

# Department of the Air Force

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Presentation

Before the House Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Military Construction and  
Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies



## *Quality of Life in the Military*

Witness Statements of  
CMSAF JoAnne S. Bass  
Chief Master Sergeant of the U.S. Air Force

CMSSF Roger A. Towberman  
Chief Master Sergeant of the U.S. Space Force

May 18, 2021

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Not for publication until released by the House Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related  
Agencies



# BIOGRAPHY



## **UNITED STATES AIR FORCE**

### **CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE JOANNE S. BASS**

Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force JoAnne S. Bass 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. She 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 more than 600,000 Total Force Airmen. Chief Bass is the 19th chief master sergeant appointed to the highest noncommissioned officer position.



Chief Bass was raised as an Army dependent, living in several overseas and stateside locations, prior to entering the Air Force in 1993. Throughout her career, she has held a variety of leadership positions serving at the squadron, group, wing and major command levels. She has significant joint service and special operations experience and has participated in several operations and exercises as well as deployments in direct support of Operations SOUTHERN WATCH, ENDURING FREEDOM, and IRAQI FREEDOM.

Prior to this assignment, she served as the Command Chief Master Sergeant, Second Air Force, Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi.

### **EDUCATION**

1997 Airman Leadership School, Pope Air Force Base (AFB), N.C.

2000 Associate Degree, Airport Resource Management, Community College of the Air Force

2004 Noncommissioned Officer Academy, Kapaun Air Station, Germany

2005 Bachelor of Science in Professional Aeronautics, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University

2006 Senior Noncommissioned Officer Academy, Course 12, by distance learning

2007 Senior Enlisted Joint Professional Military Education, by distance learning

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2009 Senior Noncommissioned Officer Academy, Maxwell AFB, Ala.

2013 Air Mobility Command Leadership Challenge Program, Ramstein Air Base (AB), Germany

2013 Chief Master Sergeant Leadership Seminar, Ramstein AB, Germany

2015 AFSSO21 Executive Leadership Seminar, University of Tennessee, Nashville

2015 USAF Enterprise Leadership Seminar, Kenan-Flagler Business School, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

2016 Senior Enlisted Joint Professional Military Education II, by distance learning

2017 Keystone Command Senior Enlisted Leader Course, National Defense University, Washington, D.C.

2018 Leading Strategically, Center for Creative Leadership, Colorado Spring, Colo.

2018 Coaching for Greater Effectiveness, Center for Creative Leadership, Greensboro, N.C.

### **ASSIGNMENTS**

1. June 1993 – June 1996, Operations System Management Journeyman, 74th Fighter Squadron, Pope Air Force Base (AFB), N.C.

2. June 1996 – July 1998, Range Scheduling Specialist, 43rd Operations Support Squadron, Pope AFB, N.C.

3. July 1998 – November 2000, Noncommissioned Officer in Charge, Current Operations Scheduler, 24th Special Tactics Squadron, Fort Bragg, N.C.

4. November 2000 – March 2001, Current Operations Scheduler, 86th Operations Support Squadron, Ramstein Air Base (AB), Germany

5. March 2001 – January 2004, Noncommissioned Officer in Charge, Special Airlift Operations, Air Mobility Operations Control Center, Ramstein AB, Germany

6. January 2004 – November 2005, Noncommissioned Officer in Charge, Host Aviation Resource Management, 86th Operations Support Squadron, Ramstein AB, Germany

7. November 2005 – August 2010, Superintendent, Host Aviation Resource Management, Group Career Field Functional Manager, (Data Masked)

8. August 2010 – September 2012, Superintendent, Host Aviation Resource Management and Superintendent, 86th Operations Support Squadron, Ramstein AB, Germany

