

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

**PRESENTATION TO THE MILITARY PERSONNEL SUBCOMMITTEE
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

SUBJECT: MORALE, WELFARE AND RECREATION (MWR) OVERVIEW

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APRIL 7, 2005

**NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED
BY THE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the Military Personnel Subcommittee, for the opportunity to appear before you today to talk about the status of Air Force MWR programs. Our mission is to increase combat capability and improve productivity through programs promoting readiness, esprit de corps, and quality of life for Air Force people. Our programs, initiatives, and outstanding people working around the world form a critical infrastructure to provide deployable support for warfighting commanders, help alleviate the stress our personnel and families undergo during these critical times, and provide a sense of community for the base population and peace of mind that those left behind are cared for.

We continue to provide combat support and community service in many ways. In the deployed environment we provide life sustaining support such as hot meals, lodging, fitness, entertainment, and recreation opportunities to troops, bringing them a sense of home the best way we can. For those sustaining the home front, we ease the burden of a high operations tempo by expanding our programs even more with extended child care and youth programs, increased community support activities, and a professional and compassionate network of care made available for those left behind.

Readiness

At the height of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, Services surged to deploy over 1,850 troops to support forward operating locations. Today, about 500 deployed Services troops provide support at 22 locations to 27,000 deployed forces. Feeding, lodging, laundry, resale, recreation, fitness activities, and mortuary affairs are all part of what Services provides in support of our nation's combat capability.

We are extremely proud of the superb service our dining facilities provide to our Airmen and other deployed personnel. Whether in garrison or in the deployed environment, the Air Force continues to set the highest standard for food service. I am particularly pleased with our deployed operations, where we continue to serve up some 36,000 meals daily and can surge to over 110,000 meals if needed.

In December 2004, I had the opportunity to visit 16 deployed sites in Iraq and witnessed first-hand the positive impact our food service professionals are having on the quality of life for our deployed forces. We all know what a hot meal can do for a person's morale and attitude, so we continue to look at innovative ways to get meals to the troops. Our Single Pallet Expeditionary Kitchen, known as the SPEK, has reduced our airlift requirements for initial field feeding facilities. This quick-response kitchen, utilizing the latest field feeding technology, has allowed us to get quality, hot food to the troops quickly and efficiently. After talking to the troops, I can assure you the consensus is that Air Force Services is doing things right.

Providing our troops with the facilities and resources for working, eating, and sleeping is a top priority. Equally as important is maintaining the health and morale of our deployed force through fitness and recreation support. All of our steady state locations have full fitness centers, and we provide some level of fitness service at every deployed site. All of our forward locations have the capability to purchase fitness equipment for fast and easy upgrades. In the event they cannot procure fitness equipment, our Services Agency in San Antonio has standing contracts with major manufacturers to purchase new equipment for shipment to the deployed location.

Dealing with the loss of life has always been difficult duty, and we have always made it a point to treat our fallen comrades with honor and dignity. The new state-of-the-art Charles C. Carson Center for Mortuary Affairs at Dover AFB was made possible through defense

emergency response funds approved under the 2001 Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act, and opened in October 2003. Double the size of the former facility, the 72,000 square foot building includes new additions such as FBI workspace, an explosive ordnance station, full-body X-ray with computed tomography scanner, and increased workspace for dental autopsy, embalming, dressing, and shipping. Based on our experience with the casualties from our operations overseas, the new facility has expanded our capabilities tenfold in some areas, and has enhanced the timely and honorable return of our fallen heroes to their families. Thank you for making this happen.

Military Funeral Honors

The Air Force military funeral honors requirement continues to grow. The law now requires that we provide funeral honors to all veterans who request it. Air Force honor guard funeral details grew from 10,644 in 1999 to 26,974 last year, more than two and a half times the level before the law went into effect. The impact is even more apparent at the local level: one small honor guard unit at Patrick AFB, FL supported 509 funeral details last year, nearly three and a half times their former workload (115). Air Force-wide, 2004 represented a 13 percent increase from the year before, as we supported military honors for 22,935 of our own funerals and 4,039 funerals for sister services. Based on the aging veteran population and widespread publicity about the entitlement in the new law, we expect to perform 50,000 funeral details annually by 2012.

