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SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

Chairman Nelson, Senator Graham and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for providing me opportunity to appear before you today on behalf of America's Army. The Army, over 1 million strong, serves proudly around the globe. As our Army is growing to meet today's demands, we are grateful to this Committee for improving incentives and bonuses to attract and retain the very best Soldiers. I take tremendous pride in this All-Volunteer Force and all it has accomplished for our great Nation.

This is an all-volunteer force. We compete in a very tough market within a robust economy. We rely on your support to help the Army grow. Your continued support gives us the necessary tools to attract and retain the Soldiers who serve our great Nation. Through your continued support, our Army will grow to meet the needs of the Nation and to defend America in the long war on terrorism.

Our Soldiers are this generation's heroes. They continue to make history, demonstrating to America that her Army is the best in the world. This generation shows that America can call upon the All-Volunteer Force time and time again to persevere in prolonged conflict. With your continued assistance, we will achieve the right mix of incentives to compensate, educate, and retain the best and brightest our Nation has to offer.

The Soldier remains the centerpiece of our Army. As I speak to you today, more than 600,000 Soldiers serve on active duty. We have more than 243,000 Soldiers, Active, Guard, and Reserve in 76 countries, and another 8,000 Soldiers securing the homeland. Soldiers from every state and territory...Soldiers from every corner of this country... serve the people of the United States with honor and distinction. Soldiers fight in Iraq and Afghanistan in support of the Global War on Terrorism. Soldiers

participate in homeland security activities. Soldiers support civil authorities on a variety of missions within the United States.

More than ever before, we are one Army, with Active and Reserve forces serving together around the globe.

Additionally, a large Army civilian workforce (over 240,000), supports our Army – to mobilize, deploy, and sustain the operational forces – at home and abroad. Our Soldiers and Department of Army Civilians remain fully engaged around the world. They remain committed to fighting and winning the Global War on Terrorism.

With help from this body, the Army continues to meet challenges in the Human Resources environment. In recent years, your support for benefits, compensation, and incentive packages ensured the recruitment and retention of a quality force. Today, I will provide you with an overview of our current military personnel posture and programs, and the status of our benefits and compensation packages as they relate to building and maintaining a quality force.

Recruiting

Our Nation is blessed with the world's finest Army. It is an all-volunteer Army that is being recruited under conditions not foreseen when the draft ended in 1973. Our Soldiers must be confident, adaptive, and competent. They must be able to handle the full complexity of 21st Century warfare in our combined, joint, and expeditionary force. They are the warriors of the 21st Century and they became heroes when they enlisted.

Recruiting these qualified young men and women in a highly competitive environment is extremely challenging. Competition with industry, an improving economy, lower unemployment, decreased support

from key influencers, the media, and the continuing Global War on Terrorism, present significant challenges. Thanks to your support and the efforts of our recruiting force, the Army achieved great success in FY06. The FY 06 recruiting year ended with the Active component making over 100% of its mission, US Army Reserve accomplishing 99.5%, and the Army National Guard accomplishing 98.6%. This data reflects USAREC recruiting mission accomplishments and does not include accessions attributed to AC to RC or IRR to Selected Reserve Transitions. These results are a significant improvement over FY05 recruiting results. Although these successes are noteworthy, we must all remain committed to meeting the challenges in the foreseeable future.

To date, the Active Army and the Army National Guard have met their recruiting missions. The Active component finished February 2007 with a year to date achievement of 108%. The United States Army Reserve finished February 2007 with a year to date achievement of 94%. The Army National Guard finished February 2007 with a year-to-date achievement of 105%. Two components, Active and National Guard are projecting successful annual missions for FY07. The mission of the Army Reserve remains the most challenging of all three Army components this year. U.S. Army Recruiting Command and the Department, with help from the Army Reserve Command, are working together on incentives and policy changes to mitigate risk and increase success. With just over one half of the recruiting year remaining, the Army is optimistic we will meet our recruiting goals.

Some members of Congress have expressed concern over the quality of the force, when viewed by the DoD standard of high school diploma graduates and Test Category IV Soldiers. However, all Soldiers who enlist into the Army are qualified for their respective military occupation specialties – their jobs. No exceptions.