9. September 2012 – May 2015, Superintendent, 86th Operations Group, Ramstein AB, Germany

10. May 2015 – September 2016, Command Chief Master Sergeant, 17th Training Wing, Goodfellow AFB, Texas

11. September 2016 – July 2018, Chief, Air Force Enlisted Developmental Education, Pentagon, Washington, D.C.

12. July 2018 – August 2020, Command Chief Master Sergeant, Second Air Force, Keesler AFB, Miss.

13. August 2020 – Present, Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, Pentagon, Washington D.C.

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### **MAJOR AWARDS AND DECORATIONS**

Legion of Merit

Defense Meritorious Service Medal

Meritorious Service Medal with four oak leaf clusters

Joint Service Commendation Medal

Air Force Commendation Medal with two oak leaf clusters

Air Force Achievement Medal with two oak leaf clusters

### **OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS**

1995 Airman of the Year, 74th Fighter Squadron

1997 John L. Levitow Award, Airman Leadership School

2004 Distinguished Graduate, Noncommissioned Officer Academy

2009 Distinguished Graduate, Senior Noncommissioned Officer Academy

2010 USAFE Senior Noncommissioned Officer Aviation Resource Manager of the Year

2011 Senior Noncommissioned Officer of the Year, 86th Operations Group

### **EFFECTIVE DATE OF PROMOTION**

Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force August 2020

(Current as of August 2020)



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## UNITED STATES SPACE FORCE

### **CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE SPACE FORCE ROGER A. TOWBERMAN**

Chief Master Sergeant Roger A. Towberman serves at 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 acts as the personal adviser to the Chief of Space Operations and the Secretary of the Air Force on all issues regarding the welfare, readiness, morale, proper utilization and development of the U.S. Space Force. Chief Towberman is the first chief master sergeant appointed to the highest noncommissioned officer position.



Chief Towberman entered the Air Force in September 1990 and his career has included various duties as a ground and airborne cryptologic language and intelligence analyst. Throughout his career, he filled myriad leadership roles at the squadron, group, wing, Numbered Air Force, Major Command and Combatant Command level, while stateside, overseas and deployed. His deployments included supporting Operations Joint Forge, Allied Force, Northern Watch, Southern Watch, Iraqi Freedom, Enduring Freedom and Unified Protector. As a Career Enlisted Aviator, he logged more than 4,500 flying hours.

He entered the United States Space Force on April 3, 2020.

#### **EDUCATION**

1995 Pacific Air Forces Airman Leadership School, Hickam AFB, Hawaii

2002 U.S. Air Forces in Europe Non-Commissioned Officer Academy, Kapaun AB, Germany

2002 Joint Advanced Tactical Signals Intelligence Training Program, Naval Strike, Air Warfare Center, Fallon, Nev. 2004 Associate in Communications Application Technology degree, Community College of the Air Force

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2006 U.S. Air Force Senior Noncommissioned Officer Academy, Maxwell AFB, Ala. 2009 U.S. Air Force Chief Master Sergeant Leadership Course, Maxwell AFB, Ala. 2014 Air Force Smart Operations for the 21st Century, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tenn. 2014 Enterprise Leadership Seminar, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, N.C.

### **ASSIGNMENTS**

1. May 1992-March 1997, Systems Operator and Collection Manager, Wheeler Army Airfield, Hawaii
2. March 1997-March 1999, C2 Network Analyst, Kelly AFB, Texas
3. March 1999-August 2007, Superintendent, Standardization and Evaluations, Flight Chief Airborne Operations, 488th Intelligence Squadron, RAF, Mildenhall, United Kingdom
4. August 2007-October 2009, Operations Superintendent, 338th Combat Training Sq, Offutt AFB, Neb.
5. October 2009-July 2010, Operations Superintendent, 488th Intelligence Sq, RAF Mildenhall, United Kingdom
6. July 2010-August 2011, Superintendent, 488th Intelligence Sq, RAF Mildenhall, United Kingdom
7. August 2011-May 2013, Superintendent, 55th Electronic Combat Group, Davis-Monthan AFB, Ariz. (April 2012- November 2012, Superintendent, 455th Expeditionary Operations Group, Bagram, Afghanistan)
8. May 2013-September 2014, Command Chief Master Sergeant, 480th Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Wing, Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Va.
9. September 2014-August 2017, Command Chief Master Sergeant, 25th Air Force, Joint Base San Antonio- Lackland, Texas
10. August 2017-November 2018, Senior Enlisted Advisor, Assistant Secretary of the Air Force (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), Pentagon, Washington D.C.
11. November 2018-December 2019, Command Chief, Air Force Space Command, Peterson AFB, Colo.
12. August 2019-August 2020, Command Senior Enlisted Leader, U.S. Space Command, Peterson AFB, Colo.
13. April 2020- Present, Senior Enlisted Advisor of the U.S. Space Force, U.S. Space Force, Pentagon, Arlington, Va.

