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**REGARDING**

**PERSONNEL PROGRAMS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE**

**BEFORE THE**

**SENATE ARMED SERVICES PERSONNEL SUBCOMMITTEE**

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## **Introduction**

Chairman Tillis, Ranking Member Gillibrand, distinguished members of the Personnel Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am joined by my team of personnel and readiness experts, and it is our distinct privilege to represent the Total Force men and women, military and civilian, who serve our nation in the armed forces and Department of Defense.

We are grateful for Congress' strong support you provided in the Fiscal Year 2020 National Defense Authorization and Defense Appropriations Acts. This important legislation supports vital investments in our military's readiness and modernization, enabled the creation of the Space Force, and provided our Service members with the largest pay increase in a decade. Your continued support is vital to ensuring our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Civilians, and members of our newest service, the Space Force, have the tools, resources, and support to carry out their missions. Our people are the backbone of our nation's security; they protect and defend our nation and our American way of life.

Secretary of Defense Mark Esper reaffirmed the 2018 National Defense Strategy (NDS) will remain our keystone to successfully compete, deter, and, if necessary, fight and win across the spectrum of conflict against near-peer rivals, as well as rogue nations and violent extremist organizations. We are now engaged in great power competition with an emerging China and revanchist Russia, powers that pose an existential threat to the United States and challenge American interests across the globe. Every domain is now contested—land, sea, air, space, and cyberspace—and our great power rivals continuously seek to find and exploit vulnerabilities and disrupt our institutions and their capabilities. The NDS reorients the Department for great power competition and peer conflict.

In implementing the strategy, the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness is laser-focused on supporting the warfighter and enabling the military departments through the NDS' three lines of effort:

- Restore readiness and build a more lethal force
- Strengthen alliances, deepen interoperability, and attract new partners
- Reform the Department for greater performance and accountability

Secretary Esper articulates an additional priority line of effort—taking care of our people and their families—to ensure they have the resources they need to succeed, and the quality of life they deserve.

### **Restoring Readiness and Building a More Lethal Force**

Readiness and lethality begin with our most valued asset, our people, who are inextricably linked to readiness. Therefore, to attain and sustain readiness against the spectrum of threats, the Department requires the best people America has to offer.

#### *Readiness*

Readiness recovery continues to be challenged by current operational commitments, juxtaposed with the need to modernize to meet future threats. The balance we must find is maintaining a ready force with sufficient capability and capacity to meet current mission demands, while continuing to modernize our Total Force to fight and win against near-peer adversaries in the future.

The Department is using the Readiness Recovery Framework as an action plan focused on specific Service-identified areas for improvement, such as meeting combatant commander operational demands, mitigating manpower shortfalls, enhancing training capabilities on live ranges and synthetic environments, and enhancing the planning, coordination, and execution of readiness and training activities. The DoD is also consolidating all Service-specific readiness reporting systems into the Defense Readiness Reporting System–Strategic to enhance unity of effort and provide senior leaders with data-driven choices for optimizing strategic decisions on readiness matters such as resource allocation, capabilities, and personnel.

#### *The Space Force*

With the creation of our newest service, the U.S. Space Force, we are ushering in an information age Service, optimized to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We expect the Space Force to be an agile and lean organization that will consolidate the majority of space missions, units, resources, and personnel from the existing Military Services into the new Space Force. Although the Space Force will leverage existing expertise and infrastructure, it will establish its own identity and culture by developing mechanisms to commission, enlist, appoint, train, equip, and support its members, as well as designate specialty codes that align with the skills necessary for this new military service.

There is much work to be done as the Space Force embarks on its mission to craft the innovative strategies and tactics necessary to preserve space superiority. However, the Department looks forward to continued collaboration with Congress as we develop warfighters for the world's most capable Space Force.

### Education and Training

Developing Service members who understand the evolving nature of the security environment and how it affects American interests, the character of warfare, and the dimensions of strategic competition requires a military education and training system that can keep pace. This system is relied upon to educate the Joint Force, develop groundbreaking concepts and strategies to implement the NDS, sustain its momentum, and ensure its approach becomes part of an irreversible cultural shift in the Department.

The NDS specifically calls on the Department to emphasize intellectual leadership and military professionalism and to revise its talent management practices to ensure the greatest return on our educational and training investments. In keeping with this NDS mandate, the DoD continues to adapt to and leverage the powerful innovations underway. Automation, digitalization, artificial intelligence, augmented and virtual reality, and collaborative tools not only dramatically alter the character of war, but necessitate a shift in the learning environment to keep pace.

