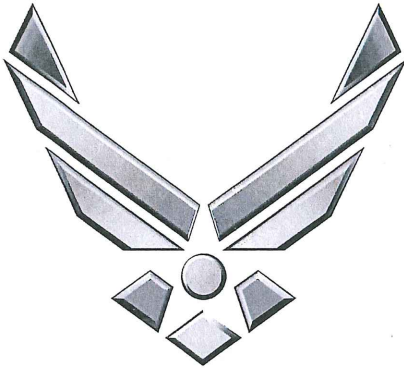


April 9, 2014

United States Air Force



Presentation

Before the Senate Armed Services Committee,
Subcommittee on Personnel

Airmen: Our Greatest Strength

Witness Statement of
CMSAF James A. Cody
Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force

April 9, 2014

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED
BY THE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
UNITED STATES SENATE

April 9, 2014



BIOGRAPHY



UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE JAMES A. CODY

Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force James A. Cody represents the highest enlisted level of leadership, and as such, provides direction for the enlisted force and represents their interests, as appropriate, to the American public, and to those in all levels of government. He serves as the personal adviser to the Chief of Staff and the Secretary of the Air Force on all issues regarding the welfare, readiness, morale, and proper utilization and progress of the enlisted force. Chief Cody is the 17th chief master sergeant appointed to the highest noncommissioned officer position.

Chief Cody entered the Air Force in November 1984. He graduated from the air traffic control specialist course at Keesler Air Force Base, Miss., in May 1985. His background includes various duties in air traffic control at the unit and major-command levels. Throughout his career, he has filled a myriad of roles including additional-duty First Sergeant and Directorate Superintendent. His assignments include bases in New Hampshire, California, Virginia and Florida. The chief also served overseas in Germany, South Korea, Turkey, and deployed in support of Operations Southern Watch and Enduring Freedom.



Prior to assuming his current position, he served as the Command Chief Master Sergeant, Air Education and Training Command, Randolph AFB, Texas.

EDUCATION

1987 Noncommissioned Officer Preparatory School, Kapaun AS, Germany

1989 Air Force Communications Command Noncommissioned Officer Leadership School, Keesler AFB, Miss.

1993 Noncommissioned Officer Academy Correspondence Course

Airmen: Our Greatest Strength

April 9, 2014

1995 USAFE Noncommissioned Officer Academy, Kapaun AS, Germany
1997 Senior Noncommissioned Officer Academy Correspondence Course
1998 Associate of Applied Science degree in airway science, Community College of the Air Force
2001 Senior Noncommissioned Officer Academy, Maxwell AFB, Ala.
2005 Chief's Leadership Course, Maxwell AFB, Ala.
2005 USAF Senior Leadership Course, Center for Creative Leadership, San Diego, Calif.
2006 Gettysburg Leadership Experience, Gettysburg, Pa.
2008 Senior Enlisted Joint Professional Military Education Correspondence Course
2008 AFSO 21 Executive Leadership Course, Disney Institute, Orlando, Fla.
2009 Keystone, National Defense University, Fort Lesley J. McNair, Washington, D.C.
2010 COMAFFOR Senior Staff Course, USAF Expeditionary Center, N.J.
2010 USAF Enterprise Management Seminar, Darden School of Business, University of Virginia, Charlottesville
2012 Bachelor of Science degree in business administration, Trident University International, Cypress, Calif.