### **MAJOR AWARDS AND DECORATIONS**

Defense Superior Service Medal  
Legion of Merit  
Bronze Star  
Meritorious Service Medal with four oak leaf clusters

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Air Medal with ten oak leaf clusters  
Aerial Achievement Medal with seven oak leaf clusters  
Joint Service Commendation Medal  
Air Force Commendation Medal with two oak leaf clusters  
Air Force Achievement Medal with two oak leaf clusters

### **OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS**

1995 Distinguished Graduate, Airmen Leadership School  
2002 Distinguished Graduate, Noncommissioned Officer Academy  
2005 Senior Noncommissioned Officer of the Year, 488th Intelligence Squadron  
2006 Distinguished Graduate, Senior Noncommissioned Officer Academy  
2006 Chief Master Sgt. James M. McCoy Academic Achievement Award Winner, Senior Noncommissioned Officer Academy  
2006 Air Force Intelligence Awards Program, Active Duty Senior Noncommissioned Officer of the Year, 8th Air Force  
2007 Airborne Mission Supervisor of the Year, 55th Wing  
2007 Electronic Warfare Senior Noncommissioned Officer of the Year, 55th Wing

### **FLIGHT INFORMATION**

CEA Status: Master Enlisted Aircrew  
Flight Hours: 4,574 including 3,748 combat support hours  
Aircraft Flown: RC-135V/W/U

### **EFFECTIVE DATES OF PROMOTION**

Chief Master Sergeant of the Space Force April 2020

*(Current as of February 2021)*

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## **Introduction**

Chairwoman Wasserman Schultz, Ranking Member Carter, and members of this Subcommittee, thank you for your interest in the quality of life of the men and women who serve our great nation and for the continued support you have shown us both. We are honored for this opportunity to address the needs of our Department as well as speak with you on the impact of those needs to the lives of our Airmen, Guardians, and their families.

Simply put, our forces inspire us every day. They are truly America's sons and daughters, and we couldn't be more honored to serve alongside them. Our service-members are part of an all-volunteer force that stands on the front lines of national security during an era of significantly contested domains. Our ability to defend our way of life is secured in the knowledge that our legislators are making service-impacting decisions with our well-being in mind. We proudly serve our great nation with the unwavering faith that our families and communities are supported by those who are elected to represent us. It falls on us to ensure that our United States Airmen and Guardians have the resources required to remain the highest trained, best equipped and best led military department this world has ever seen.

We are at an inflection point, where it has never been more important we put our service members' quality of life first. As we face rapidly-evolving challenges, new domains of warfare, and near-peer competitors...we must continue to support them, as they faithfully support and defend our great nation.

The life of a service member, while incredibly rewarding, is extremely challenging and demanding, and we ask much of them. Their physical, mental, spiritual, and financial health directly contribute to our readiness, and our nation's warfighting ability. The readiness of our individual warfighters cannot be separated from the readiness of the whole of the force. Our



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country needs forces who are trained, resilient, ready and able to accelerate and get after the change our Air Force needs to compete, deter, and win any high-end fight while ensuring our Space Force remains always above and tailor built for the newest warfighting domain.