The Department is also shifting its focus in curricula in joint military education programs from a topic-based approach to a focus on outcomes. We are modifying our approach to emphasize ingenuity, military professionalism, and historical insights into the art and science of warfighting.

### 21<sup>st</sup> Century Talent Management

The Department's talent management enterprise must continuously assess, adapt, and innovate to keep pace with 21<sup>st</sup> century developments. Rather than using outdated models where personnel are treated like interchangeable parts from a bygone era, the DoD is ushering in a new age of talent management that recognizes the unique talents that Service members bring to the fight by considering preferences for assignments, and the knowledge, skills, and attributes required at key points in a Service members military career.

Our talent management system also harnesses the relationship between military education and training and talent management. We are refining our military education and talent

management processes to ensure our Service men and women who receive relevant education and training opportunities, are then directed to the right assignments to best leverage what they have learned and effectively contribute to the body of strategic leadership.

### **Strengthen Alliances and Attract New Partners**

America's alliances and partnerships around the world give the United States an unmatched advantage over our competitors. Maintaining and nurturing these relationships is a product of a long-term efforts to build trust and confidence between nations. The NDS recognizes the human dynamic as a strategic asset to build trust and deepen relationships with international allies and partners.

#### *Professional Military Education (PME)*

In today's complex security environment, where persuasive authority is often times as powerful as any weapon in our arsenal, building coalitions through personal engagements is at the forefront of our efforts. PME is one tool that provides a powerful strategic arena for enhancing alliances and expanding partnerships, and understanding the value of developing norms within the international profession of arms.

Increased partner nation access to U.S. PME programs contribute to establishing mutually beneficial relationships, developing enduring personal connections with future leaders, and exposing participants to American values.

### **Reform the DoD for Greater Performance and Affordability**

In line with the NDS's mandate to reform our organization to prepare the Department for great power competition, the Department is executing reforms to ensure more effective management processes and to achieve greater efficiencies to free resources for the warfighter. We will ensure we remain good stewards of American taxpayer dollars.

#### *Transformation of the Military Health System*

The Military Health System (MHS) is the most comprehensive military medical enterprise in the world. A key Department of Defense reform priority is the transformation of the MHS to ensure its ability to provide both a medically ready force to execute the National Defense Strategy, and a ready medical force to support our armed forces throughout the world.

The overarching direction of this reform is to consolidate and standardize military health care functions to increase the readiness of our force, better integrate healthcare delivery throughout the Department, and ensures all beneficiaries have continued access to high quality medical care.

The reform also includes the realignment and restructuring of our management processes for overseeing MTFs; the continued implementation and standardization of enterprise-wide activities in support of global medical activities; and the restructuring of the Department's medical personnel end strength. Taken together, these reforms represent the most significant change to the MHS in decades.

The DoD continues its consolidation of the management of military Medical Treatment Facilities (MTF) under the Defense Health Agency (DHA). This allows Service medical departments to focus on medical readiness requirements while providing quality healthcare through standardized clinical and business practices. The consolidation should eventually lower the Department's costs of operating the MHS by eliminating redundancies and improving efficiency. The end state of the consolidation will result in primary responsibility for operational medical care retained by the Services, while MTF healthcare delivery is the responsibility of the DHA.

In October 2019, the authority, direction, and control of MTFs in the continental U.S. was transferred to the DHA. While DHA's headquarters management capabilities are expanded, many of DHA's functions continue via support agreements with the Services. These relationships will be phased out on a conditions-based approach as DHA's MTF management capabilities are expanded through transfer of functions and personnel, which began earlier this year. The DoD will monitor the transition closely to ensure there are no gaps in medical care for our beneficiaries.

The Department recently submitted a report to Congress pursuant to Section 703 of the FY 2017 NDAA. This report details the comprehensive review of 343 MTFs identified as providing healthcare services in the United States.

The Department's review identified 50 MTFs for realignment and restructuring that will increase the readiness of our operational and medical forces, while ensuring all beneficiaries receive high quality medical care. More detailed implementation plans that include MTF-specific timelines will be forthcoming. The Department will continue to monitor MTFs closely

and make any adjustments necessary. **It is important to note** that all DoD beneficiaries will continue to have access to high quality healthcare, and any transitions will be conditions-based on the capacity of provider networks to absorb additional patients. This means beneficiaries in some areas could transition quickly to civilian networks, others may take years to transition as networks build capacity, and some may not transition based on local market conditions and capacities.