ASSIGNMENTS

1. November 1984 - January 1985, Student, Basic Military Training, Lackland AFB, Texas
2. January 1985 - June 1985, Student, Technical Training School, Keesler AFB, Miss.
3. June 1985 - June 1988, Air Traffic Controller, 1964th Communications Group, Ramstein AB, Germany
4. June 1988 - January 1991, ATC Watch Supervisor, 1916th Communications Squadron, Pease AFB, N.H.
5. January 1991 - May 1993, ATC Watch Supervisor, 30th Operational Support Squadron, Vandenberg AFB, Calif.
6. May 1993 - May 1994, ATC Watch Supervisor, 51st OSS, Osan AB, South Korea
7. June 1994 - June 1996, Superintendent, Airfield Operations Training, 39th OSS, Incirlik AB, Turkey
8. June 1996 - March 2000, Superintendent, Airfield Operations, Readiness/Training, Headquarters Air Combat Command, Langley AFB, Va.
9. March 2000 - May 2003, Chief Tower Controller, additional duty 1st Sgt, 6th OSS, MacDill AFB, Fla. (April 2002 - July 2002, Superintendent, Combat Airspace Management Cell, Joint Task Force-Southwest Asia, Prince Sultan Air Base, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia)
10. June 2003 - July 2005, Superintendent, Directorate of Air and Space Operations and ATC Functional Manager, HQ ACC, Langley AFB, Va.
11. July 2005 - August 2007, Command Chief, 15th Expeditionary Mobility Task Force, Travis AFB, Calif.
12. August 2007 - July 2008, Command Chief, 6th Air Mobility Wing, MacDill AFB, Fla.
13. July 2008 - September 2010, Command Chief, 18th Air Force, Scott AFB, Ill.
14. September 2010 - January 2013, Command Chief, Headquarters Air Education and Training Command, Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph, Texas
15. January 2013 - present, Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, the Pentagon, Washington, D.C.

MAJOR AWARDS AND DECORATIONS

Legion of Merit
Meritorious Service Medal with seven oak leaf clusters
Air Force Commendation Medal with two oak leaf clusters
Air Force Achievement Medal with five oak leaf clusters
Outstanding Airman of the Year Ribbon

OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

1994 39th Wing NCO of the Year

Airmen: Our Greatest Strength

April 9, 2014

1995 John L. Levitow Award, NCO Academy
1995 USAFE ATC Training Achievement Award
1995 STEP promotion to Master Sergeant
1997 ACC Director of Air and Space Operations SNCO of the Year
2001 Distinguished Graduate, SNCO Academy
2001 AMC Air Traffic Control Enlisted Manager of the Year
2001 Tampa Bay Military Citizen of the Year
2001 Air Mobility Command SNCO of the Year

EFFECTIVE DATE OF PROMOTION

Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force January 2013

(Current as of February 2014)

Airmen: Our Greatest Strength

April 9, 2014

INTRODUCTION

Chairman Gillibrand, Ranking Member Graham, members of the Subcommittee, thank you for your continued support and commitment to the men and women who serve in our military. It is my absolute honor to join my fellow service senior enlisted advisors as we represent those men and women who have raised their right hand in dedication to their nation.

America's Airmen continue to generate the greatest Air Force the world has ever known. They are innovative, dedicated, and passionate men and women who understand freedom does not come without a cost; it must be fought for, and won. Throughout the last 20 plus years of sustained operations, they have continued to dominate in a multi-dimensional battlefield of air, space and cyberspace. They have never wavered from their commitment to serve our nation, and they have continuously demonstrated our core values of *Integrity First, Service Before Self and Excellence in All We Do*. In order for Airmen to continue to serve as leaders and warriors for America, the Air Force must remain focused on recruiting, retaining, training, developing, and supporting a world-class, all-volunteer Force.

FORCE MANAGEMENT

The Air Force faces a significant challenge over the next several years as we move toward a new normal of operational tempo and fiscal constraints. We must significantly reduce the Total Force end strength from 503,400 to 483,000 proud Airmen to meet DoD strategic guidance for a leaner force. Our Active Duty military end strength will drop 16,700, from 327,600 to 308,800. Our Air Force Reserve military end strength will decrease by 3,300 to 66,500, and Air National Guard military end strength will decrease by 400 to 103,600. To reach these numbers, we are instituting multiple voluntary and involuntary programs that have been structured in a logical, deliberate and responsible manner, with voluntary programs available

Airmen: Our Greatest Strength

April 9, 2014

first. These programs are not quick fixes, but rather a tailored effort comprised of many initiatives aimed at managing the long-term health of the force along a continuum of service. They are necessary to facilitate critical modernization and restore force readiness. The capabilities and credibility of our Air Force to meet our core missions are essential to national defense, and these efforts support that end.