Our readiness is driven by our ability to care for our Airmen, Guardians, and their families. How we recruit, train, develop, retain, and transition them are key components of that as well. For those Americans who choose to pursue a career in the world's greatest Air Force or the world's first Space Force, they are stepping into an environment filled with countless opportunities which impact our force like never before. The Air Force is smaller than we have been in years past and the Space Force has been purpose built to be as lean as possible, however, we have a strong way-ahead and strategy that will move us in the right direction...we need your assistance to help us get there. With the establishment of the Space Force, we have built an incredible partnership between our two services which is sincerely represented here in our joint statement. In truth, all we do we do together and we are steadfastly linked and committed to securing the highest of the high grounds together. The Air Force has reaffirmed our mission is *"to fly, fight and win...Airpower anytime, anywhere."* The Space Force is working hard on several core documents outlining our doctrine and our way of life. Every single Airman and Guardian, from every career field and assigned to both services, is responsible for generating the Airpower and Spacepower our sister services, partner nations and country expect. We are where we are because of our innovative spirit, devotion to duty, commitment to our warrior ethos, and our love for this nation. Our service members stand on the shoulders of the giants who came before us, and we will continue the charge in defense of our great country.

As we move forward in our strategy and focus on the Air and Space Force of 2030 and beyond, there is much to be done. We must focus on developing the Airmen and Guardians We

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Need, and creating an environment where every single one of them can thrive and be their very best. We must guarantee a culture of dignity and respect, and an environment where we value the diversity of the force, and inclusion is our default. And we owe it to our forces to build an institution where no one is afraid of sexual assault, harassment, discrimination, bullying, violence, or anything of the sort. While we live in an era where there are challenges all around us, we must continue to find ways to build the resilience of our members, and get after mental health issues that steal the lives of our brothers and sisters in arms. We are committed to dismantling the stigmas surrounding mental health treatment, and creating a culture where seeking help is not shameful. We will maintain a culture where our Airmen and Guardians can thrive, and know for certain that their leaders, teammates, and wingmen care deeply about them. All of these things are integral to who we are and imperative to our future success.

We also realize and deeply appreciate the service and sacrifice of our military families. They give so much in their own right. And the same care and support we provide our Airmen and Guardians must extend to every member of their family. Continuing to eliminate the barriers of military spouse employment, improving the availability and affordability of childcare, ensuring that the quality of our schools remains high, and ensuring our families have the access and support they need, when they need it, are paramount. Taking these issues on demonstrates our commitment to our service members and their families, and ultimately builds their trust in our great institution.

As we work to build that trust and care for our Airmen, our Guardians, and our families, we cannot turn a blind eye to our infrastructure. Our installations are not only key components of supporting our warfighting mission, but they are also where we call home. Years of competing priorities and fiscal constraints have forced us to manage risk in infrastructure and continues to

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create challenges and hardships for our Airmen and Guardians. Caring for our warfighters and their families cannot be rhetoric. We must honor the promises we make to those who look to us for leadership.

The readiness of our Airmen, our Air Force, our Guardians, and our Space Force is inseparably linked to our quality of life and an investment we must continue to make to preserve America's competitive advantage.

Our service members and their families remain grateful for your efforts and continued support, and so do we. Thank you.

### **Military Family Housing**

Ensuring the health and safety of our Airmen, Guardians and their families living in government-controlled housing is a leadership imperative for our Air and Space Force.

The Department of the Air Force family housing FY22 inventory contains 15,273 homes. Approximately 19%, or 2,900 homes, fall below the facility condition standard set by the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Housing. Those assessed below this standard require divestiture, or some level of repair. Out of the 2,900 homes, only 346 are assessed below 60 on the 100-point Facility Condition Index. Facilities assessed below 60 generally require more robust repairs and increased maintenance to ensure they are safe and operable for occupants.

The Department of the Air Force uses the Family Housing Master Plan to provide a comprehensive investment strategy to execute housing projects at the right time, scope, and cost. Within that plan, the Family Housing Construction Investment Program acquires, constructs, replaces, and improves housing units, housing support facilities and infrastructure.

