

# United States Air Force

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Presentation

Before the House Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Military Construction  
and Veterans Affairs

## ***Quality of Life in the Military***

Witness Statement of  
CMSAF Kaleth O. Wright  
Chief Master Sergeant of the U.S. Air  
Force

February 7, 2019

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## BIOGRAPHY

### UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

#### **CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE KALETH O. WRIGHT**

Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force Kaleth O. Wright 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 Wright is the 18th chief master sergeant appointed to the highest noncommissioned officer position

Chief Wright enlisted in the Air Force in March of 1989 and his background includes various duties in the dental career field. He served as a Professional Military Education instructor and has held various senior enlisted positions while serving at squadron, group, wing, Task-Force and Numbered Air Force levels. He has deployed in support of Operations DESERT SHIELD/STORM and ENDURING FREEDOM and completed overseas tours in the Republic of Korea, Japan, Germany, and Alaska.



Prior to assuming his current position, he served as the Command Chief Master Sergeant, U.S. Air Forces in Europe and U.S. Air Forces Africa, with headquarters at Ramstein Air Base, Germany.

#### **EDUCATION**

1993 Airman Leadership School, Pope Air Force Base, N.C.  
2000 Associates in Applied Science Degree, Dental Assisting, CCAF  
2000 Noncommissioned Officer Academy, Kadena AB, Japan  
2002 Bachelor of Science, Business Management, University of Maryland  
2003 Associates in Applied Science Degree, Instructor of Technology/Military Science, CCAF  
2005 Senior Noncommissioned Officer Academy, Maxwell AFB-Gunter Annex, AL  
2007 Air Force Medical Service Intermediate Executive Skills Course  
2009 Masters in Business Administration, University of Phoenix  
2010 Master Certificate in Project Management, Villanova University  
2010 Chief Leadership Course, Maxwell AFB-Gunter Annex, Ala.  
2010 Professional Managers Certification, CCAF  
2012 Gettysburg Leadership Experience, Gettysburg, Pa.  
2012 Senior Enlisted Joint PME Course, National Defense University  
2013 Project Management Professional Certification, Project Management Institute  
2013 Enterprise Leadership Seminar, Darden School of Business, University of Virginia  
2014 Keystone Command Senior Enlisted Leader Course, National Defense University  
2014 AFSSO21 Executive Leaders Course, University of Tennessee  
2014 USAF Air War College via Correspondence, Air University  
2015 Leadership Development Program, Center for Creative Leadership, Colorado Springs, CO  
2016 Graduate Certificate in Executive Leadership, Cornell University

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## **ASSIGNMENTS**

1. September 1989 – June 1994, Dental Assistant Specialist, 23rd Medical Group, Pope AFB, N.C.
2. July 1994 – July 1995, Dental Assistant Journeyman, 51st Dental Squadron, Osan AB, Korea
3. August 1995 – August 2001, NCOIC, Preventive Dentistry/Records and Reception/Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery/Dental Readiness, 18th Dental Squadron, Kadena AB, Japan
4. August 2001 – August 2004, Flight Chief, Training/Evaluation, Kisling NCOA, Kapaun AS, Germany
5. September 2004 – February 2007, Flight Chief, Dental Flight, 43rd ADOS, Pope AFB, N.C.
6. February 2007 – February 2009, Superintendent, 51st Dental Squadron, Osan AB, Republic of Korea
7. February 2009- July 2010, Superintendent, 3rd Dental Squadron, Elmendorf AFB, Alaska
8. July 2010 – May 2011, Superintendent, 18th Dental Squadron, Kadena AB, Japan
9. May 2011 – May 2012, Superintendent, 18th Mission Support Group, Kadena AB, Japan
10. May 2012 – February 2014, Command Chief Master Sergeant, 22nd Air Refueling Wing, McConnell AFB, Kansas
11. February 2014 – December 2014, Command Chief Master Sergeant, 9th Air and Space Expeditionary Task Force-Afghanistan, Kabul, Afghanistan
12. January 2015 – June 2016, Command Chief Master Sergeant, 3rd Air Force and 17th Expeditionary Air Force, Ramstein Air Base, Germany
13. June 2016 – January 2017, Command Chief Master Sergeant, U.S. Air Forces in Europe, U.S. Air Forces Africa, Ramstein AB, Germany
14. February 2017 – Present, Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, Pentagon, Washington, D.C.