We recognize how difficult these actions are on our Airmen and the importance of transparency during this process. Air Force senior leaders announced the programs as early as possible to ensure Airmen and their families had time to plan for their future. All Airmen have been individually notified of their vulnerability for voluntary and involuntary force management programs. We also understand the importance of communication and support for our Airmen and their families. Through a deliberate communication effort, supervisors down to the unit level understand they must stay well versed on the different force management initiatives and how they affect their team. We are committed to sitting down with each individual Airman to talk through options and refer them to support agencies as appropriate. As we push forward through the turbulent road ahead, our commitment to our fellow Airmen and their families will assuredly serve as the fabric that holds us together.

TRANSITION ASSISTANCE

As we manage the reductions to end strength, we must continue to focus on support for our Airmen transitioning to the civilian sector. The Airman and Family Care Division has been largely focused on the re-designed Transition Assistance Program (TAP), which includes pre-separation counseling, attendance at a Department of Labor Employment Workshop, Veterans Affairs benefits briefings, and a Capstone that validates career readiness standards have been met and that the service member is ready to transition to the private sector.

Airmen: Our Greatest Strength

April 9, 2014

The number of Airmen transitioning as a result of the force management programs will be over and above the 32,000 to 35,000 Airmen our Airmen and Family Readiness Centers (A&FRCs) process each year (FY13 throughput was 33,422). Our A&FRC team is taking additional steps to ensure all Airmen separating or retiring attend TAP. Some initiatives include increasing the frequency of courses at each installation, increasing the class size, coordinating with partnering agencies to brief additional TAP courses as needed, providing the Air Force community (to include family members) information about TAP and contacting Airmen to sign them up for TAP.

RECRUITING AND RETENTION

The Air Force Recruiting Service (AFRS) has successfully met All-Volunteer Force requirements for the past 14 years and is currently positioned to meet both FY14 and FY15 requirements. This fiscal year, over 11,000 of America's young men and women have completed or are currently attending Air Force Basic Military Training (BMT). Additionally, there are approximately 9,000 recruits already contracted to attend BMT. AFRS has placed the right Airmen into the right jobs and at the right time to fill the Initial Skills Training pipeline with the number of Airmen necessary to meet career field requirements across the Air Force. Despite a shrinking pool of age-qualified youth, a decreased propensity to serve in the military and reduced budgets, we continue to recruit the best and brightest our nation has to offer. Currently, 99 percent of our recruits are high school diploma graduates and 18 percent have at least 15 semester hours of college. This punctuates the Air Force commitment to produce a high-quality enlisted corps capable of meeting the challenges of today, and tomorrow.

During these unprecedented budgetary times, it is imperative we continue to invest in programs that attract the high-quality applicants the Air Force requires to meet evolving career

Airmen: Our Greatest Strength

April 9, 2014

field needs. The Air Force budget for recruiting includes funding for day-to-day operations, personnel costs, and advertising activities necessary to accomplish the recruiting mission. In recent years, recruiting budgets have seen a steady decline in available funding. Fewer advertising dollars have created inefficiencies that have evaporated Air Force awareness activities in entire markets. A critical component of our recruiting success is built on a foundation of strong community relationships that take years to cultivate.

The Air Force has continued to experience high retention trends over the past 10 years, with the enlisted retention trend remaining very strong in FY13. Even with the upcoming reductions in end strength, there are still critical and emerging career fields, including battlefield and cyberspace Airmen, that are experiencing poor retention, low manning and/or high operational demands. To offset this challenge, Airmen associated with these skills are not targeted in the FY14 force management programs, and there are numerous efforts to increase career field health. These include Special and Incentive (S&I) and Bonus pays, protections from force management programs, and increases to accessions, retraining and promotions. Enlistment and re-enlistment bonuses continue to be effective means to maintain positive recruitment and retention levels for critical skill career fields. The Initial Enlistment Bonus (IEB), Selective Reenlistment Bonus (SRB), Critical Skill Retention Bonus (CSRB) and the Air National Guard Incentive Program are all effective and measurable retention tools that have successfully encouraged Airmen to stay and/or retrain into career fields with high demand requirements.