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The Department of the Air Force's FY22 Family Housing Construction (FHCON) has identified several challenges within military family housing, such as: a slowly declining Facility Condition Index across the FYDP. Based on 81% of the inventory in adequate condition at the beginning of FY22, we project only 72% to be adequate by the beginning of FY26; another concern is bids exceeding cost estimates due to high construction costs, an aging and limited labor pool, and increased demand, which contribute to delays in awarding construction projects.

Short term measures to overcome these challenges include canceling projects no longer necessary, such as FY20 Spangdahlem as a result of Economic Impact Council (EIC) changes. Long term fixes include a greater level of analysis within the on-going update to the Department of the Air Force's Family Housing Master Plan to determine the health and appropriate funding of both the Family Housing Construction and Family Housing Maintenance and Repair. This will provide insights into potential right-sizing of the total Military Family Housing (MFH) to meet the DOD goal: 90% of MFH inventory in adequate condition, by changing the current downward trend of inventory condition to an upward trend.

To help manage the condition of MFH, the Air Force Family Housing Operations and Maintenance program provides resources to keep homes available for occupancy and ensure they are adequately maintained. Operations funds are used to plan, manage, and execute functions for housing administration including civilian pay; municipal-type services such as entomology, refuse collection/disposal, and snow removal; and furnishings. Maintenance funds are utilized for day-to-day maintenance and repair of government-owned housing units facilitated by in-house or contracted personnel as well as design, alterations, and major repair projects to sustain and modernize inventory while improving adequacy ratings of the units.

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The Department of the Air Force's FY21 FHCON Tasking Order prioritized restoration and modernization projects within the overall program. In response to the results of the DOD Inspector General evaluation of DOD management of health and safety hazards in government-owned and controlled MFH, identified deficiencies were corrected.

### **Department of the Air Force Dormitories**

The Department of the Air Force dormitory inventory contains 761 permanent party dorms comprising 53,302 bedrooms, and 119 training dorms with 43,527 bedrooms. Out of 880 dorm buildings, none were assessed below the facility condition standard set by the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense. Despite the high overall dorm condition rating, the department recognized that, based on facility and system component life cycle, nearly 35% of the dormitory inventory is ready for repairs or replacement of major systems. Continued deliberate investment is required to sustain adequate dormitories. The Department of the Air Force evaluates dormitories through the Dormitory Master Plan (DMP) by using a building systems approach that is based on the life cycle of system components. The DMP projects dormitory repair and renewal requirements based on system age and overall assessed condition of systems and components.

### **Meeting the Military Childcare Need**

Available, affordable and quality childcare programs are an essential workforce enabler for our Airmen and Guardians. These programs ensure the care and support of family members, which allows our service members to clearly focus on training and mission accomplishment. We currently have 175 child development and 92 youth centers on our installations. We also offer expanded childcare programs, utilizing a variety of approaches to meet the needs of Airmen and Guardians who require nontraditional care for irregular duty hours. Unfortunately, this still does

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not meet the demand for the care our service members need. As of March 2021, there were 4,050 children on a waiting list for on-base childcare – with an average wait time of 154 days. To combat this gap between needs and capability, we are working to maximize the spaces and childcare options currently available, pursue initiatives to expand childcare options, and leverage feedback from Airmen, Guardians and their families, to make the programs better. We have launched a new communication platform for childcare resources, and authorized relocation incentives and moving-cost options for hard-to-fill childcare positions at 10 bases. These existing challenges were only amplified by the pandemic, which required our school age care operations to support modified scheduled and instructional modes. Additionally, we implemented a military spouse appointment childcare program to provide flexible childcare options to ensure spouses may keep appointments related to key aspects of military life. We have also utilized the Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood (MCCYN) to subsidize a portion of childcare fees. This program supports Airmen and Guardians living in areas where on-base childcare is not available, or there is an extensive waitlist. In FY20, roughly 5,000 children were supported through MCCYN. As we continue to leverage these programs, we must also remain conscious of the increasing demand for available, affordable and quality childcare. This directly impacts the readiness and retention of our Airmen, Guardians, and their families. It is more than just a quality of life initiative, it is a force multiplier essential to mission success.