Across America, there is an increasing trend in alternatives to the traditional high school. Our ability to recruit in the current environment – which is unprecedented in the history of the All-Volunteer-Force - requires innovation, as well as perseverance.

We must recognize that those who volunteer to serve during these difficult times, have distinct qualities all their own. Once accepted, the Army molds them into a precious resource – The American Soldier.

Incentives & Enlistment Bonuses

The Army must maintain a competitive advantage to attract high quality applicants. Bonuses are the primary and most effective competitive advantage the Army can use to attract quality Soldiers. These bonuses help us to compete within the market and prepare for future conditions. The bonuses and incentives are key in filling critical Military Occupation Specialties in an increasingly college-oriented market and meet seasonal (“quick-ship”) priorities.

College attendance rates are at an all-time high and continue to grow. With nearly 70% of the Nation’s high school graduates intent on college attendance within the year of graduation, the Army College Fund is a proven performer. The Army College Fund allows recruits to concurrently serve their country while meeting their desires to attend college.

The Loan Repayment Program, with a maximum of \$65,000 payment for already accrued college expenses, is another incentive we offer within this competitive market. This Loan Repayment Program is the best tool for those with college education credits and student loans. Over the past 4 years, approximately 27% percent of Army recruits have some post-secondary education credits and we expect that trend line to increase.

Other recently passed legislation assisting our recruiting mission includes: the increased enlistment age which brought nearly 600 Soldiers into the Army; the expansion of the \$1K Referral Bonus to \$2K increased accessions by nearly 2500 qualified Soldiers since enactment last year; and the increase in bonuses above \$20K resulted in over 7200 Soldiers signing up.

Further assisting our efforts to attract and retain officers, is the expanded Student Loan Repayment Program. It now includes officers, and permits repayment of a broader variety of student loans.

The temporary Recruiting Incentives Authority under NDAA 2006 permits the Department of the Army to develop and test four new pilot programs for recruiting. The Army implemented the first pilot program, the Recruiter Incentive Pay Program, on June 6 2006, and plans to implement the second, an Officer Accession Bonus Program not later than this summer.

The Army Advantage Fund (AAF) is a third incentive. It will provide a choice between a down payment for a home loan or seed money for a small business loan to new Soldiers. The Army expects AAF to be a major recruiting market attraction – the next Army College Fund. Key to establishment of the AAF is the creation of an investment fund. With congressional support for the Army Incentive Fund, currently projected for NDAA 08, we will move another step in the right direction toward growing the All-Volunteer-Force.

Collectively, the authority to pilot these incentives are key to FY07 mission achievement, and will set conditions for continued success in FY08 and beyond. We rely heavily on your continued support for the authorities and resources necessary to recruit and retain the All-Volunteer Army.

Enlisted Retention

The Active Army achieved all retention goals for the past nine years, a result that can be directly attributed to the Army's leadership and the motivation of our Soldiers to accept their "Call to Duty". The Active Army retained 67,307 Soldiers in fiscal year 2006, finishing the year 105% of mission. The Army Reserve finished the year achieving 103% of mission and the Army National Guard finished at 118% of mission.

In fiscal year 2007, the Active Army must retain 62,200 Soldiers to achieve overall manning levels. This year's retention mission is just as challenging as the previous year's. We believe however, that we will accomplish this mission. Thus far, the Active Army achieved 109% of its year-to-date mission, the Army Reserve achieved 110% of its year-to-date mission, and the Army National Guard achieved 127% of its year-to-date mission. Once again, a robust bonus program is important to continuing success in the Army's retention goals.

We must be no less innovative in our incentives to retain Soldiers to fight the ongoing Global War on Terrorism. We continue to review the impact of our Reenlistment Bonus Programs on retention and additionally use a deployed reenlistment bonus as a tool to attract and retain quality Soldiers with combat experience. This bonus targets eligible Soldiers assigned to units in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Kuwait. Soldiers can receive a lump sum payment up to \$15,000 to reenlist while deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan, or Kuwait. The average lump sum payment is currently \$10,400. All components benefit from this program, and results show the highest rates of retention among deployed Soldiers.