COMPENSATION REFORM

The compensation of our service members has risen significantly over the last decade. As a result, we've recruited and retained quality Airmen who continue to power the world's greatest

Airmen: Our Greatest Strength

April 9, 2014

Air Force. These Airmen are not overcompensated; they have earned every dollar. However, in light of projected constraints on future defense spending, including sequestration-level cuts in FY16 and beyond, we must slow the growth of military compensation in order to avoid deeper reductions to force structure, readiness, and modernization efforts critical to support the warfighter and national defense.

The Air Force, in conjunction with the Department of Defense, is supportive of the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission in its review of potential compensation system reforms and study the impact on the All-Volunteer Force. The Air Force concurs that there is sufficient information available to make recommendations on key areas of current compensation (other than retirement) to slow the growth of military pay and benefit costs, starting with the FY15 budget, in order to permit a balanced drawdown in defense spending. For major modifications to the compensation system, we recommend reviewing the Commission report first to ensure it supports the sustainment of a highly skilled and capable All-Volunteer force.

DELIBERATE DEVELOPMENT OF AIRMEN

The deliberate development of our Airmen remains a top priority. It is absolutely critical if we are to ensure the force remains prepared to meet current requirements and the challenges we will undoubtedly face in the future. Investment in education, training, and experience are essential to meeting the demands of the combatant commanders our Airmen serve around the world; the success of your Air Force is clearly attributed to how well these Airmen are prepared to handle the tasks those commanders need them to execute. We will continue to assess what

Airmen: Our Greatest Strength

April 9, 2014

commanders require of Joint Force warrior Airmen and ensure we have the plans and policies in place to meet current and future expectations.

ENLISTED PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION

In FY13 we took several steps to ensure we deliver enlisted Airmen the highest quality professional military education, while simultaneously mitigating the challenges of the current fiscal environment. We began the first online facilitated distance learning Chief's Leadership Course, a one-year intensive education initiative for all new Chief Master Sergeants to strengthen their leadership and management skills as they take on critical roles in our Air Force.

Additionally, we entered the first stages of a blended learning approach to SNCO and NCO Professional Military Education. The blended approach delivers the most current and relevant education in an online, learner-centric format followed by a shorter in-residence learning experience, which expands on current knowledge through group dynamics and problem solving. In December 2013, 36 Senior Non-Commissioned Officers graduated from the first blended learning SNCO Academy course. The overwhelming sentiment from the experience proved the course was challenging and rewarding with extended opportunities for dialogue and leadership reflection.

AIRMEN EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

The Air Force has the most educated enlisted force in the world. Every Airman entering service is automatically enrolled in an associate of applied science degree program through the Community College of the Air Force (CCAF). Since April 25, 1977, CCAF has awarded more than 427,000 degrees that correspond to each member's career field. Many view the CCAF

Airmen: Our Greatest Strength

April 9, 2014

degree as the start of their path toward higher education. Currently, more than 22,000 enlisted Airmen have bachelor's degrees or higher and 26 have earned a doctorate degree.

Air University's Associate-to-Baccalaureate Cooperative is helping Airmen who have completed CCAF degrees apply those credits toward a bachelor's degree. This program has grown to encompass 55 civilian university partners offering 200 bachelor's degree programs. Over 23,000 Airmen have participated and 1,735 bachelor's degrees have been awarded through this program alone. Additionally, 46 of these graduates have become commissioned officers.

We are also focused on professional credentialing to broaden the development of our Airmen. The Airframe and Power-Plant licensing program is one of several credentialing and licensing initiatives that codify the training and experience for over 75,000 aircraft maintainers, enabling them to earn the Federal Aviation Administration's mechanic license. CCAF is currently engaged in developing credentialing and licensing pilot programs and policies that support the White House Veterans Employment Initiative, the DoD Credentialing and Licensing Task Force, and the FY12 National Defense Authorization Act, section 558 mandate. We are convinced that opportunities like these directly increase Air Force recruitment and retention as well as enhance our Airmen's professional capabilities. Our focused efforts result in highly capable Airmen ready to contribute to our nation's defense and equipped for professional life outside of the Air Force. We continue to explore new programs that enhance our ability to educate the force, being keenly aware of the associated costs and need to seek efficiencies.