### **Women in the Military**

The Department of the Air Force continues to operationalize diversity and inclusion to fully leverage America's greatest asset – our people. Since January 2016, 100% of all Department of Air Force occupations and positions have been open to women. Additionally, we have updated the Air Force Medical Standards Directory, reducing restrictions on pregnant

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women performing flight duties and required units to provide nursing mothers access to a lactation facility.

While these have been important strides towards improving the quality of life and inclusivity of our Department, there is still work to be done. This is why we have implemented a Rated Diversity Improvement Strategic Action Plan designed to increase demographic representation of women and minorities in our rated pilot force across the Air Force. The targeting of geographic recruiting markets provides our Air and Space Force recruiters with the tools and resources they need to identify and assess geographically, racially and ethnically diverse communities. These efforts have led to a 30% increase in the female officer applicant pool to the United States Air Force Academy for 2022. Additionally, the Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps is showing upward trends in their applicant pool, with a 28% female class for 2022.

Looking ahead, we have established unconscious bias training and charged developmental teams with conducting an analysis to identify barriers that prevent Airmen and Guardians from reaching their highest levels of performance. We have also established a policy on filling key military developmental slates of qualified, diverse candidates for executive officer, military assistant and similar positions to address persistent diversity gaps impacting key Air and Space Force deliberate development experiences. Furthermore, the Department of the Air Force also initiated civilian hiring panels designed to increase the transparency of the selection process, with the intent to establish a level playing field for all applicants and maximize the effectiveness of diversity and inclusion within higher civilian ranks.

Regarding our Career Intermission Program (CIP), the flexibility, made permanent in the FY19 National Defense Authorization Act, now allows service members to transfer to the

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Individual Ready Reserve and back to Active Duty to meet personal or professional needs.

Between 2014 and 2019, 87 women participated in the program, and 54 of the 79 total CIP participants who listed “raise and grow a family” as an intent for applying were women.

However, one of the most recent changes we made to improve the quality of life for women serving in our Air and Space Force has been the adoption of new grooming standards. These updates addressed the personal health and hair loss of our female service members, in an ongoing effort to improve diversity and inclusion within the ranks.

Our Air and Space Force must continue to attract, develop and retain the best and brightest our nation has to offer. We can accomplish this by continually identifying and addressing the barriers that prevent our Airmen and Guardians from reaching their full potential, leveraging diverse perspectives, developing innovative solutions and supporting viable, forward leaning initiatives to resolve the challenges we face in defense of our nation.

### **Suicide Prevention**

Suicide prevention remains a Department of the Air Force priority at every level, despite challenges from COVID-19 and increasing Department of Defense suicide counts. Between 2015 and 2018, suicide rates remained relatively the same, roughly 25.1 per 100,000. Those rates increased in 2019, to 25.9 per 100,000. However, our intent is to reduce those rates to zero. We are focused on four areas, and aligning them with the Center for Disease Control: building connections, detecting risk, promoting protective environments, and equipping our Air and Space Forces and families. Our intent is to take a leadership-driven public-health approach, informed by data and partnerships with academia, industry, and sister Services to leverage diverse ideas and innovate prevention activities.



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The Air Force suicide prevention strategy focuses on building off those four identified areas and establishing five prevention priorities for 2021: leadership development, evaluating the effectiveness of prevention efforts, enhancing prevention messaging, empowering and equipping families, and focusing on time-based prevention. Within the strategy, we have incorporated a continuous process improvement framework to ensure the results we drive are evaluated against the latest research on suicide prevention.