## **MAJOR AWARDS AND DECORATIONS**

Legion of Merit

Bronze Star Medal

Meritorious Service Medal with four oak leaf clusters

Air Force Commendation Medal with one oak leaf cluster

Air Force Achievement Medal with one oak leaf cluster

Air Force Recognition Ribbon with one oak leaf cluster

## **OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS**

1997 18th Dental Squadron NCO of the Year

1998 18th Dental Squadron NCO of the Year

2000 18th Dental Squadron NCO of the Year

2000 PACAF Outstanding Dental NCO of the Year

2000 USAF Outstanding Dental NCO of the Year

2000 John L. Levitow and Academic Achievement Awards, Kadena NCOA

2005 43rd AW and Pope AFB SNCO of the Year

2005 AMC Outstanding Dental SNCO of the Year

## **EFFECTIVE DATE OF PROMOTION**

Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force February 2017

(Current as of February 2017)

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## **Introduction**

Chairwoman Wasserman Schultz, Ranking Member John Carter, and members of this Subcommittee, thank you for your support and interest in the quality of life of our service men and women. It is an honor to address you, express our Airmen's needs and offer their appreciation for your support.

Our Airmen and their families are the key to our success as the world's most dominate air and space force. They understand the freedoms we guard are not just our own. They've made a choice to do something for a purpose and it is our duty to take care of them as they continue to take care of the mission. This means we must provide them with the training, leadership, support and facilities necessary to carry out our National Defense Strategy. It is imperative we place our Airmen's quality of life first, supporting them as they face the challenges inherent in serving in the Profession of Arms.

Air Force readiness and our Airmen are inextricably linked. Recruiting the best Airmen for the Air Force of the future, training and retaining the Airmen of today, and ensuring all of our Airmen and their families are taken care of directly impacts readiness. Providing our Airmen with the ability to grow in ways unheard of a decade ago, through opportunities like enlisted RPA pilots and females in combat specialties, allows us to enhance readiness, cohesion and combat effectiveness. Remaining fully committed to sexual assault prevention and providing better care, recovery and judicial advocacy for victims who report sexual violence, mixed with a dedicated strategy to reduce suicide rates, ensures we place dignity, respect, and the health and wellness of all Airmen as our priority.

Furthermore, it is imperative we take care of the entire Air Force family. We must continue efforts to improve the availability and affordability of child care while, at the same time

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driving efforts to eliminate barriers to military spouse employment. These issues are important to the wellbeing of Airmen, because we don't just retain career Airmen – we retain families.

Finally, it's important we continue to invest in our bases and infrastructure. Our installations serve as critical enablers for our Airmen, underpinning the success of the Air Force's enduring core missions of delivering air, space and cyberspace capabilities. Air bases are unique; they are vital to supporting joint operations worldwide. More than just pavement, runways and buildings, our air bases include airspace, ranges, locations and surge capacity with significant strategic value. But decades of challenging fiscal conditions and competing priorities have necessitated managed risk in infrastructure, leading to backlogs and deferred costs. Making investments to ensure lethality, restore readiness, properly fund and train personnel and deliver cost effective, adaptive infrastructure is essential to preserving the Air Force's power projection advantage.

We rely on and are grateful for your efforts, actions and legislation to protect and support our service members. We welcome your visits to our installations to see first-hand the talent and dedication of our Airmen and families. Their continued commitment speaks to their character, passion and talent.

