2 anything and everything that we can do to help our great
3 family members.

4 Senator Tillis: I think not only in terms of doing
5 right by those who are serving and their family members,
6 but when we get this right, whether it is exceptional
7 family members, making sure that we have employment
8 opportunities for spouses, this develops a -- and General
9 Ottignon, it wasn't lost on me, what you were talking about
10 with what you are doing with maybe extending assignments
11 and reducing PCSs.

12 I mean, these are all things that can change what some
13 people would conceive of when they enter into the armed
14 services. More friendly, family friendly, more
15 opportunities for occupations and careers for work members.

16 We are working on some of the -- or following closely
17 some of the work we are trying to do with State PACs to
18 allow licensing and certifications moving across State
19 lines more efficiently. And all of those things I think
20 are useful tools for the issue that I brought up in my
21 opening comments. We have got headwinds in terms of
22 recruiting. And these are the sorts of things that can
23 help make your jobs a lot easier.

24 When you are the last person in committee and the
25 chair gives you the authority to call the committee, I

1 mean, you could talk forever. I am sure the staff are
2 hoping I don't talk anymore, but I really do appreciate you
3 all being here.

4 But this process -- committees are good, but I hope,
5 and I think I speak for Senator Gillibrand, as we are
6 moving through the NDAA process, as we are looking at more
7 work that we can do, please be sure you are in touch with
8 the committee staff and our officers so that we can do
9 everything we can to make your job easier. Thank you all
10 for being here. The committee is adjourned.

11 [Whereupon, at 4:32 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]
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