Our True North program has moved from a beta test to an execution phase for embedding mental health providers and religious support teams in units at 16 installations plus Air Support Operations Squadrons and rescue units Air Force-wide. The priority for installation expansion is based on 5-year history of suicides, sexual assaults, domestic violence, child maltreatment, and other violence data, to include workplace violence. Additionally, in 2020, we developed and launched online family member suicide prevention training to equip and empower families. By the fourth quarter of 2020, the Department of the Air Force had issued more than 3,200 training certificates from the program.

In 2019, the largest demographic of suicides among service members were single men, between the ages of 23-30, and in the rank of E1-E4. They predominantly used a firearm as the means to commit suicide. To address this, the Department of the Air Force leaned into the development and distribution of additional time-based prevention products, including a total of 202,000 gun locks, educational materials and training on safe-storage options. Time-based prevention puts time and space between members in distress and access to lethal means, particularly firearms, which are involved in more 70% of the Department of the Air Force suicide deaths.

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Our Suicide Analysis Board policy is being revamped for 2021 to centralize and standardize suicide death analysis. Our Major Commands will be provided results and recommendations that drive prevention activities. Additionally, the new SAB process will leverage expertise from Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences and ensure objectivity in the review, dramatically enhancing our ability to identify gaps and equip leaders.

Looking to the future, the continued funding for expansion of the True North program is essential to ensuring our Airmen and Guardians have direct access to the care they need, when they need it.

### **Sexual Assault Prevention and Response**

The Department of the Air Force remains fully committed to Sexual Assault Prevention and Response and advanced sexual assault prevention and response capabilities via evidence-based strategies, a violence prevention workforce and fostering partnerships with helping agencies and community partners. Sexual assault is a crime that undermines force lethality, readiness, and mission success. Despite significant efforts, cases did not reduce, and we must recognize we have not made significant, measurable progress in preventing/reducing the number of sexual assault cases. The Department of the Air Force remains committed to combatting sexual assaults in the ranks using effective, research-informed prevention and ensuring comprehensive support and response for sexual assault victims.

In line with DOD trends, the Department of the Air Force experienced a significant increase in sexual assault prevalence among women between 2016 and 2018, jumping from 2.8% to 4.3%. Prevalence rates among men remained relatively low, but still increased slightly between 2016 and 2018, jumping from .3% to .5%. Regarding sexual harassment, the data for

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both women and men show a statistically significant increase between 2016 and 2018; women jumped from 13.2% to 15.4%, men jumped from 3.2% to 4%.

The Department of the Air Force goal is to increase the reporting percent to match estimated prevalence, while reducing both overall. Our strategy is focused on prevention but also includes response and accountability through several initiatives, such as: the Sexual Communication and Consent Program. This is an innovative, evidence-informed sexual assault prevention training developed specifically for delivery during Basic Military Training that includes both universal and tailored content. Additionally, the Department of the Air Force is providing Bystander Intervention Training: this annual training provides a foundation of the concepts of bystander intervention, targeted for all Airmen and Guardians across the total force. Furthermore, the Wingman Intervention Training is provided during technical school and at the First Term Airman Center, and targets the most at-risk age group population. The 2021 Total Force Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Training was created to enable maximum flexibility and tailoring, so the delivery format for the key content can be determined by either Major Commands or Air Force installations.

Additionally, the Department of the Air Force continues to support the DOD Catch a Serial Offender Program where Restricted Reporting victims can anonymously disclose information to identify serial offenders. To enhance accountability programs, the department has enhanced collaboration among legal offices, military criminal investigators, and circuit trial counsel for investigations of sexual assault, domestic violence, and child abuse, from investigation through the termination of trial proceedings, if applicable.

Some of the newest initiatives we are implementing include the Department of the Air Force's Compatibility Assessment, which is designed to assess risk of disciplinary and

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counterproductive workplace behaviors negatively impacting well-being, morale and mission.

The Interpersonal Violence Task Force, established July 2020, conducted a Total Force survey about multiple types of interpersonal violence, including sexual assault. From this survey, focus groups were formed to look deeper into these issues.