Bases earn no manpower positions for these funeral honors, but must come up with the people from existing resources. This is a significant challenge in itself, since some bases are responsible for the increasing number of military funerals within an area of up to 250,000 square miles. Deployments have increased the operational tempo, further compounding the challenge.

Many Honor Guard volunteers are deployed in their primary military capacity, while others find that the increased press of their regular military duty keeps them too busy to volunteer for Honor Guard duties. This has decreased the number of airmen available to conduct funeral honors.

To spread the workload, we rely on Air Reserve Component forces to augment our active duty honors teams. In 2004, the Air Reserve Component used 40,000 man-days to support approximately 18 percent of all Air Force funeral honors details. However, military personnel appropriation (MPA) days are not a stable solution. The Air Force's Future Total Force initiative may help us achieve better integration of the Air Reserve Component and active duty units to perform funeral honors. With the support of this subcommittee, the Honor Guard motto "To Honor With Dignity" will continue to ring true for years to come.

Air Force Survivor Assistance Program

The Air Force Survivor Assistance Program is now entering its fifth year of service to the men, women, and families of the Air Force. It has continued to evolve to meet the requirements of the Air Force and the expectations of the families it serves. The Family Liaison Officer or FLO is the heart and soul of our support program. FLOs are trained and provided to the family to ensure they receive personal attention in their time of crisis, and draw upon numerous resources of the Air Force and the surrounding community to support our families. Each commander who suffers a loss hand-picks a FLO and dedicates them to serving the family. This is their only duty from the time of the loss at least until after the funeral. Beyond the funeral, FLOs remain in contact and support the family through the anniversary of the loss. FLOs guide families to get the help, support, and information they need. Well over 1,000 FLOs have provided support to families since the inception of our program.

We recognize the need for immediate and continuous care for our Air Force family, and provide direct support through our web site (<http://survivorassistance.afsv.af.mil>) and 24-hour worldwide toll-free access (1-877-USAFHELP). We recognized early on the need to continue contact with surviving family members. While the FLO is our primary contact with families, our installation commanders also contact them at the one-year anniversary to assure them they are not forgotten. We ensure families have immediate and long term assistance, and our program is constantly evolving to better serve surviving families of deceased Air Force members.

Last year, we used the success of the Air Force Survivor Assistance Program as a model to provide care for our wounded in action returning from Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. From the moment we learn of a wounded member, we begin to track the journey back to the states and ensure all needs are met. A FLO from a sister unit meets the wounded upon arrival at Ramstein Air Base and Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany. If family members travel to Germany to be with the wounded, we coordinate with the FLO and other supporting agencies to meet them when they arrive. FLOs take care of families by arranging transportation, lodging, and any other support they may require.

When wounded members move from Landstuhl back to the states, we ensure family members know where and when they will arrive. A FLO meets each wounded member at every stop along the way and a permanent FLO is assigned on orders to assist at the principal military treatment facility. While the wounded move from the battlefield to the final destination, we gather information and keep family members informed. We also keep our senior leadership abreast on where our wounded in action are and how they are progressing. Because of this, it is

not unusual for the Secretary of the Air Force, Air Force Chief of Staff, and Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force to visit our wounded members and personally present their Purple Hearts.

We have also taken a proactive role in reducing preventable deaths. Working with families who lost loved ones to suicide and motor vehicle accidents, we produced awareness videos that have been instrumental in reducing our death rate. These videos were made available to every active duty, Guard, and Reserve base in the Air Force. After our Survivor Assistance Office noted an alarming rise in suicide and vehicle deaths, General Jumper directed the Air Force to designate a day in October as Wingman Day to discuss safety, preventable deaths, and how to take care of each other. Our Survivor Assistance videos were used successfully as training tools for both military and civilian personnel, stimulating discussions on how to be good wingmen and prevent unnecessary deaths. Since the Wingman Day training, our losses to suicide and vehicle accidents, our greatest takers of Air Force lives, have been cut in half from last year's numbers.

Dynamic in nature and flexible by design, the Survivor Assistance Program is focused on supporting our most valuable resources: our Airmen, civilians, and their families.