### **Recruiting and Retention**

The Air Force is on track to meet total force enlisted accession goals of 32,050 non-prior service enlisted Airmen for FY19. But with an improving economy, we face tough competition for recruits, especially those with highly technical or unique skills and capabilities. Because of this, we must continue to invest in quality of life programs to attract the highest caliber applicants the Air Force requires to meet myriad mission needs, especially for evolving career fields such as cyber and space and High-Demand/Low-Density career fields like our critical

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special warfare Airmen. Our ability to meet recruitment goals and sustain the quality enlisted corps we require depends on keeping military service attractive to potential recruits. A centerpiece of that approach is a focus of this committee - quality of life programs and initiatives. We offer our recruits much more than just a profession; we offer them the opportunity to be part of our Air Force family. The most recent Joint Advertising Market Research and Studies data shows travel; experience and work skills; and education and training are among the top five reasons people enlist in the Air Force, meaning our quality of life programs are essential to remaining competitive in the recruiting arena.

Once we have recruited and trained the Airmen we need, we have to ensure we work to retain them. A high demand for technical skills and a continuously high operational tempo mixed with a strong economy and an ever increasing demand for talent places higher burdens on Air Force retention. In order to increase our readiness, we have to retain experienced talent in key skill sets like special warfare, maintenance, remotely piloted aircraft, signals intelligence, cyber, space, close air support integration, and nuclear specialty Airmen, improving our existing manning and preparing for anticipated growth.

To ensure the continuous health of career fields that are stressed due to low manning or those that present skillsets critical to the mission, the Air Force offers financial incentives in the form of SRBs to maintain both capability and capacity. SRBs are set based on Air Force specialty manning, retention trends and training costs and are reviewed bi-annually to meet changing requirements. The goal remains to be most economical while still achieving desired retention results. The most recent SRB list was released in October, 2018, and targets 115 of our 196 Air Force enlisted specialties.

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More than 16 years of data shows reenlistment rates trend upward following the implementation of an SRB for any given Air Force specialty while reenlistment rates trend downward in the months after an SRB is removed. We have reaped the benefits of retention bonuses to retain targeted skill sets critical to delivering air and space power to the nation. But we are keenly aware that factors other than money – especially quality of life and education benefits - also influence retention decisions. Because of this, we are especially thankful for current legislation which allows us to positively influence retention behavior.

### **Total Force End-Strength**

In order to meet mission requirements established in the NDS, the Air Force must increase our total force end strength from the 325,880 Airmen to 329,000 by the end of FY19.

This end strength growth directly improves readiness and lethality by increasing personnel in our fighting force – our squadrons. It also provides the manning necessary to continue readiness improvements by increasing Airmen for force structure operations and maintenance; intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance; special operations forces; cyber; space; and security forces within the nuclear enterprise. This is also vital to supporting our modernization efforts, providing the necessary B-21 research and development workforce. We have grown by 24,500 total force Airmen since 2015 in a continuous effort to revitalize our squadrons following the sequester loss of roughly 30,000 Airmen. Growing end strength growth helps us meet NDS priorities. In order to fully support the NDS, our Air Force plans to refresh and recapitalize our operational units.

### **Non-Deployability**

The Air Force is aggressively working to increase readiness and decrease non-deployability. Since reporting methods stabilized in mid-2018, more than 93% of our total force

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Airmen have been deployable at any given time. In December, 2018, 34,200 total force Airmen (6.8%) were considered non-deployable. Of those, 30,400 (89% of the non-deployable population) were for temporary medical reasons with only 0.5% of the total force population non-deployable for more than 12 months. Additionally, we have seen a steady decline in the percentage of non-deployable Airmen over time, decreasing more than 42% over the past year, from 11.9% in January, 2018, to our current 6.8%.

Our personnel and medical communities are focusing on four lines of effort to reduce the non-deployable population. First, they are pursuing resolution to unsatisfactory participation in the Air Reserve Component. Additionally, they are analyzing changes to personnel policies such as accessions, development opportunities, promotions and assignments associated with emphasizing deployability. Furthermore, they are adjusting Air Force processes for assignments and managing temporary medical profiles. Finally, they are improving the health of the force by implementing strategies designed to promote healthy lifestyles, prevent injuries, and increase personal accountability for readiness. Our goal is to enhance our ability to deliver air and space power by driving our non-deployable rates below 5%.