### **Diversity & Inclusion**

The Air and Space Force understands that planning for our next generation workforce is just as critical as planning for our next generation weapon systems. To defeat our adversaries we must continue to operationalize diversity and inclusion to fully leverage the nation's greatest strength – our remarkably diverse people – for a decisive, lethal advantage.

In recognition of this, the Department of the Air Force's foundational competencies now contain the principle of fostering inclusion. We recognize that while we have a diverse force, we need to continue to make strides in how inclusive we are. Within the efforts to improve the culture, the department has eased fitness standards for Airmen and Guardians who have experienced a miscarriage, implemented court-ordered child custody assignment or deferment, established unconscious bias training and charged developmental teams to conduct an analysis to identify and address barriers preventing members from reaching their highest potential. We have established a policy on filling key military developmental slates of qualified, diverse candidates, designed to address diversity gaps impacting key deliberate development experiences. Additionally, the Department of the Air Force initiated civilian hiring panels to increase transparency of selection process which includes the mandatory use of hiring panels for GS-14 and GS-15 fill actions.

As part of an effort to measure the effectiveness of these initiatives, Air and Space Equal Opportunity Advisors conduct organizational climate assessments. They rely on the Defense

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Equal Opportunity Management Institute for research, training and tools to assist commanders in creating action plans to improve the unit's culture and increase inclusion. We have also implemented changes to adverse administrative actions guidance, and begun tracking adverse administrative actions with regard to age, rank, gender and race of those issuing and receiving administrative action. The Department of the Air Force is also identifying and removing systemic bias in the aircraft acquisition and design process to include: updating anthropometric standards and designing maternity flight suits.

Looking ahead, the Department of the Air Force will utilize working groups to identify and address barriers, as well as expand the member resource group concept to grow and develop diverse talent through professional development, mentoring, coaching and networking. Ultimately, we need to promote and advance a culture that celebrates our diversity and allows every Airman and Guardian to achieve their full measure of success in an environment free from barriers and bias.

### **Enlisted Voluntary Force Management**

Voluntary Force Management actions are routinely used throughout the year to make adjustments in order to meet end strength requirements. Due to higher retention during COVID-19, the Air Force will exceed FY21 end strength. At 92.4%, this is the second highest retention rate the Department of the Air Force has seen in 20 years.

The Department of the Air Force is projected to end FY21 approximately 3,000 over the 333,475 active duty authorized end strength, with will start FY22 at an inventory of roughly 337,000. The FY21 Force Management Actions, Limited Active Duty Service Commitment waivers and expanded PALACE CHASE, currently in use, have averaged about 50 approvals a

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week, since their initiation in January 2021. It is imperative that we balance the force and continue to bring in new talent, while simultaneously managing the experience of career Airmen in line with a steady state end-strength environment. The FY21 Presidential Budget Request (PBR) and NDAA set the Air Force target end strength as 264,835.

Based on the end of month February data, the Department of the Air Force is projected to have 266,770 enlisted personnel at the end of FY21, which is 1,935 enlisted personnel over requirements. From this data, it is the Air Force's recommendation to extend FY21 Voluntary Force Management Programs to FY22 to meet end strength requirements by the end of FY22.

### **Conclusion**

Chairwoman Wasserman Schultz, Ranking Member Carter, and members of this Subcommittee, thank you again for this opportunity to represent our incredible Airmen, Guardians and their families. Your Airmen and Guardians, supported by some of the strongest families our nation will ever know, stand ready. They fully understand the role they play in employing and enabling Air and Space power around the world.

We are honored for the opportunity to provide insight into the quality of life of our Airmen and Guardians, which directly affects our force. Again, we appreciate your continued support for America's sons and daughters, their selfless families, and for your commitment to protect the quality of life initiatives they need to confidently defend our nation. In an era of contested domains, our Airmen and Guardians have to accelerate the change our Air and Space Force needs to remain always above our adversaries. They are the key to securing a future where American dominance is assured. We are counting on each of you to lead our nation and ensure we have the resources to remain the world's greatest Air and Space Force.