Retention rates of units engaged in Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom continue to exceed 100%. During FY06, the 4th Infantry Division and the 101st Airborne Division achieved 124% and 132% of their

respective retention missions while deployed. Currently, elements of the 1st Armored Division are deployed and have achieved 137% of their retention mission.

Moreover, the Army has not seen a decline in retention rates from units that have deployed multiple times. For example, the 10th Mountain Division has deployed elements of its command several times since 2001, and has currently achieved 162% of its retention mission.

Although we have seen no downward trends in overall retention, we monitor our mid-career reenlistment rates closely. We adjusted our incentive programs to target this population of Soldiers. Multiple deployments appear to be impacting mid-career Soldiers between their 6th and 10th year of service more than any other population. Retention rates of mid-career Soldiers has increased from 82% to over 93% in March. We do know that Soldiers are most concerned with the limited time at home between deployments. They would like more predictability on deployments, and more time, at least 24-months with their families, before their next deployment.

Additionally, all components employ positive levers, including Force Stabilization policy initiatives, updates to the reenlistment bonus program, targeted specialty pays, and policy updates to positively influence the retention program. We will achieve FY07 retention success in the Active Army, the Army National Guard, and the United States Army Reserve.

Officer Retention and Accessions

To man the future force, the Army must increase company grade officer retention to keep up with the growth brought about by modularity. Although the FY06 loss rates for company grade officers was below the 10 year average of 8.5%, we must continue to reduce this loss rate to 5%. A

retention strategy focused on near, mid-term, and long-term retention will assist our Army to retain more of its best and brightest officers.

The Army has successfully grown the officer corps over the last several years through increased officer promotion selection rates and earlier pin-on time to captain and major. For example, the captain promotion pin-on time has dropped from 42 months to 38 months, and the major promotion pin on time dropped from 11 years to 10 years. Additionally, promotion selection rates to captain and major are between 95-98%. While promotion rates are high, we continue to select the "best qualified" officers.

The Army developed a menu of options that is available to officers upon promotion to captain and prior to their completion of their active duty service obligation (ADSO). This menu provides officers a choice of incentives in exchange for an additional 3 years of active duty service. Officers can elect to get their post or branch/functional area of choice; attend a military school or obtain language training; attend a fully-funded graduate degree program; or receive a \$20,000 Critical Skills Retention Bonus (CSRB).

Further, the Army implemented a Pre-commissioning Program in FY06, allowing Cadets to select a Branch, Post or Graduate school for an additional service obligation of three years. This program has proven successful in just one year, with 1100 participating in FY06 and 1600 expected to participated in FY07. The Army expects this program to drop loss rates of USMA and ROTC scholarship source of commissioned officers beginning in FY10 when these officers would have completed their normal ADSO (4-years for ROTC scholarships and 5-years for USMA). Now, these officers will retain at 7 and 8-years respectively.

United States Military Academy cadets may agree to serve 3-years beyond their 5-year obligation; scholarship Reserve Officer Training Corps

cadets agree to serve their 4-year obligation plus an additional 3-year of active duty service; and non-scholarship officers agree to serve their 3-year active duty obligation plus additional 3-years. In FY06, over 1100 cadets from USMA and ROTC signed up for this program. In FY07, we expect over 1500 cadets to sign up for one of these programs, increasing the retention rate for USMA and ROTC year group cohort to 58% by year 10.

In 2006, we offered an additional 200 fully funded graduate school opportunities to serving captains, beyond the 412 graduate school opportunities we previously provided. Officers participating in this program serve an additional 3 months for each month they attend school. We plan to send another 200 officers to graduate school in academic year 2007.

In October 2006, the Army established an Officer Retention Branch as part of a new campaign designed to retain more of our best officers. Unit commanders are getting more involved in officer retention. We intend to manage this program like to the enlisted personnel retention program.

The Army is confident that the implementation of these strategies will rapidly grow the officer force and will enable us to meet our manning needs by FY10 vice FY13 or later if we relied on traditional approaches for growing the force.

To meet the long term needs of a larger officer corps, the Army is increasing its Army Competitive Category (ACC) officer accession mission by up to 300 officers each year, over the next 3-years. Accessions will increase from 4600 in FY06 to 4900 in FY07, 5200 in FY08 and 5500 in FY09 and beyond. This increase in officer accessions will ensure the Army has enough captains and majors 4-10 years from now.