In most cases, the population of roughly 2,500 total force Airmen who comprise the 0.5% of our force who have been non-deployable for 12 or more months are non-deployable for medically related reasons. These individuals have been or will be referred to the Disability Evaluation System (DES) for assessment of suitability for continued service. Under this process, the Air Force considers the Airman's condition, specialty, deployment requirements and ability to effectively conduct the duties of their associated rank when making a retention decision. When a DES referral is not appropriate, the Air Force will continue to use retention



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determination and administrative processes to appropriately evaluate Airmen for continued service.

### **Aircraft Maintenance Manning**

The Air Force has made positive gains on total force aircraft maintenance manning. In FY15, we identified we were roughly 4,000 enlisted aircraft maintainers short against that year's current requirements. By the end of FY18, we had closed the gap to about 400, but we must continue to grow in order to increase our military capability rates for the F-35, F-22 and F-16 to 80% while simultaneously allowing us to increase the mission capacity of our 312 operational squadrons. Additionally, we must grow to meet future F-35, KC-46 and B-21 requirements. Within the FY19 President's Budget, maintenance manning is currently authorized at 68,500 Airmen with projected requirements reaching approximately 73,500.

While the Regular Air Force (RegAF) has closed the maintenance manning gap considerably, the Air Force Reserve is short approximately 1,740 maintainers (27%) across all types of full-time positions (Air Reserve Technician, civilian and Active Guard Reservists). The Air National Guard is short 1,345 full-time positions (11%) across both Active Guard Reservists and dual status military technicians, which are similar to Air Reserve Technicians.

In order to meet mission requirements, we must have not only the right number of maintainers, but also have the right level of expertise. Total force experience levels are constraining readiness levels as low experience hinders mission execution. Typically, personnel upgrade to the 5-skill level in their first 19 months after graduating from training, but seasoning and airframe-specific experience take years to develop.

To bridge the experience gap, we have maintenance manning contracts in place at locations where we conduct pilot training, such as Laughlin and Sheppard Air Force bases (AFS)

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in Texas and Altus AFB, Oklahoma, allowing us to retain experienced personnel at operational locations.

Additionally, the Air Force is using Maintenance Training Next (MTN) as an initiative to insert technology into training processes to more deliberately experience our aircraft maintainers by immersing virtual, augmented and mixed reality technologies. The program launched in January and teams are currently researching and developing content to leverage existing and advanced technologies to create adaptive Airmen. The MTN objective is to teach maintenance practices in the context of the mission, not just teaching skills but how to apply them. For the initial cadre, we intentionally sought aircraft maintainers who are tech-savvy with advanced problem solving skills. We targeted those with gaming or software programming experience familiar with virtual or augmented reality. This team will aggressively explore student centered learning tools to identify best practices for educating future maintainers, testing and evaluating educational strategies both in virtual/simulated environments and on aircraft. These outcomes will be used to shape future enlisted training processes.

### **Enlisted RPA Pilots**

The RQ-4 Global Hawk enlisted pilot program has demonstrated enlisted pilot capability and is postured for growth. We are close to reaching our goal of 100 enlisted pilots by 2020. In January, we selected 26 candidates for training, bringing the total to 96. All but two enlisted students who entered training have successfully completed the course and both of those students self-eliminated for reasons not related to academics. Of the 42 enlisted pilot students who have graduated to date, 21 have graduated with distinction or honors. Of the 11 original enlisted pilots, all are mission qualified and three have deployed and successfully resolved in-flight emergencies

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to save aircraft. Commanders have praised their enlisted pilots, seeking to integrate them further within their squadrons, groups and wings.

The FY17 NDAA directed the Air Force to “transition a significant number of RPA pilots” to enlisted personnel by the end of FY20. We are making positive strides to achieve our goal of 100 RegAF enlisted pilots in the RQ-4 Global Hawk by September, 2020, which is the end of the training year cycle. But, we need to continue to work on mutual understanding between the Air Force and Congress as to what constitutes “transitioning to an organizational model using a significant number of enlisted personnel,” as directed by Section 1052 of the FY17 NDAA. Currently, enlisted pilots make up 25% of all RegAF RQ-4 pilots. But we recognize the enlisted pilot program must grow its future career field health to a number sustainable for assignments, duty positions and promotion. We are reviewing mission effectiveness and readiness of mission qualified enlisted pilots to determine the feasibility of future growth, modeled similarly after other Career Enlisted Aviator fields of comparable size, such as flight engineers.