#### VA/DoD Collaboration

The DoD and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) are working closely together. We are collaborating to improve the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of health services and the delivery of benefits. Our Joint Executive Committee, a VA-DoD interagency coordination body co-chaired by the Deputy Secretary for VA and the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, is currently engaged on more than 20 VA-DoD joint initiatives to enhance interoperability and the seamless transition of our members from military service to post-service care, including the Federal Electronic Health Record Modernization (FEHRM).

The FEHRM serves as a single point of accountability in the delivery of a common electronic health record for DoD, VA, and the United States Coast Guard. The FEHRM will ensure each Department successfully executes their respective electronic health record deployment strategies with minimal risks to cost, performance, and schedule. When complete, DoD and VA clinicians will have the ability to share healthcare information to support continued and improved treatment for our Service members, their families, and our veterans.

The deployment of MHS GENESIS, the DoD's electronic health record, is currently underway. The most recent implementation wave occurred at four sites in September 2019. On our current trajectory, we will deploy MHS GENESIS at 10 installations in June 2020, and complete the deployment by the end of fiscal year 2024.

#### Military and Civilian Recruiting and Retention

The Department is adapting to the modern workforce as it strives to recruit and retain a diverse force that represents the best America has to offer. The current recruiting environment presents challenges due to low unemployment rates as well as a competitive job market that recruits from the same pool of candidates.

Recruits today are also digital natives that have an expectation to enter a military that uses technology that they are familiar with and that will allow them to optimize their time. In

order to attract and keep these types of individuals, the Department must continue to field the most advanced, cutting edge technology.

### Military

In recruiting the best and brightest for our Armed Forces, we are using marketing tools such as the Joint Advertising, Market Research & Studies (JAMRS) Program to understand factors that are critical to our recruiting goals, and ensure our efforts are conducted in the most efficient and beneficial ways. In sustaining our All-Volunteer Force, we are ensuring the public understands the importance and benefits of serving in the military through information initiatives and campaigns at all levels of our organization.

We are also ensuring our pay and benefits packages are competitive in order to attract the best candidates and compete against corporate America. The FY 2021 budget request supports a three percent military pay raise to sustain our ability to attract a highly talented force. Congress' support for this measure will be greatly appreciated.

In addressing a broad array of retention issues for our military members—from job satisfaction to quality of life to professional development—the Department is actively pursuing initiatives to increase career path flexibility, identifying non-monetary career-enhancing opportunities, addressing operational tempo, and managing operational commitments to reduce the strain of deployments on Service members, their families, and employers of our Guard and Reserves. In the end, if we do not take care of service members and their families, they will vote with their feet and move on to other opportunities.

### Civilians

Civilians who serve in the Department share the same values, ethics, and maintain the same mission focus as our military members. Their ability to provide valued perspective through a long term lens and uninterrupted service is vital to the DoD.

The skills inherent in today's civilian workforce become even more critical when we account for complex and evolving requirements such as in the cyber and space domains. Our civilian force is a repository of best practices and the incubators of new and innovative ideas. Their skills and talents are foundational to the strategies and plans we develop.

The Department is enhancing its civilian marketing and recruitment outreach efforts, working closely with critical functional communities such as cyber and digital to implement targeted recruitment strategies and increase awareness of the Department's civilian employment

opportunities. We are also identifying and improving ways to decrease hiring process bottlenecks, reduce the time to hire candidates, and enhance the quality of our hires. The DoD understands that as our security environment continues to evolve and straddle every sector of society, the role of our civilian force increases in importance every day.

### **Taking Care of People**

Our people – Active, Guard, and Reserve Service members, military families, and our civilians – are at the core of the NDS. We could not accomplish our missions in the Department without the dedication of our people who sacrifice every day to protect our nation. It is imperative we remain committed to each and every one of them.

Secretary Esper’s additional priority line of effort – taking care of our people and their families – ensures they have the resources they need to succeed, and the quality of life they deserve. The Department is acting aggressively on this priority to ensure our people have the care and support they deserve, and uphold our core values of good order and discipline, and treating all with dignity and respect.

### **Force Resiliency**

The Department is fully committed to strengthening and promoting the resiliency and readiness of the Total Force. Among our top priorities are to stop sexual assault and prevent suicides.