In FY06, IAW Title 10 authority, USMA increased the number of officers they accepted into their 4-year degree program. This will result in an additional 100 officers produced through USMA in FY10 and beyond.

In addition, we are leveraging other accession programs such as the "Blue to Green" Inter-service Transfer Program. To date, we have accessed over 325 officers into the Army from the Air Force, Navy and Marines. We expect to access another 200 officers from the other services in FY07. We have also partnered with the Merchant Marine Academy and have contacted over 10,000 former officers that have separated in the past 24-months to offer them the opportunity to serve again.

Through continued service, approximately 250 Reserve Component officers volunteered to transfer to the active component. Additionally, we encourage those who served honorably to serve again through a retiree recall or a call to active duty. Today, we have approximately 700 retirees serving on active duty in a retiree recall status.

Our current officer accession mission is the highest in 30 years. To assist in meeting this mission we will rely heavily on OCS. Though we increased accessions in USMA (by 100 in FY06) and ROTC, those commissioning sources have longer lead times to produce officers. OCS is critical in meeting today's manpower needs. Since it takes time to increase production through USMA and ROTC (e.g. 2-4 years), as a short term measure, the Army intends to maximize production from Federal OCS with 5 companies. Federal OCS production is expected to increase from 1435 in FY06 to 1735 in FY07 and 1985 in FY08 to FY10. The OCS bonus will help attract NCOs to go to OCS and become officers, especially as we increase the FY08 OCS mission from 1700 to 1950. Further, increases in ROTC production are planned over the next 4-years from 4000 in FY07 to 4200 in FY08, 4500 in FY09 and 5100 by FY10. Provided resources continue to flow, ROTC production is expected to reach 5350 by FY11. As ROTC production increases, more officers will

be sent to the Reserve Components and we project that we will be able to begin reducing Federal OCS production by roughly 200.

Stop Loss

The Global War on Terror demands trained, cohesive, and ready units. Stop Loss is a management tool that effectively sustains a force that has trained together, to remain a cohesive element throughout its deployment. Stemming from statutory authority, (Section 12305, Title 10, U.S.C), the Army's Stop Loss policy is very limited in size and for a very short duration on average. Losses caused by non-casualty oriented separations, retirements, and reassignments have the potential to adversely impact training, cohesion, and stability in Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF) and Operation ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF).

Although there is not a specific end date for the current use of Stop Loss, the Army is committed to minimizing its use. Initiatives such as Force Stabilization (three year life cycle managed units), modularity, and the program to Rebalance/Restructure the Active Component/Reserve Component for mix should alleviate stress on the force and will help mitigate Stop Loss requirements in the future.

Individual Ready Reserve Mobilization

The mission of the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) is to provide a pool of Soldiers who are “individually ready” for call-up. In January 2004, the Army began our current IRR mobilization effort. We use the IRR primarily to fill deploying Reserve component forces supporting OIF and OEF, and to fill individual augmentation requirements in Joint organizations supporting Combatant Commanders.

The IRR has improved the readiness of deploying Reserve component units and has reduced required cross-leveling from other Reserve component units. This effort allows the Army to preserve units for future operations.

As of March 11, 2007, there are 2,071 IRR Soldiers on active duty supporting the Global War on Terrorism— 234 are supporting Worldwide Individual Augmentation requirements, 208 are supporting the O9L Linguist Program, 2 are replacements, and 1,627 are fillers. Another 1,475 IRR Soldiers have received mobilization orders, and are pending mobilization between now and January 27, 2008.

The IRR also contributed to the manning of joint headquarters elements such as the Multi-National Force-Iraq, Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan, and others. This talent pool allows the Army to balance the contributions of the Active and Reserve components in these headquarters.

The Army will continue to use the IRR and is implementing several initiatives to transform the IRR into a more viable and ready prior-service talent bank.

Until now, a large number of IRR Soldiers were either unaware of their service obligations or were not qualified to perform further service. Soldiers within the IRR are now identified as “Individual Warriors”. We initiated a program where IRR Soldiers will participate in virtual musters, attend annual readiness processing, and participate in training opportunities to maintain their military occupational specialties.