### **Women Airmen in Combat Specialties**

Our Air Force remains fully committed to integrating women into combat specialties. Since 2016, 100% of Air Force occupations and positions have been open to women. This includes six special warfare occupations: Combat Rescue Officer; Special Tactics Officer; Pararescue; Combat Control; Tactical Air Control Party; and Special Reconnaissance (previously Special Operations Weather). We also eliminated gender-based assignment restrictions for 22 previously closed positions serving with Army and Special Operations Force units.

For our special warfare occupations, we have seen steady progress with the 10 women who entered training since January, 2016. While there is currently one female in training, to date

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no females have graduated from these training courses, which average attrition rates between 40 and 90% depending on the occupation.

The Air Force actively seeks special warfare recruits, male and female, who meet the intense physical and mental requirements of a demanding training pipeline. Mitigation strategies to address the small number of female volunteers includes pursuing athletes, targeting a wide-range of qualified female candidates through swim meets, water polo, gymnastics, CrossFit, and track and field events. Additionally, we allow Airmen serving in all career fields, regardless of manning, an opportunity to retrain into special warfare careers.

A Special Warfare Airman Preparatory Program was started in October, 2017, and provides non-prior service students with a team environment. All recruits, male and female, are housed in single open-bay dorms. This is a critical part of team development, necessary in building cohesion, and the preparatory team is pioneering this integration effort.

To better assist females and males with the physical rigors of training and to reduce possible injuries, we initiated a number of programs that place physical therapists, strength and conditioning coaches, clinical psychologists, athletic trainers and sports medicine physicians in operational and training units that include special warfare Airmen. On-site physical therapy and individualized athletic training is focused on increasing resilience against physical and mental stressors while decreasing long-term injuries. While program results are hindered by low female participation, we remain postured to support female candidates as they progress in training.

At the U.S. Air Force Academy, we have undertaken several initiatives to ensure females are aware of special warfare opportunities and to prepare them for success in training. The athletic department launched an “Advanced Functional Fitness” course emphasizing the physical preparation components essential to special warfare training such as power, speed, agility and

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strength. The Academy also sanctioned a club for cadets interested in and deliberately training to become special warfare Airmen. Additionally, last year the Academy sponsored two separate trips to Fort Carson, Colorado, exposing cadets to special tactics demonstrations. They also hosted live fire events with follow on mentoring sessions by special warfare representatives.

Additionally, we are using feedback and data from the Air Liaison Officer (ALO) career field. Three females have successfully graduated this training pipeline. While ALOs don't fall directly under the scope of the special warfare umbrella, their health statistics and experiences in a largely male community with rigorous physical training are a valuable resource to other special warfare career fields working to fully integrate.

The Air Force continues to monitor and assess gender integration through commanders' modernization efforts for pre-accession development, basic training improvements and retooling of training pipelines to ensure all Airmen have the best tools to succeed.

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

The Air Force remains fully committed to Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) 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. We have enhanced our response system through accountability, transparency and senior leader oversight to continue shrinking the gap between prevalence and reporting. Prevalence data is culled from anonymous surveys conducted biennially. We are still compiling data from the 2018 report; however, 2016 data shows that while 1,048 Active Duty Service members (any Service member can report to an Air Force SARC, not just airmen provided either a restricted or unrestricted report of sexual assault, 2,300 survey respondents reported having been victim to some form of sexual assault or abusive contact. That comes out

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to nearly 1 out of 2 Service members (~46%) who experienced a sexual assault, reported it to a DoD authority.