Armed Forces Entertainment

The Air Force has been the executive agent for this defense-wide Armed Forces Entertainment program for almost eight years and last year was the busiest yet. We provide free, quality, live professional entertainment to U.S. Armed Forces personnel and their families stationed overseas, with a priority to remote and isolated sites, ships at sea and deployed locations. Quality entertainment enhances readiness and communicates public support to the

troops. This morale-boosting entertainment continues to be recognized by commanders as providing essential respite during long, difficult operations.

Entertainers generously donate their time and talent to the program and show a visible sign of support from the United States of America. We have entertained troops with a wide variety of both non-celebrity and celebrity visits such as the Harlem Globetrotters, singer LeAnn Rimes, “Comics on Duty,” and former football stars Randy Gradishar, Matt Blair and Lyle Blackwood. A highlight this past holiday season was a tour by World Wrestling Entertainment shortly before Christmas; the wrestlers braved hostile territory to reach 13 forward operating bases and 4 installations in Iraq, bringing an essential morale boost to many war fighters not previously reached by entertainment tours. Their visit culminated with a “Tribute to the Troops” show at Camp Speicher, Iraq, to a grateful and enthusiastic audience of over 4,000 war-worn troops. In partnership with the United Service Organizations (USO), we sent high caliber celebrities like Robin Williams, Toby Keith, Gary Sinise and David Letterman on tour. This past year we were able to provide 127 Armed Forces Entertainment tours on our own and partner with USO for 24 USO celebrity tours, for a total of more than 1,350 performances at 370 locations.

The demands for the program continue to grow. With the outstanding support of Air Force leadership, Armed Forces Entertainment received \$9 million in fiscal year 2004 and is currently funded at \$5 million for fiscal year 2005, not including anticipated contingency funding. Already in fiscal year 2005 we have sent 73 entertainment tours overseas, with 25 of these tours supporting contingency operations in places like Iraq, Djibouti, Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan and locations in the Balkans. We greatly appreciate the committee’s continued

support for this program and what it does for our troops and their families stationed around the world.

Fitness

Fitness is a primary component of combat capability, and current operations demand that Airmen be fit to fight. General Jumper began a significant cultural change in 2004 when he initiated the “Fit to Fight” program, charging commanders and leaders at all levels with creating an Air Force culture of fitness. The focus of this program is not on passing a fitness test once a year. Rather, it’s about our readiness to deploy and fight; instilling an expectation that makes fitness a daily standard and an essential part of our Airmen’s daily lives. The program is taking hold and we are already seeing visible results. Fitness center usage is up 30 percent and fitness program results significantly exceed expectations. At the onset of the new program, the Air Force Surgeon General’s office estimated 40 percent of those tested would fall into the “poor” or failing category, but in fact only 10 percent did and 16 percent scored in the “excellent” category. A 40 percent failure prediction may have been accurate based on the Air Force’s fitness level when the program began. However, throughout the year, the Fit to Fight culture had taken hold and the testing results reflect that progress.

Air Force Services played a large role in this cultural change by providing resources to include trained fitness staff, functional fitness centers equipped with the right equipment, and fitness related programs to include sporting events. We instituted the 5-Star Fitness Recognition program to recognize our outstanding fitness centers, which can earn stars by exceeding standards in five areas. The Chief of Staff of the Air Force established 4-stars and above as the goal with stars earned for operations, programs, customer service, facilities, and training.

Your strong support has allowed us to make great strides in 2004 and I am happy to report that on our main operating bases, 46 percent (or 36 fitness centers) meet all Department of Defense standards; another 41 percent (32 fitness centers) exceed 90 percent compliance. The principal shortcoming in those not fully meeting the DoD standard is the facility itself. Your support has allowed us to fund construction of 32 fitness centers at a cost of \$312 million since 2000. However, we still have 39 additional fitness facility construction requirements at an estimated cost of \$464 million budgeted between 2006 and 2011, and I thank you for your continued support of this critical combat support construction requirement.

Child Care and Youth Programs

Air Force parents tell us child care is their number one priority when at home and while deployed. The Air Force is not yet able to meet all of the need for full day child care for single, dual military, and dual working couples. We have more than 8,000 children on waiting lists for care with more than 75 percent of these children under 3 years of age. Our greatest needs for additional centers are at locations such as Eglin AFB, Tinker AFB, Hurlburt Field, Patrick AFB, Beale AFB, and Offutt AFB. We have 16 projects in the out-year military construction program and we could use all of those facilities.

