

JOINT STATEMENT OF

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AND

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BEFORE THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES
MILITARY PERSONNEL SUBCOMMITTEE

EXTREMISM IN THE MILITARY

Good afternoon, Chairwoman Speier, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the Subcommittee. We are pleased to appear before you today to provide testimony on this important issue. In January 2020, the Department provided a report to the House and Senate Appropriation Committees titled, “*Military Personnel and Extremist Ideologies*.” In that report the Department emphasized the importance it places on treating all personnel with dignity and respect, in an inclusive environment free from unlawful discrimination and maltreatment. The Department and the Military Services have policies expressly prohibiting actively advocating supremacist, extremist, or criminal gang doctrine, ideology and causes. We continue to explore means by which we can enhance our ability to monitor and enforce these guiding principles.

The life-cycle for military personnel, from accessions processing to separation, is a complex process which is constantly evolving. The beginning of the life-cycle starts with each new member, whether enlisted or officer, undergoing a thorough screening process to ensure they meet the high standards of today’s military. Our data show that only about 29 percent of today’s youth, 17-24 year old, meet our standards without some type of an accession waiver. Our high standards and screening processes help ensure only the most qualified and deserving individuals are allowed to serve. This multi-tiered screening process enables a holistic view of each applicant. Using the tools available, we believe we have been effective at screening for individuals that have extremist ideologies or support extremist groups.

Recruiters play a critical role in assessing the qualification and intent of an applicant. Every applicant is interviewed by a recruiter in an effort to obtain as much information and documentation as possible about the individual’s basic qualifications for military service; this includes medical history, education credentials, local law enforcement involvement, family status, and work history. During this process recruiters look for additional indicators or issues that may

warrant additional scrutiny including a review of an individual's tattoos, scars, or other body markings, and if warranted, questions regarding the origin, meaning, and symbology associated with those markings, as they may represent a history or active involvement with a criminal gang or extremist group. At our Military Entrance Processing Stations, applicants then undergo a full physical by trained medical professionals and a background search of law enforcement and other records. Applicants answer questions about any involvement with law enforcement agencies including arrests, charges, citations, parole or probation, detention, and any other form of potentially adverse adjudication regardless of the outcome. Additionally, all applicants undergo an advanced fingerprint check, which provides a preliminary review of a history of any involvement with law enforcement, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Screening culminates with a Tier 3 background check (or higher if warranted) which screens recruits for extremist ties, including FBI investigative and criminal history files checks; terrorist and subversive activities checks; local law enforcement agency checks; and a review of the Violent Gang file of the National Criminal Information Center.

Upon an individual's entry into the Armed Services, the Department, the Military Services, and the individual have a shared responsibility to ensure members are afforded the opportunity to serve with dignity and respect, in an inclusive environment. Ever mindful that service members still retain constitutional rights and civil liberties, such as freedom of speech and freedom of peaceful assembly, those rights must be balanced with the unique need of the military to maintain good order and discipline in order to prevail in combat. And, in that manner, service members are held to a higher standard than their civilian peers, as guided by Department of Defense policy and the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

To that end, the Department’s overarching guidance is clear, Department of Defense Instruction (DoDI) 1325.06, “Handling Dissident and Protest Activities Among Members of the Armed Forces,” provides that military personnel “**must reject active participation and must not actively advocate** supremacist, extremist, or criminal gang doctrine, ideology, or causes, including those that advance, encourage, or advocate illegal discrimination based on race, creed, color, sex, religion, ethnicity, or national origin or those that advance, encourage, or advocate the use of force, violence, or criminal activity or otherwise advance efforts to deprive individuals of their civil rights.” The instruction goes on to articulate that active advocacy and/or participation in these causes may result in discipline, including administrative separation or criminal justice action, as “[c]ommanders have the authority to employ the full range of administrative and disciplinary actions,” in this regard.

Beyond its overarching guidance, the Department continues to work with the Services and other agencies to provide commanders and senior military leaders the tools needed to keep informed about the activities or adverse behaviors of service members. Commanders working with key stakeholders, such as the Service Investigative Offices, are swift to take appropriate action when warranted. We are gaining additional insights on service members through the deployment of new technologies and have explored additional testing and screening techniques that assess a range of personality dimensions to identify applicants who best fit with the military's culture of treating all personnel with dignity and respect. Examples of critical personality dimensions exhibiting applicants fit with the Department’s culture on inclusivity, respect, and dignity include: commitment to serve, order, selflessness, and tolerance. In conjunction with more traditional qualification batteries, these tools can be utilized as part of a “whole person” applicant screening process and can tell us a great deal about the likelihood of successfully completing

basic training, the first term of enlistment, and the ability of the applicant to adapt to rules, regulations, and military culture.

The Department also established the DoD Insider Threat Management and Analysis Center (DITMAC) that receives and analyzes applicable cases, allowing for timely reporting of serious threats including terrorism and criminal affiliation as well as criminal conduct. The Continuous Evaluation System allows for a constant monitoring of Service members including incidents that may have occurred outside the purview of military law enforcement; the Department continues to explore additional data sources (to include social media) for Continuous Evaluation and already includes criminal, terrorist, and subversive activities checks. Military law enforcement officials continue to foster stronger and more trusting partnerships with local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies including the National Gang Intelligence Center and the National Joint Terrorism Task Force. Collectively these actions and progress showcase increased interest and emphasis by the Department, as well as, enhanced federal capabilities regarding the tracking and reporting of real and potential cause for concern. In collaboration with the FBI Behavior Analysis Unit, DoD's Personnel Security Research Center issued policy recommendations that were enacted that clearly define several behaviors of concern which, when observed, are reported to appropriate agency security officials. More than 40 DoD Components have established insider threat programs that assess reports and share the information with security personnel for appropriate actions.

DoD remains committed to ensuring that all personnel are treated with dignity and respect, in an inclusive environment free from unlawful discrimination and maltreatment. This effort is accomplished while keeping each person's civil liberties intact. While this is not always an easy endeavor, it is critical to protecting our service members and those our service members are sworn to protect.

Madam Chairwoman, this concludes our statement. We are happy to answer any question you or members of the Subcommittee may have at this time. We thank you for your outstanding and continuing support for the men and women of the Department of Defense.