We are building upon our SAPR efforts by developing a new, multi-pronged strategy, focusing on providing better care, recovery, and judicial advocacy for victims who report sexual violence. Additionally, we are leveraging approaches across an Airman's career to prevent and reduce power-based personal violence such as partner violence, rape or sexual assault, stalking or uses of force, threat, intimidation or harassment.

Workplace Gender Relations Survey data from 2016 reflects prevalence is decreasing over time while sexual assault reporting is steadily increasing. This is a positive step in the right direction, as assaults are decreasing while at the same time, victim confidence in reporting is increasing. But our standard remains "zero tolerance" for sexual assaults. We do not tolerate an increase in the prevalence of sexual assault and will continue work to promote a safe environment, holding accountable those who commit sexual assault. We continue to build on SAPR efforts by continuously researching new prevention strategies, refining our training, and collaborating with organizations outside the Air Force on violence response capabilities.

### **Suicide Prevention**

Suicide prevention remains an Air Force priority at every level. We are pursuing 11 total force suicide prevention goals and initiatives with empirical support to drive down suicide rates by 50% over the next five years with an end goal to drive rates to as close to zero as possible. For calendar year 2017, Air Force suicide rates per 100,000 were at 19.5, slightly below the DoD average of 21.9 and demographically matched to U.S. rates. Our suicide rates increased between 2009 and 2015, from 12.5 per 100,000 to 20.0 per 100,000, and then plateaued between 2014 and 2016, remaining at about 19.0 per 100,000 for all three years. And while we haven't seen an

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increase, we know we must do better. We are pursuing algorithms through connected and integrated databases to identify “at risk” Airmen to create protective programs for them.

One of the programs we’re currently beta testing in order to bring resiliency resources closer to Airmen and drive a culture that affects, embraces, and drives help-seeking behavior is Task Force True North (TFTN). The program is current at four bases – Minot AFB, North Dakota; Beale AFB, California; Whiteman AFB, Missouri; and Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. TFTN is comprised of three primary elements: engaging Airmen and families early; normalizing help-seeking behavior as a strength; and a decentralized push for help, meeting Airmen where they are, at the unit level.

Under TFTN, units have mandatory sponsorship programs and dedicated on-boarding programs to engage Airmen upon arrival, ensuring their assignment begins with positive leadership interaction. Additionally, leaders are now using a squadron commander risk and protective factor analysis tool, developed in partnership with New York University. This tool, called NORTH STAR, was fielded in November, 2017, with subsequent rounds every six months. NORTH STAR uses member feedback via anonymous surveys to identify issues like suicidality, alcohol misuse and domestic partner abuse Airmen may be facing. Based on those results, unit leadership teams work directly with a psychologist from NYU to understand the issues and build an intervention plan that provides the Airmen with self-help tools like articles, resources or smart phone apps they can use to seek help or enhance coping skills. Because feedback is anonymous, commanders provide tools to the entire unit, not targeting any one person, empowering Airmen to make their own decisions.

In addition, we have embedded mental health providers, assigning them to the groups with duties at the squadron-level. We developed group-level dedicated religious support teams to

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provide support directly to Airmen. Both were enacted to directly target a range of conditions affecting Airmen's mental, social and spiritual comprehensive fitness. Early results show TFTN improves mission readiness by enhancing Airman and family well-being, decreasing negative outcomes such as suicide, sexual and domestic or workplace violence, and optimizing human performance. Data gathered during the beta test phase will inform decisions regarding a possible total force scale up. We are still collecting data from beta test bases; however, input from commanders has been positive.

### **Personal Financial Readiness**

Personal Financial Readiness (PFR) is a key component to the readiness of Airmen and their families. The Air Force is developing and implementing mandatory financial literacy training at all levels in an effort to increase the financial readiness of our Airmen. The PFR program works to improve financial literacy and financial readiness through information, education, training, and personal financial counseling.

Financial readiness capabilities are delivered by certified personal financial counselors and educators through personal counseling, unit-level events, and classes at Airman and Family Readiness Centers. Currently, our total force manpower supporting PFR programs include 195 certified civilian employees and 86 certified support contractors. We are developing total force processes and policy to implement newly required training, including standardized curriculum, program evaluation, and reporting capabilities. The full program will be implemented in FY19 but updated curriculum is currently available at enlisted and officer first duty stations and continuation pay touchpoints.