To improve Soldier understanding of service commitments, the Army will develop and deliver expectation management briefings and obligation confirmation checklists to all Soldiers at initial enlistments/appointments and, again, during transition beginning 3rd quarter 2007. The Army is also conducting systematic screening to reconcile records and identify non-mobilization assets which will likely result in a reduction in the current IRR population and aid in establishing realistic readiness reporting.

Military Benefits and Compensation

A strong benefits package is essential to recruit and retain our quality force. The Administration and Congress have provided very competitive compensation and entitlements programs for our Soldiers and their families and we sincerely appreciate this support to our Soldiers and families.

With help from the Congress, the Army continues to develop programs to address our unique challenges with recruiting and retention. Congress has provided us the flexible tools we need to encourage our young men and woman to enlist in the Army. The referral bonus and the bonus for service members who agree to transfer between Armed Forces are two critical authorities that provide the Army the necessary assistance to meet its recruiting goals.

The extension of the pay table beyond 30 years and lifting the cap on Retired pay percentage multiplier has enabled additional successes with retention.

The Army regularly looks for ways to compensate our Soldiers for the hardships they endure while serving under the most dangerous conditions. The Department has requested an increase in Hardship Duty

Pay from \$750 to \$1500 and authorized payment in lump sum. We are continually seeking ways to appropriately compensate Soldiers for the hardships they endure.

The Army appreciates your emphasis and interest in Soldiers and families, and their need for financial support when they suffer a combat injury or become a casualty. Soldiers perform best when they know their families are in good care. Many of our surviving families remain in Government housing for an extended period during their recovery from the loss of their spouses. This facilitates a transition from the Service, and allows their children to continue the school year with the least amount of disruption. The changes to survivor benefits ensure all Soldiers and their families are treated fairly and equitably. The Army also implemented the Combat-related Injury Rehabilitation Pay (CIP) and continues to monitor pay and personnel issues for our wounded warriors. Recent enhancements to survivor benefits and other entitlements for our wounded Soldiers demonstrate recognition of their sacrifices and a commitment to care for our own.

Well Being

A broad spectrum of services, programs and initiatives from a number of Army agencies provide for the well-being of our people while supporting the Combatant Commander in conducting Joint and coalition Warfighting missions. Our well-being efforts are focused on strengthening the mental, physical, spiritual, and material condition of our Soldiers, civilians, and their families, while balancing demanding institutional needs of today's Army.

Sexual Assault

The Army continues to operate and improve its comprehensive Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) Program. Its primary goal is to create a climate where Soldiers live the Army Values. Such a climate does not tolerate sexual assault crimes or attitudes and behaviors which condone them. Further, the climate encourages Soldiers who have been victims of assault to come forward, without fear, knowing they will receive the help and care they deserve.

Calendar Year 2006 (CY06) represents the first full year the Army Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) had Sexual Assault Response Coordinators (SARC, civilian), military deployable SARC advocacy support, and the restricted reporting option. These changes allow Soldiers to receive medical care, counseling, and advocacy services without undergoing a criminal investigation.

Based on the initial assessments of the program, the Army has made significant progress, including: the publication of a comprehensive policy; the expansion of the victim advocacy component of the program; and the proliferation of required training throughout Army units, Army schools, and Army response groups.

Recently reports of sexual assaults have risen within the Army. While this overall increase in reported sexual assaults is of concern, the Army attributes this rise partially to the implementation of the Army's SAPR Program and the increasing culture of awareness and response. To date, our efforts have empowered more Soldiers to come forward and report these crimes. Our leaders will continue to hold offenders accountable and ensure victims receive the care they need. Over 42% of all sexual assault investigations completed by the Criminal Investigation Division (CID) in 2006 were dismissed as unsubstantiated, unfounded, or lacking sufficient evidence. In 2006, there were 1,618 reported cases across the Army. This represents a 30% increase over 2005, and includes 300 restricted reports. Of the 515 CY06 case

dispositions where the commander could take action, over one quarter (26%, 136 case dispositions) were completed by December 31 2006. The remaining 74% (379) are still pending.

While the increase in reported cases may not represent an increase in the number of actual assaults, it does indicate the magnitude of a problem that continues to exist. Sexual assault has consistently been cited as the most under-reported violent crime in the United States.