While our child development centers and school age programs provide high quality care at a reasonable cost, they are not able to help our families with the additional types of care they need as a result of their military service. We continue to focus on supplementing our center programs with a cadre of unique services to help our families reduce their total out-of-pocket expenses for child care. Our Extended Duty Child Care program provides free child care to members who have to work late, experience shift changes, work on the weekends, or who have other child care emergencies. The care is provided in contract family child care homes. The

same concept is being used to provide night care for members who work around the clock at missile sites and need 24 hour care several days in a row. We also use contract family child care homes to provide child care for Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard personnel during their training weekends. Recently, we also began a new program to buy down the cost of care in civilian communities for our deployed Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve personnel.

Since the start of Operation Enduring Freedom, we have provided Returning Home Care to members returning from deployment. All members, including our Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, are provided 16 hours of free child care in one of the extended duty homes to give them time to get their household matters back in order and to spend some time with their spouses. We also launched a variation of this program to provide care for children who have mild illnesses and are not well enough to go to their regular child care setting.

Our focus has also been on our older children, especially children of deployed parents. We provide many programs for them including Air Force Youth of the Year, Air Force Teen Aviation Camp, Air Force Youth Space Camp, Missoula Children's Theatre, Air Force Kids' Run, several residential outdoor recreation camps, and numerous offerings through our Youth Programs' affiliation with the Boys & Girls Clubs of America. As a major area of emphasis in Air Force Services Youth Programs, the Youth Fitness Initiative began development in 2004 as a way to get youth ages 9-18 years up and moving. Events have included annual fun run events, after-school health and wellness programs, and web-based tracking programs to document youth fitness participation and fitness levels. This summer we will increase the number of youth camps for children of Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve members to help them learn about their parent's life in the military and to allow them to experience mock deployments.

Lodging

Our on-base lodging operations continue to receive attention. We successfully validated our visiting quarters concept with our newly opened, 350-room visiting quarters at Osan AB, South Korea. Under this concept, we build visiting quarters to a single size standard with a private room and private bath for all guests. In addition to improving the quality of life for our troops, this concept provides critical force protection, saves travel costs and significantly streamlines our construction process. The response from customers is positively overwhelming. We have incorporated the lessons learned from the Osan AB visiting quarters into the 350-room Travis AFB and Nellis AFB visiting quarters, which will be opening this summer. The 700 new rooms will save the travel line \$9.2 million each year.

Great improvements have also been made with our temporary lodging facilities, providing our families a place to stay together comfortably as they move from base to base. Since 1997, we have built 480 new units and renovated 235 units at 19 different bases. I am also happy to report that we opened two new temporary lodging facilities in 2004, with 50 units at Little Rock AFB and 40 units at RAF Mildenhall. We are constructing 70 new units at RAF Lakenheath that are slated to open in May 2005, and have plans to build an additional 107 units throughout the continental United States over the next two years.

We recently completed a wall-to-wall review of all Air Force lodging and temporary lodging facility requirements. This review provides a roadmap for our future facility requirements and provides a critical planning tool to help us funnel limited construction funds to the installations with the greatest need. Appropriated funds are still our primary source for replacing and repairing lodging facilities. The major commands and bases understand the

importance of upgrading our lodging facilities and continue to raise the priority for lodging projects in the outyear military construction program.

Clubs

Over the past years, clubs have become much more than just a place to eat. Clubs provide the foundation to support Air Force traditions, protocol, and commanders' military functions. We have developed two programs to introduce our newest AF members to Air Force Services and Clubs. The first is UBU (You be You). The program provides positive introduction of Air Force Services and clubs by establishing and sustaining first contact with new Air Force enlisted recruits at their basic military training or technical school. A UBU card provides discounts at various Air Force Services facilities and zero dues for the first year of active military service. The second program, called Take It To The Max, focuses on educating second lieutenants about Air Force Services and club membership. All new club members receive the first six months of dues free and existing members are provided food and beverage coupons as part of the promotion.