Additionally, financial counselors and educators provide supportive counseling and education to eligible Airmen during the Blended Retirement System (BRS) opt-in periods. Last



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year, more than 5,000 Airmen received more than 5,700 hours of support during individual counseling appointments. The Air Force hosted 1,800 BRS information and referral events, more with 9,500 Airmen attending BRS opt-in training, 11,500 Airmen attended BRS information seminars, and 3,900 Airmen attended Thrift Savings Plan classes. At the end of the 2018 opt-in enrollment period, approximately 85,000 total force Airmen had opted into the BRS – 29.8% of the RegAF, 11.5% of the Reserve, and 11.5% of the Guard who were eligible during the enrollment window.

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

Available, affordable and quality childcare programs are a necessity for our Airmen, providing a workforce enabler that ensures family members are well cared for, thus allowing our Airmen to clearly focus on training and mission accomplishment. We currently have 240 child development/school age facilities and more than 350 family childcare homes. We also offer an expanded childcare program with an array of approaches to meet the needs of Airmen requiring nontraditional care for irregular duty hours. But we are still falling short. In October, 2018, we were unable to provide military childcare for 3,210 Air Force children across the force as of the date care was needed. We have executed a Child and Youth Program Human Capital Strategy to enhance hiring the hiring and retention of qualified youth and program staff, increasing wages at our overseas programs, standardized position descriptions and have implemented direct hiring authority all in an effort to provide care to all of our Air Force children requiring care. As a means to bridge the gap, there is also a community-based fee assistance program which supports Airmen living in off-base areas where on-base care is not available or for Airmen living on or near an installation with extensive wait lists for on base child care programs.

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### **Military Spouse Licensure**

Many of our families are two-income homes. Approximately 35% of Air Force spouses require an occupational license to work. Data shows 49% of those are in health care occupations and 32% are in education. But license portability remains problematic for many of our family members, leading to long periods of unemployment after a change of assignment and loss of income to families. Obtaining interstate compacts is a must for the future of our family members who contribute to the professional workforces in the communities where they live. To achieve license portability, occupations must resolve existing differences between state definitions of competency and its measurement. Interstate compacts provide a way of getting occupations to resolve differences and to establish rules for sharing public safety oversight responsibility so professionals can maintain one license in a state with the flexibility to work in other states.

We continue to work with the Defense-State Liaison Office (DSLO) to eliminate barriers to license portability many military spouses experience. DSLO has developed short and long-term approaches to improving license portability. In the short-term, we request state policymakers follow-up on the implementation of laws they passed between 2011 and 2016 designed to improve endorsement, temporary licensing and expedited applications as avenues toward expediting licensure portability. In the long-term, DSLO is working with professional associations and related licensing boards as they consider “interstate compacts” as a way for states to develop mutually agreeable processes to support the mobility of licensed professionals.

DLSO helped 47 states enact 69 bills, with 42 states providing provisions for temporary licensing, 39 improving endorsement, and 31 establishing expedited application processes. But recent reports show implementation has not been consistent across all boards. Additionally, temporary and expedited endorsement did not relieve the underlying burden of licensing, it only

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made the process faster. Furthermore, currently only 16 states have included spouse information on their licensing website, modified applications, instructed staff or established additional policy to ensure boards comply.

### **Conclusion**

Chairwoman Wasserman Schultz, Ranking Member John Carter, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you again for this opportunity to represent our incredible Airmen and their families. Your Airmen, supported by some of the strongest families our nation will ever know, stand ready. They fully understand the joint force depends on their ability to employ and enable airpower around the world.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide insight into the quality of life of our Airmen which directly affect our force. We appreciate your continued support for our brave Airmen and their selfless families, and for your commitment to protect the quality of life initiatives they need to confidently defend our nation. We're counting on each of you to lead our nation and ensure we have the resources to remain the world's greatest Air Force.