We will persist in our efforts to improve the Army's prevention efforts in addressing sexual assault. As we execute the Army's SAPR Program and we continue to assess its effectiveness, we will make every effort to improve it and make further progress toward our goal of eliminating sexual assault in the Army.

Suicide Prevention Program

The loss of any American Soldier's life is a great tragedy and a matter of concern regardless of the cause. In the case of suicide, the United States Army is committed to providing prevention and intervention resources.

For 2006, the Army sustained 98 active duty confirmed suicides (with 3 possible cases still pending), 88 in 2005, 67 in 2004, 78 in 2003, 70 in 2002, and 51 in 2001. Although experiencing a relatively high number of confirmed suicides since the beginning of the Global War on Terrorism, the Regular Army average rate per 100K Soldiers is 11.3 for the last 5 years (2001-2005), which is lower than the rate of 12.1 that existed prior to the war. The Regular Army rate is also considerably lower than the national demographically-adjusted rate of 19.9 per 100k.

Our goal is to provide our Soldiers and families the best available support to overcome the stresses that military service entails. We continue to work through training, counseling, and intervention measures to help find alternative and appropriate ways of stress management. Our

goal is to minimize suicidal behavior and subsequently the risk of suicides across the Army.

U.S. Army Wounded Warrior Program

Soldiers suffering from severe injuries or illnesses in support of the Global War on Terrorism deserve the highest priority from our Army for support. These heroes need services associated with healing, recuperation and rehabilitation, evaluation for return to duty and, if required successful transition from active duty to civilian life. The Army Wounded Warrior takes to heart the Warrior Ethos, "I Will Never Leave a Fallen Comrade." To date, the US Army Wounded Warrior Program (AW2) Program assisted over 1500 Soldiers.

As Soldiers progress through their care and rehabilitation, AW2 facilitates communication and coordination among the Soldier, their families, and relevant local, federal and national agencies and organizations.

The Soldiers and their families gain information concerning available resources and opportunities for their future. Additionally, the Soldiers gain priority access to services they may require through the assistance of a dedicated Soldier Family Management Specialist (SFMS). Since October 2005, we increased the number of SFMS from 9 to 47, with plans to hire an additional 2 SFMS. This reduces the average caseload to 32 Soldiers for every SFMS. Our SFMS are currently embedded in 11 Military Medical Treatment Facilities and 16 VA Medical Centers located throughout the United States. We anticipate future expansion. This decentralization of operations allows our SFMS to co-locate with our Soldiers and families nationwide for optimal support.

To date, AW2 assisted 34 Soldiers for Continuation on Active Duty or in an Active Reserve Status (COAD/COAR). In conjunction with the Soldier's Career Managers at the US Army Human Resources Command, a 5-Year Assignment Plan was developed for each Soldier.

AW2 actively seeks employment and educational opportunities for our Soldiers and their families. During the past year, AW2 conducted more than 120 office calls with interested employers. An interactive geo-employment locator is included in the AW2 website. AW2 participated in many federal and state sponsored conferences and seminars to remain current on the latest developments and programs to assist the severely injured Soldiers. Additionally, the AW2 staff networks with grass roots community organizations to discover new possibilities for the Soldiers.

To ensure Soldiers receive the best treatment available, the AW2 program has several initiatives working at this time. Initiatives include a third Wounded Warrior Symposium tentatively scheduled for summer or fall 2007, and the implementation of a Pilot Program with the National Organization on Disability (NOD). This program aligns an employment expert with a Soldier Family Management Specialist to enhance their ability to assist Soldiers seeking employment.

Additional initiatives include a cooperative review with the Department of Veterans Affairs of the current transition process of our Soldiers from the military to VA health care system. AW2 is involved with the Veterans Advisory Committee on Rehabilitation, The Surgeon General's Traumatic Brain Injury Task Force, the Physical Disability Evaluation Transformation Initiative and the Office of Secretary of Defense/Health Affairs Family Transition Initiative. AW2 is facilitating a DoD sanctioned study by the RAND Corporation to learn about Severely Injured and Wounded Soldiers' experiences in returning to duty.