Sexual assault is destructive and undercuts our ability to keep a mission-focused, ready force. We are committed to preventing this crime, encouraging increased reporting, caring for victims, and holding offenders appropriately accountable. Most recently, we launched the *CATCH a Serial Offender Program*, and we continue to implement recommendations from the *Sexual Assault Accountability and Investigation Task Force*.

The Department is grateful to all members of this Committee, in particular Senator McSally’s leadership, for your partnership on the Task Force. The efforts of the Task Force are driving improvements in leadership, process timeliness and accuracy, fairness and due process, and our overall system’s credibility and transparency. We are grateful for Congress’ support of many of these recommendations in the FY20 NDAA.

We are also emphasizing mental health and resiliency for our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines as we strive to prevent suicides. Suicides decimate lives, families, and units. The

Department is committed to supporting our Service members and preventing these devastating tragedies.

Our efforts in suicide prevention are focused on increasing help-seeking behaviors, targeting efforts to our Service members at highest risk, and ensuring all members of the DoD family are part of the solution. In September 2019, the Department released its inaugural Annual Suicide Report for Calendar Year 2018. The data from this and future reports will assist in targeting the areas of greatest concern as we strive to eliminate suicides within the Department of Defense.

#### *Domestic Violence and Child Abuse*

Domestic violence is a serious national issue and the military community is not immune. We are focusing on collaborating with civilian partners to increase awareness of domestic violence, prevention, and support services available to Service members and their families.

The Department's public awareness campaign promotes a military community culture that reduces the stigma for seeking help and normalizes support for domestic violence victims. The Family Advocacy Program (FAP) provides education about available services through military and civilian communities, and educates commands on warning signs of domestic violence and the command's responsibility to encourage Service members and their families to seek help.

The DoD is also committed to ensuring prompt reporting and response to all allegations of child abuse and neglect. The FAP uses a coordinated community response model, in collaboration with law enforcement, legal, medical, command, and civilian child welfare services. The FAP also works closely with the Defense State Liaison Office on reciprocal reporting issues between State Child Protective Service agencies and the military. This collaboration has resulted in 24 states revising their statutes to develop laws and policies to comply with reciprocal reporting.

#### *Military Spouse Employment and Licensure*

Military spouses face barriers to employment due to frequent relocations and extended periods of family separations. Delays and expenses associated with re-licensure cause many military spouses to put their careers on hold or not to practice in their professions at all. This financial and quality of life issue impacts the desirability of remaining in the military for many Service members.

The Department is dedicated to supporting military spouse employment. Recently, the Secretary of Defense directed the Secretaries of the Military Departments to include military spous employment assistance as a criterion in future basing decisions. The DoD is also working with State governments to develop legislation and policies that grant licensure reciprocity between States. Additionally, the Department provides military spouses with education and career guidance through comprehensive tools and resources to support career exploration, education, training, licensing, employment readiness, and career connections. By assisting our military spouses and our families, we allow our Service members to remain mission focused and incentivize retention in their military careers.

#### Access to Childcare

Secretary Esper recognizes the importance of providing military families with access to quality, affordable childcare. Access to childcare is a workforce issue that directly impacts the readiness and retention of the Total Force. In February of this year, Secretary Esper issued a directive prioritizing uniformed Service members' children in installation child care programs.

The Department is committed to meeting the increased demand for childcare services. Initiatives, such as the establishment of a joint-Service working group to look at ways to recruit and retain quality child care staff, will continue to be pursued to ensure we can meet the rising demand. At the same time, we understand this challenge requires multi-pronged solutions and are also looking at other strategies to increase child care capacity and decrease waiting lists.

#### **Where Congress Can Help**

The Department of Defense is tremendously appreciative of the support you provided in the Fiscal Year 2020 National Defense Authorization and Defense Appropriations Acts. We are hopeful Congress will provide us with on-time authorization and appropriations legislation for Fiscal Year 2021 so we can capitalize on the vital investments in defense the American people have already made, and ensure the predictable and timely funding the Department requires.

We would also appreciate the Committee's careful consideration of the DoD legislative proposals that will more effectively enable the Department to carry out its missions.

## **Conclusion**

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before the Committee to represent the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and Civilians who have volunteered to dedicate their lives to protecting our freedoms and our way of life. Their sacrifices are awe-inspiring and deserve the gratitude of all American citizens. With the continued collaboration with and support from Congress, we will do all we can to ensure our people have the resources, the education and training, and the full range of support needed to accomplish their missions.