Benchmarking against industry's best hospitality trends and innovative business practices, club customers are given the latest products and programs at U.S. bases and are also offered a bit of Americana at our overseas bases. We have developed, funded, and implemented various Air Force Signature Brand restaurants. We also work with industry leaders to bring nationally-recognized name brand restaurants to our Air Force bases. Casual dining restaurants like Chili's can now be found in two of our overseas bases in Japan and Germany, and a Macaroni Grill will soon follow at Ramstein AB, Germany.

Bowling

Our bowling centers contribute directly to unit cohesiveness and provide an outstanding recreational venue for a diverse group of individuals and families. However, the average age of an Air Force bowling center is 37 years old and they are typically in need of an upgrade. We used a nationally recognized bowling center architect to develop standardized facility design guides that will create a “Family Atmosphere and Fun Center” concept. Beginning in 2006, we are committing \$5 million of nonappropriated funds each year to upgrade our bowling centers around the Air Force. We have also begun installing standardized scoring systems throughout all centers that will benefit both customers and our bowling center operators Air Force wide.

Along with our facility improvements, we are working on programs such as Hook Up 2 Bowling and Bowl for the Stars & Strikes to promote bowling in our Air Force communities. We are also conducting an annual assessment through our 5-Star Bowling Recognition Program. This program determines superior achievement for those bowling centers that have demonstrated excellence in operations, programs, training, facilities, and customer service. It is not a requirements checklist or an inspection, but a tool to use as an incentive to exceed standards and reach excellence. We strive to be the premier leader and our customer’s first choice in bowling and family entertainment.

Golf

Our 80 golf courses worldwide provide enjoyment opportunities for tens of thousands of golfers, with over 2.8 million rounds of golf played annually. Our Air Force Services Agency recently hired our first-ever certified greens superintendent. He oversees turf management and maintenance, and provides guidance to all Air Force golf superintendents on a regular basis with the goal of improving turf quality and playing conditions worldwide. We also recognize our

responsibility for the environmental stewardship of our installation's golf courses, which cover approximately 16,000 acres of intensely-maintained property. We have partnered with the Air Force Center for Environmental Excellence (AFCEE) to introduce the U.S. Air Force Golf Course Environmental Management Program. We hope to provide ways for more rounds to be played on better-conditioned courses while minimizing or eliminating negative impacts to the environment.

Under our 5-Star Golf Recognition Program, we conduct an annual assessment and recognize superior achievement for golf courses that demonstrate excellence in operations, programs, training, facilities, and customer service, similar to the 5-Star programs in our other areas. We are also fielding programs like Link Up 2 Golf in concert with PGA, USGA, and LGPA to bring new players into the game of golf. To introduce young players to the game, we have Golf-4-Kids, a player development and retention program.

Funding

For funding purposes, MWR functions are broken down into three categories. Category A, Mission Essential (such as fitness and library programs) is supported almost completely with appropriated funds. Category B, Community Support (such as child and youth programs) receives substantial APF support like Category A, but with reduced allowances for personnel. Category C, Business Activities (such as clubs and golf programs) receives no direct appropriated fund support. Air Force Services received \$6.7 million more appropriated funds in fiscal year 2004 than in fiscal year 2003, an increase of slightly more than 1 percent. Despite challenges, the Air Force again met all DoD standards for funding in fiscal year 2004, with Category A programs receiving 97 percent appropriated fund support and Category B programs receiving 66 percent appropriated fund support.

We appreciate the interest the committee has shown in ensuring that Category C programs like clubs not bear an unreasonable financial burden in the form of utility expenses in their base facilities. The fiscal year 2005 Defense Authorization Act confirmed that appropriated funds can be used to support most utility expenses in Category C activities. This much-needed support will enable Air Force Services to provide more and better programs for our troops and their families at a time when quality-of-life programs are so important to retention and readiness.