Physical Disability Evaluation System:

Consistent with the Vice Chief of Staff of the Army's action plan to fix the infrastructure of the current disability evaluation system, the Army's Physical Disability Action Plan is well underway and moving toward full implementation. We are committed to the well-being of our Soldiers and are working toward the goal of a seamless transition between the Army

and the Veterans Administration. Our goal is to streamline the process and to eliminate confusion for our Soldiers and their families. The Human Resources Community is actively engaged and focused on four objectives, which include: equity for Soldiers in the disability rating process; disability system infrastructure support improvements; timely and accurate administrative processing and enhanced information dissemination. Additionally, the Army leadership established the Task Force Med Hold Brigade and is rapidly resourcing many of the personnel, infrastructure, and support needs originally identified by the senior leadership. We are ensuring that our Wounded Warriors are treated the way they so richly deserve and the way the Nation rightfully expects. We are grateful to the Congress for your concern and attention paid to Soldiers - and will continue to keep the Congress informed as we improve these identified challenges.

CENTCOM Rest and Recuperation Leave Program

A fit, mission-focused Soldier is the foundation of our combat readiness. For Soldiers fighting the Global War on Terrorism in the USCENTCOM area of responsibility, the Rest and Recuperation (R&R) Leave Program is a vital component of their well-being and readiness.

Every day, flights depart Kuwait City International Airport carrying hundreds of Soldiers and DoD civilians to scores of leave destinations in the continental United States and throughout the world. Such R&R opportunities are essential when units are deployed and engaged in intense and sustained operations. Since September 25 2003, a total of 460,850 Soldiers and DoD civilians have participated in this highly successful program. They benefit from a break from the tensions of the combat environment and from the opportunity to reconnect with family and loved ones. The R&R Leave Program is an integral part of operations and readiness, and is a significant contributor to our Soldiers' success.

Deployment Cycle Support

Deployment Cycle Support, or DCS, is a comprehensive process that ensures Soldiers, DA civilians and their families are prepared and sustained throughout the deployment cycle. It provides a means to identify Soldiers, DA Civilians, and families who may need assistance with the challenges inherent to extended deployments. The goal of the DCS process is to facilitate Soldier, DA Civilian and family well-being before, during and after the deployment cycle.

All Soldiers deployed away from home station for 90 days or more complete the DCS process. Services for DA Civilians and families are integrated in every stage of the process, and they are highly encouraged to take advantage of the resources provided.

As of February 7 2007, 480,704 Soldiers completed the in-theater redeployment stage DCS tasks.

Equal Opportunity

Recent newspaper reports and a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) report concerning gangs leave the impression that gang activity in the U.S. Army is widespread and out of control. Reviews of both the recent media and FBI reports indicate that the problem was often overstated. In 2006, CID adopted the National Crime Information Center definition of a Gang and Gang Activity. This led to an increase in reporting over previous years. While the Army cannot state with certainty that no gang members exist within our Army, within our Army communities there are no data to support the presence of gang activities. The overall assessment by CID of gang activity threat in the Army remains low. CID and Military Police present awareness briefings that identify possible gang association by Soldiers. Additionally, education, awareness, and vigilance remain the best tools in combating gang activities and involvement by Soldiers and family members.

Retirement Services

Once a Soldier, Always a Soldier. Our efforts extend beyond our active duty population. The Army counts on its retired Soldiers to continue to serve as mobilization assets and as volunteers on military installations. Retired Soldiers are the face of the military in communities far from military installations. As key influencers they often act as adjunct recruiters, encouraging neighbors and relatives to become part of their Army. They speak from experience.

Retired Soldiers and family members are a force of more than one million strong with nearly 800,000 retired Soldiers and their spouses and family members receiving retired pay.

Conclusion

America's Army is strong. We continue to meet our worldwide commitments and provide the best led, best trained and best equipped Soldiers to combatant commanders. We need the continued support of Congress for the resources to maintain and grow our Army over the long war.

Just as important, is your support as national leaders to affect influencers and encourage all who are ready to answer this Nation's call to duty. To ensure our Army is prepared for the future, we need full support for the issues and funding requested in the FY07 Supplemental and the FY08 President's Budget to support the Army manning requirements given the current operational environment.

I thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today and I look forward to answering your questions.