The Military Tuition Assistance (MilTA) program is a force multiplier that not only affects recruitment, retention, and readiness, but leads to greater critical thinking skills across the enlisted force. In order to sustain this valuable program within the fiscal environment and ensure Airmen are receiving the right education at the right time, the Air Force instituted management

Airmen: Our Greatest Strength

April 9, 2014

controls for the use of MilTA. The first was to re-insert the supervisor into the approval process. This allowed supervisors the opportunity to get to know their Airmen's educational goals and provide mentoring. Additionally, Airmen who have not passed or are overdue for their Physical Fitness Test, have an Unfavorable Information File, or have a referral annual performance report are ineligible for MilTA until these issues are resolved. We believe these controls ensure Airmen are prepared to succeed in their degree program as well as continue their critical work in the defense of our great nation. Our focused efforts result in highly capable Airmen ready to contribute to our nation's defense and equipped for professional life outside of the Air Force.

DEVELOPMENTAL SPECIAL DUTIES

We continue to make deliberate development decisions throughout an Airman's career with regards to promotions and assignments, and are actively identifying ways to ensure we have the right Airman, at the right place in his or her career, at the right time for our Air Force. In CY13 we formalized 10 Developmental Special Duties that directly impact the growth of our enlisted force and provide the broader experience Airmen need to succeed in different roles throughout their careers. Airmen throughout the force are nominated for these positions based on their previous experience and future potential. In November 2013, we selected approximately 1,100 Staff Sergeants, Technical Sergeants and Master Sergeants to serve as Military Training Instructors, Recruiters, USAF Honor Guardsmen, First Sergeants, Professional Military Education Instructors, Career Assistance Advisors, Technical Training Instructors, USAFA Military Trainers, Military Training Leaders, and Airman and Family Readiness Center NCOs. These Airmen were nominated by their MAJCOM leadership and selected from a pool of approximately 7,500 nominees. They are some of our best Airmen - the first to be hand-picked

Airmen: Our Greatest Strength

April 9, 2014

for these roles under the new process and will now be in a position to leverage their proven performance across the force.

AIRMAN COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT

A critical aspect of deliberate development is quality, comprehensive feedback that guides Airmen toward established goals. In the coming months we will introduce the Airman Comprehensive Assessment (ACA) that facilitates a deep, meaningful conversation between supervisors and the Airmen they lead. It includes a self-assessment, a detailed evaluation of current performance, and specific questions geared toward Airmen-centered feedback. The form will ensure Airmen understand their critical role in organizational climate, as well as Air Force culture, support of the mission, and individual readiness and resiliency.

CARING FOR AIRMEN AND FAMILIES

Caring for Airmen and their families is about maintaining the source of Airpower. Our Airmen are the engine that keeps the force moving, and we rely on them to meet any challenge and overcome any obstacle. The hallmark of our success has always been, and will remain, our people. Unfortunately, in the current fiscal environment, we must make tough decisions to include reducing or cutting some programs. To help mitigate the impact of reduced funding, the Air Force prioritized its programs to resource those most valued from an enterprise-wide, mission accomplishment perspective. As we move forward and our force changes, we must adapt our programs and services to ensure we meet the needs of today's Airmen and their families.

SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

Last summer, the Air Force established a multi-functional Air Force Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office--a directorate-level organization, led by a general officer whom

Airmen: Our Greatest Strength

April 9, 2014

reports directly to the Air Force Vice Chief of Staff. This office leads a robust focus on sexual assault prevention, advocacy, investigation, accountability and assessment and enables the Air Force to better synchronize with the Department of Defense lines of effort. As a result, the Air Force has been able to provide broader, more comprehensive victim support. The Air Force has also benchmarked a Special Victim's Counsel Program. It is through this program that victims of sexual assault have personal, direct access to an attorney representing only their interests in the judicial process as well as advocating for them in any collateral discipline issues and assisting them in any case issues whenever necessary. Additionally, "Every Airman Counts" is an initiative that our Air Force Vice Chief of Staff, General Larry O. Spencer launched as a forum to promote Airman-to-Airman dialogue related to Sexual Assault and provide the opportunity for Airmen to provide suggestions to senior leaders. Furthermore, the Air Force hired and trained Air Force Office of Special Investigations agents for the exclusive purpose of investigating sexual assaults. The Air Force team has already conducted focus groups with 1,400 Airmen, including 30 sexual assault survivors, male and female, at 14 installations worldwide and obtained valuable insight from the junior Airmen, all levels of leadership, and survivors of sexual assault. Lastly, the Air Force Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office works jointly with its Department of Defense counterparts to streamline future survey efforts, to include a 100 percent transition to the Defense Equal Opportunity Climate Survey. We are committed to taking every step possible to eliminate sexual assault within our ranks and instill confidence and care in the process.

CARE FOR WOUNDED WARRIORS

Our combat wounded and our seriously injured and ill Airmen and their families are a top priority. They continue to willingly sacrifice day in and day out to serve our nation; their

Airmen: Our Greatest Strength

April 9, 2014

resilience and perseverance when the effects of war forever alter their lives is simply astounding. We match their commitment through a lifelong promise to provide them the care and support they need, and so rightfully deserve. The Air Force has built a Recovery Care program for these Airmen that focuses on the full continuum of care - recovery, rehabilitation and transition.

By strategically placing Recovery Care Coordinators in 43 locations around the world, the Airmen and their families receive face-to-face, individualized service and support when and where they need it. Our commitment is unwavering whether our wounded, ill, or injured Airmen are returning to active service or transitioning to civilian life. The Recovery Care Coordinators also support the families and caregivers of our Airmen by identifying needs, connecting with support groups, and working to ease the burden brought on by their current circumstance.

Along with our Recovery Care Coordinators, the Air Force provides Non-Medical Care Managers who act as fiduciary agents on behalf of the recovering Airman and as advocates for the recovering Airman and his or her family with other government and non-governmental agencies. They work with Recovery Care Coordinators, medical care providers, chaplains, commanders and other providers as a single Recovery Team that meet the needs of our wounded, ill and injured and their families.

POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)

As might be expected with fewer deployments, the Air Force has seen a slight drop in newly diagnosed Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) cases between 2011 and 2012. Our data is not yet complete from 2013, but we expect the slight reductions to continue. Our overall rate has remained relatively low, and our current rate for newly diagnosed PTSD is under 0.4 percent. Historically we have retained approximately 75 percent of our Airmen diagnosed with PTSD.

Airmen: Our Greatest Strength

April 9, 2014

The Air Force remains committed to helping our Airmen through improving early symptom recognition and offering evidence-based treatments. We continue to screen our Airmen for PTSD symptoms at set points in the deployment cycle, to include screening through Pre- and Post-Deployment Health Assessment and Reassessment, and provide training to help counter the stresses on our Airmen with each deployment. Our Airmen in the Explosive Ordnance Disposal, Security Forces, Medical, and Transportation career fields are at higher risk of developing PTSD and receive additional education and training on how to recognize symptoms of PTSD along with available treatment and supportive resources. The Deployment Transition Center (DTC), Ramstein, Germany, continues to support Airmen in our high-risk careers with two days of training and reconstitution time before returning home. A 2010 study showed Airmen who participated in the DTC reported at least a six percent lower rate of post-traumatic symptoms, problematic alcohol use and interpersonal conflict after having attended the program as compared to a control-group of deployed Airmen who did not participate. Two follow on studies are being conducted to measure the continued effectiveness of the DTC. We continue to collaborate with the Department of Defense and Veterans Affairs to advance research on prevention and treatment of combat related injuries, including PTSD.

TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY (TBI)

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) rates in the Air Force remain very low. However, we are expanding our efforts to ensure our Airmen seek medical care for mild traumatic brain injury, or concussion, in any setting. The vast majority of TBI cases in the Air Force are from non-deployment related injuries. We identify deployed individuals with continued TBI symptoms upon return home through the Post Deployment Health Assessment, with referral as appropriate. The Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury and

Airmen: Our Greatest Strength

April 9, 2014

Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center continue to serve as valuable partners in facilitating a combined effort between all services, the Department of Veterans Affairs and civilian subject matter experts to develop clinical practice guidelines for our primary care providers. Our efforts are closely coordinated with the other Services through our TBI Quad Service Working Group to make sure we incorporate the latest in TBI research into clinical practice. The National Intrepid Center of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury serves as a premier referral center for those deployment-related cases with more significant symptoms.

SUICIDE PREVENTION

Suicide prevention remains a high priority for Air Force leadership at every level. Our prevention program is an integrated network of measures focused on reducing suicide through community support, education, early identification and treatment of those at risk. The program was designed with 11 overlapping elements to enhance the capacity of the Air Force to recognize and respond to Airmen in distress. We are encouraged that the number of suicides among Active Duty Airmen declined between 2012 and 2013. However, we know one loss is too many, which drives us to place significant focus and resources toward eliminating suicides in our force.

We are committed to strengthening and improving our program. Some recent suicide prevention initiatives include live training for all installation suicide prevention program managers and Department of Defense Suicide Event Report Point of Contacts, release of the revised Air Force Guide to Suicide Risk Assessment, Management, and Treatment for mental health providers and staff, and efforts to expand the Air Force's strategic communication plan for suicide prevention and promoting the Wingman Culture.

HEALTH PROMOTION

Airmen: Our Greatest Strength

April 9, 2014

The Air Force is committed to promoting a healthy, fit, resilient, and productive force. Our Health Promotion target areas include Tobacco Free Living, Nutritional Fitness, Physical Activity, and Healthy Weight. Consistent with our war-fighting mission, our Airmen have rates of obesity and physical activity that compare quite favorably with the civilian population. Smoking has seen a steady decline; our current smoking prevalence of 14 percent is lower than the national average of 18 percent. In the current fiscal climate, we are committed to implementing low-cost, high-reach policy and environmental interventions that promote healthy living as the default choice and social norm.

CHILD AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

The Air Force has continued our commitment to deliver readily available, affordable, and quality childcare programs for our Airmen and their families. These programs ensure our Airmen are able to focus on the mission while knowing their youngest family members are cared for through quality Child & Youth programs. In FY13 we delivered high quality child care programs to 58,000 children.

In addition to brick and mortar facilities, our Air Force Expanded Child Care program provides assistance in a home-based setting for Airmen who need care during unusual shifts, extended duty hours and drill weekends. This type of care is mission-critical particularly in those locations where community-based care options are both few and costly. Through programs like Extended Duty Care, Missile Care, Supplemental Care, and Returning Home Care, the Air Force is able to provide a wide range of support to our active and reserve component families. We expanded this capability in FY13 by implementing new childcare programs to assist wounded warriors, families of the fallen and those with unique needs due to medical circumstances.

Airmen: Our Greatest Strength

April 9, 2014

Additionally, our Air Force Youth Programs have taken a comprehensive approach to resiliency by integrating elements of resilience concepts throughout the experiences we provide to youth. We recognize the importance of providing meaningful opportunities during the out-of-school hours which can be peak times for “at risk” behavior, particularly in light of reduced school district and community service budgets. Our Youth Programs had 642,000 enrollments in a variety of fitness and health, deployment support, resiliency building, academic enrichment and community service activities offered to Total Force youth around the world. The Air Force Teen Council continues to offer advocacy opportunities and leadership skills while helping our teens strengthen their personal resiliency and contribute to the larger Air Force community. The newly implemented quarterly Teen Movement Projects have created a network of involved teens at each installation. New for 2013, our Youth Program members participated in the first ever Military Youth of the Year competition, an initiative in partnership with the Boys and Girls Clubs of America. Showcasing the stellar achievements of military teens around the world, Air Force teens were awarded an astonishing five out of six regional awards garnering a combined total of more than \$70,000 in Military Youth of the Year scholarships. In addition, through another key partnership with the US Department of Agriculture’s 4-H Youth Development Program, over 1,000 Air Force youth participated in the 2013 National Youth Science Day event and we were able to reach 14,000 additional youth through partnership with 4-H county extension agents.