We made substantial progress on our nonappropriated fund transformation initiative this past year. This initiative involves re-engineering our business practices, replacing our legacy accounting and payroll management systems that are over 25 years old with a commercial off-the-shelf solution, and establishing a shared service center to provide world-wide support. Over the past year we have identified changes required to make our processes more efficient and eliminate non-value-added processes, acquired a solution for the accounting and payroll functions, and established a shared service center at the Air Force Services Agency in San Antonio, TX. In addition, we are integrating existing business systems with our new system for greater efficiencies. Using lessons learned from visiting Navy NAF operations in Millington, TN, the Army's centralized NAF accounting office in Texarkana, TX and industry best practices with the Marriott Corporation, we have developed a multi-year, four-phased enterprise resource plan that will increase customer service and productivity while reducing overhead costs.

We will implement Phase I of our plan by deploying the new accounting and payroll systems this summer, starting with our stateside installations and realigning the processing workload from bases to the shared service center. While NAF transformation will require long-term commitment to fully realize benefits, it demonstrates that commercial best practices can be

blended with government requirements to yield major improvements in business decision-making and resource savings. Our \$27.5 million investment in this initiative will conservatively deliver \$12 million in resource savings per year upon full implementation.

Nonappropriated Fund Construction

Since 1994, we have aggressively reinvested approximately \$1.3 billion in our quality of life projects, including the base capital improvement and lodging funds. This reinvestment is essential to meeting the quality of life needs of the men and women of the Air Force, and directly impacts recruitment and retention of a quality force. We continually improve our processes to ensure we make sound business-based decisions and fund the most needed requirements in the most expeditious manner possible.

In fiscal year 2004, we funded only 13 capital improvement projects for \$34 million due to a decline in AAFES dividends, which fund a large part of our construction. In fiscal year 2005, increased AAFES dividends along with funds from the BRAC Special Treasury Account allowed for funding of 17 capital improvement projects totaling \$60.3 million; we also funded 5 lodging projects for \$112 million. For fiscal year 2006 we expect to fund, at most, \$72.6 million for 20 capital improvement projects and \$71.5 million for lodging. We are also currently conducting project assessments on 35 capital improvement projects valued at \$84.5 million, which will compete for a projected \$78.8 million in funding for fiscal years 2007 and 2008.

Military Construction

The military construction (MILCON) program is vitally important in sustaining Air Force Services and other quality of life programs. We appreciate the Committee's support for several Services facilities in fiscal year 2005. Fitness centers at Elmendorf AFB, AK; Hill AFB, UT;

and Lajes AB, Portugal will move us closer to providing state of the art fitness centers at all Air Force installations. One MILCON lodging project at Arnold AFS, TN will improve the quality of life for our military travelers. Construction of three child development centers at Buckley AFB, CO; Little Rock AFB, AR; and Whiteman AFB, MO are essential to the family support structure that allows our Airmen to serve and not have to worry about the care of their children. Funding future projects like these and other quality of life facilities through the MILCON program will remain critically important in supporting our troops and their families.

Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC)

We continue to attempt recovery of nearly \$108 million in exchange, commissary, and MWR fund investments at Air Force locations impacted by base realignment and closure (BRAC) actions. To date, we have recovered \$41.6 million in undepreciated value of troop investments and expect to recover an additional \$6.2 million in the future. Recovery of the remaining \$60.2 million is doubtful, due to the conveyance of most of the property through Public Benefit Conveyance and Economic Development Conveyance at no cost.

We appreciate the support you provided in the legislation for fiscal year 2004 to release the recovered funds, which had been held in the Special Treasury Reserve Account. Of the \$41.6 million we recovered, \$21.7 million has already been returned to our Air Force MWR, AAFES, and DeCA accounts, and we expect to receive additional funds this year and next. We also appreciate your previous action to ensure nonappropriated funds recovered from upcoming BRAC rounds will be available without the need for an appropriation. As a result, the funds recovered from service member investments at these bases can quickly and easily be returned to the Service members to build and improve other NAF facilities supporting our troops, their families, and retirees.

Conclusion

Through proper training and outstanding leadership, our highly motivated troops lead the way in support of the global war on terror and other contingencies. Our commitment to readiness is a key pillar of the Air Force Services mission, and the community service we provide is just as important. Through innovative systems and programs, the hard work of our personnel, and the support of the community, we continue to provide needed mission capability for our commanders and vital support for our members and families. Helping sustain our Air Force is a tremendous challenge and we would not be successful without your continued support. We thank you and look forward to working with you to make a direct and lasting impact on quality of life for our military members and their families.