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UNTIL RELEASED BY THE  
SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

STATEMENT OF  
THE HONORABLE ROBERT WILKIE  
UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PERSONNEL & READINESS  
BEFORE THE  
SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON PERSONNEL  
ON  
PERSONNEL POSTURE OF THE ARMED SERVICES  
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Mr. Chairman, Senator Gillibrand, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee on Personnel, this is a bit of a homecoming and I can never begin to repay the kindness shown me by the Senators here and their wonderful staff.

Mr. Chairman, during my nomination hearing I noted that you were charging me with making life easier for those men and women who carry our future on their shoulders.

Since my confirmation, the role of Personnel & Readiness (P&R) has changed to comport with Secretary Mattis' vision. The Secretary has laid out three Department of Defense (DoD) priorities in the new National Defense Strategy:

1. Rebuilding military readiness as we build a more **lethal** Joint Force
2. Strengthening alliances as we attract new partners
3. Reforming the Department's business practices for greater performance P&R has a role in all these areas, most significantly in building readiness and reforming DoD.

The Secretary has also given P&R new responsibilities for the Strategic Readiness of the force. He has instructed us to:

- Address resource gaps in the capabilities, readiness, and capacity to project power globally in contested environments.
- Update the readiness goals in line with the National Defense Strategy – working with Joint Staff and Services, establish a standardized demand signal to determine the forces essential to address various future warfighting scenarios and identify actions to maximize force readiness.

- Implement a Readiness Recovery Framework (R2F) that includes a plan on specific Military Service-identified areas for improvement, such as sufficient maintenance; access to training ranges; sufficient manpower; depot maintenance capacity; and time needed to plan, coordinate, and execute readiness and training activities.

In my opinion, the Department has too often been caught up in chasing the shiny object—the new carrier or fighter. We have forgotten the Service members on the frontline. The frontline is where eighty percent of the casualties occur.

It is where the **human dimension** of conflict is its most bloody. It is a world that is brutal and unforgiving--a world in which the grim reality now is that the enemy is catching up and exploiting areas of weakness. The mighty Israeli Defense Force experienced it in Lebanon against Hezbollah. We have experienced it against foes in Iraq and Afghanistan and now look to a world where threats are proliferating from North Korea, China, Russia, and Iran.

The threshold question then is whether each decision made by the Department enhances America's ability to deter--and if need be defeat-- any enemy while keeping our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines alive and getting them back home quickly.

**That means no more fair fights.** That means overmatching our enemies. That means providing our Marines and Army Infantry with the same level of investment and scholarly attention that we do with the billion-dollar programs that grab the headlines in this town.

Mr. Chairman, as I mentioned at my nomination hearing--this is not the military that Senator McCain or my father joined at the dawn of the Kennedy Administration, yet we are hamstrung by the policies and procedures emplaced then to run that force of multiple millions refreshed each year by tens of thousands of draftees and thousands of ROTC graduates. Today, our military is vastly different. Comprised entirely of high-quality volunteers. Seventeen percent of the force is female--many of whom are serving on the frontlines—in numbers and missions unimaginable in the days of the Women's Army Corps.

We rely on a twenty-year-up-or-out model for Service members who are forced to leave the military in their prime. Promotion models often see the bottom performer advanced at the same pace as the front runner. Success in the information age will increasingly rely on the technical ability of our troops, yet our assignment system values breadth over depth of experience and expertise. Recruiting is stove piped and not reaching a wide audience online. Service members cannot move freely amongst Active, Guard and Reserve components to meet changing circumstances in their lives. As part of a holistic talent management strategy, I am working with the Services and will work with you to ensure our legislative authorities and policies meet the requirements laid out in our National Defense Strategy.

I will also make our families a priority. In my father's day, few Service members had families—today over sixty percent do. For our families, the Military Health System has been slow to keep up with modern medical advances for conditions like autism and other behavioral disorders as Senators Gillibrand and Tillis have pointed out. The Department will continue to enhance and improve DoD support for military families with special medical or educational

needs through ongoing Exceptional Family Member Program standardization efforts, oversight and analysis of policy implementation, increased communication of available resources, and continuous processes improvement.

We still have military families making their medical appointments on paper and P&R, in accord with the direction of this Committee, is consolidating our multiple military health care systems into one streamlined and efficient military health care administration.

Constant rotation-- again based on a 19<sup>th</sup> century Army model—causes stress on our force and prevents families from putting down roots and spouses from garnering meaningful employment. We are mindful of this and are undertaking a review of ways in which we can mitigate those stressors through greater stability, particularly at large posts, camps, and stations-- locations where stability can be balanced with the readiness imperative for Service member professional development. We are also reviewing our childcare services and will implement strategies to improve access to and the quality of Defense Department-provided child-care services. The bottom line is that readiness is holistic—if the families are not happy, the soldier walks.

Importantly, we have finally moved to provide our members with a comprehensive anti-harassment and bullying policy as instructed by this Committee over six years ago. To mark the seriousness of this endeavor—I have instructed the elevation of the DoD Office of Resiliency to include the Sexual Assault Prevention & Response Office to be a direct report to me, so that it is no longer within the layers of the Pentagon infrastructure. This office will be responsible for

Department policy and enforcement on sexual assault, harassment, suicide prevention, and equal opportunity.

The All-Volunteer Force has performed miracles but certain communities within the Joint Force are still deploying at a higher rate than desired and in some cases their current deploy to dwell rate is not sustainable to achieve our readiness recovery goals. We must address those hard facts, or the force will break.

One way we address this is to ensure our Service members are performing warfighting operations while we rely on our civilian workforce to meet the support missions that enable our military's readiness. To that effort, I am reviewing not only how the Department can optimize staffing at our shipyards, our hospitals, and especially our headquarters, but how we can hire the right people and make them accountable to perform at the highest level.

Mr. Chairman, this Committee has kept faith with the finest military in the world and the solutions for many of the issues I mentioned have already begun to be put in place. I pledge to continue to build on your work and help keep that faith.