FAMILY SUPPORT

The Air Force continues to bolster its communication to family members through the Key Spouse Program. The program designates one volunteer family member in each unit to

Airmen: Our Greatest Strength

April 9, 2014

disseminate information from installation leaders to other unit family members. This builds a greater sense of community, especially when families are separated by deployments.

Additionally, the Air Force is making steady progress in support of Air Force dependents attending public, private, DoD Dependent Schools, home, and virtual schools. Civilian (or Military designee) school liaisons and staff at our Airman & Family Readiness Centers provide support to base leaders and families through advocacy with local and state school administration and school boards. Forty-six states and the District of Columbia have passed legislation to establish an Interstate Compact on educational opportunity for military children in state and local school districts. The Interstate Compact ensures military children are not negatively impacted in school by their families' service to the nation. It provides educational solutions on class placement, records transfer, graduation requirements, immunizations, and exit testing, as well as allows late entry to extra-curricular activities and sports teams. The work done to ensure our families are not penalized as they move around the world is an important factor for our Airmen and their families.

About 50 percent of Air Force spouses seek employment with each military move, making spouse employment a consistent challenge. In many cases spouse employment constitutes almost half of an Air Force family's income. As I travel and meet with Airmen and their families, the struggle to find spouse employment is often a topic of conversation; it is very much on our Airmen's minds. They have benefited from your support and White House efforts to help military spouses enjoy consistent and productive careers despite relatively frequent relocation.

Unemployment compensation for spouses of service members continues to be critical to Air Force families. Support for unemployment compensation acknowledges military spouses

Airmen: Our Greatest Strength

April 9, 2014

need reasonable time and resources necessary to find suitable employment or meet licensing or credentialing requirements each time they move. We look forward to all states properly compensating spouses that move because of their military obligation.

Our Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) provides targeted assistance to Airmen who have family members with special needs. In FY13, we continued strengthening this program to provide our families with access to greater resources that will assist them in effectively balancing mission requirements with family care responsibilities. We have 35 full-time family support coordinators at Air Force installations with 175 EFMP enrollees or higher. In FY11, Respite Child Care was launched at seven locations to provide support to parents of exceptional family members. The program is now in 64 locations and has provided over 37,000 hours of skilled respite care allowing parents a needed break from the stressors of caring for a child with special needs. Through the generous support of the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), 100 accessible childcare playgrounds and community nature parks are in various stages of design and construction and will support family members with special needs.

CONCLUSION

Chairman Gillibrand, Ranking Member Graham, members of the Subcommittee, thank you again for this opportunity to represent the incredible Airmen and their families through this testimony. This past year has been extremely turbulent and stressful on those serving in our Air Force. All members - Active duty, Air National Guard, Air Force Reserve, and Civilian Airmen - have endured significant uncertainty and churn with respect to mission capability, compensation, and in some cases the very meaning of service in our Air Force. The budget challenges we face have not been lost on our force. We've stood down flying squadrons, furloughed civilians, and seen our readiness levels significantly decline; yet you would be proud

Airmen: Our Greatest Strength

April 9, 2014

to know the first concern of our Airmen is mission accomplishment. Our Airmen are truly doing amazing work around the world every day, from delivering relief to typhoon stricken regions in the Philippines to supporting combatant commanders from all corners of the globe. They continue to serve honorably and proudly in defense of our nation.

Our Air Force families are also a critical component to our success. These men and women serve alongside the service member by taking care of the home front while we employ and enable airpower around the world. They stand strong while loved ones deploy to war zones in foreign countries. Their faith and support is critical to our Airmen and enable the focus and dedication our complex missions require. Thank you again for your continued support for our brave Airmen and their supportive families.