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**MERITOCRACY IN THE MILITARY
SERVICES: ACCESSION, PROMOTION,
AND COMMAND SELECTION**

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS

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CONTENTS

	Page
STATEMENTS PRESENTED BY MEMBERS OF CONGRESS	
Banks, Hon. Jim, a Representative from Indiana, Chairman, Subcommittee on Military Personnel	1
Kim, Hon. Andy, a Representative from New Jersey, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Military Personnel	2
WITNESSES	
Cheeseman, VADM Richard J., Jr., USN, Chief of Naval Personnel and Deputy Chief of Naval Operations (Personnel, Manpower, and Training), U.S. Navy	15
Greenway, Robert, Director, Center for National Defense, The Heritage Foundation	4
Kelley, Katharine, Deputy Chief of Space Operations for Human Capital, U.S. Space Force	18
Levine, Peter, Former Acting Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness	5
Miller, Lt Gen Caroline M., USAF, Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower, Personnel and Services, U.S. Air Force	17
Stitt, LTG Douglas F., USA, Deputy Chief of Staff, U.S. Army	15
Strobl, Michael R., Assistant Deputy Commandant for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, U.S. Marine Corps	16
Thibreau, William, Director, American Military Project, Center for the American Way of Life, The Claremont Institute	3
APPENDIX	
PREPARED STATEMENTS:	
Banks, Hon. Jim	33
Cheeseman, VADM Richard J., Jr.	69
Greenway, Robert	40
Kelley, Katharine	88
Kim, Hon. Andy	35
Levine, Peter	49
Miller, Lt Gen Caroline M.	82
Stitt, LTG Douglas F.	55
Strobl, Michael R.	75
Thibreau, William	36
DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD:	
[There were no Documents submitted.]	
WITNESS RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ASKED DURING THE HEARING:	
Mr. Mills	95
QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS POST HEARING:	
Mr. Gaetz	99
Ms. Stefanik	99
Mr. Waltz	100

MERITOCRACY IN THE MILITARY SERVICES: ACCESSION, PROMOTION, AND COMMAND SELECTION

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL,
Washington, DC, Wednesday, September 20, 2023.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 1:00 p.m., in room 2212, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Jim Banks (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JIM BANKS, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM INDIANA, CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL

Mr. BANKS. The subcommittee will come to order. I ask unanimous consent that the Chair be authorized to declare a recess at any time. Without objection, so ordered.

The hearing will now come to order. I ask unanimous consent that the Chair be authorized to declare a recess at any time and, again, without objection so ordered.

I want to welcome everyone to this hearing of the Military Personnel Subcommittee. Today's hearing is on meritocracy in the military services, from recruiting and accession to promotion and command selection.

I want to thank our witnesses for being with us today. I hope this hearing provides an opportunity for our members to have a productive exchange with our witnesses and provide answers to their questions.

The questions we ask today may be focused on the military's personnel system. However, they have much broader implications. These questions go to our Nation's founding principles: meritocracy, talent, and equality of opportunity. Across the country, these principles are under attack. They have been sacrificed at the altar of diversity, equity, and inclusion bureaucracies, bureaucracies which demand racial and gender quotas regardless of ability.

These performative social justice goals require government agencies, large corporations, top-tier universities, and the military to trade skill, productivity, hard work, and ingenuity for a workforce which looks good on a brochure. This is demeaning for all Americans, including those singled out by those quotas. Millions of Americans are frustrated with the social justice agenda that pervades our schools, corporations, and now the Pentagon bureaucracy.

For example on August 9th, 2022, a memo from the Secretary of the Air Force explicitly laid out quota goals for its officer applicant pool. Apparently, Air Force officer applicants should be 15 percent Hispanic, 10 percent Asian, 67 percent White, 36 percent female,

and so on. Americans are fed up with that. There is one place we simply can't afford to trade equal opportunity for radical ideology, and that's the United States military.

We must do whatever it takes to ensure that effort, hard work, and results are the only relevant measure of our service members, not only because every American deserves to be judged by their character, but because no matter what our military does in peacetime, lethality is the only standard that will matter on the battlefield.

If these policies continue, we are placing military readiness and our national security at risk, and we are putting an end to one of the last great meritocratic systems in the United States.

Today you will hear from two panels. The first panel is a group of experts that will explain the cost of military readiness associated with trading merit for diversity quotas. In the second panel, we will hear from DOD's [Department of Defense's] military personnel chiefs. They will describe the factors and characteristics used to select military members for promotion and command.

Additionally, they will address demographically targeted recruiting and accessions. Before hearing from our witnesses, let me offer Ranking Member Kim an opportunity to make opening remarks.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Banks can be found in the Appendix on page 33.]

STATEMENT OF HON. ANDY KIM, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM NEW JERSEY, RANKING MEMBER, SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL

Mr. KIM. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you to our witnesses for coming forward. And I just want to start by taking a step back here to say, I believe all of us in this room want the same thing. We want the strongest possible military to defend our Nation. And that goal requires the best leaders to step up and lead this military. And in pursuit of this absolute need, we need a process of accession, retention, and promotion that is fair and transparent, and based on skill and merit. All of us want and demand a meritocratic system.

But let's keep in mind that meritocratic means weighing both quantitative and qualitative qualities. There is no solely quantitative way to identify the best leaders. Academic achievement and tactical proficiency are easy to measure. You either have a degree or you don't. You are either a marksman or an expert with your assigned rifle. But assessing and defining factors such as leadership, character, and integrity cannot be perfectly reduced to a number.

I am interested in hearing from our witnesses how they assess those hard to measure attributes across the spectrum of service, how we recruit, how we retain, how we decide to promote our service members.

I also hope to hear our witnesses' insights on what improvements we need to make so our processes work as intended. And I hope Congress, and the Department of Defense, make every effort to encourage service from people of all types of backgrounds as we engage in this process.

We should work together to foster a culture that encourages and rewards excellence, creativity, innovation, and critical thinking so our military can continue to meet emerging challenges around the globe.

As I close, I also just want to say that our desire for the promotion of the best military leaders should also encompass a need for Congress to fulfill its own role in this process. And holding up military promotions is not the right way to make a political point.

I hope all of us in this room can agree that our national security is vital and the threats we face are real. We need fully qualified leaders in their jobs doing the work to secure our Nation. We ask a lot of our service members. Now we need to make sure that they know we are supporting them and their mission.

Thank you to the witnesses again for being here. And I yield back the balance of my time.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Kim can be found in the Appendix on page 35.]

Mr. BANKS. I thank the ranking member. Each witness will have the opportunity to present his testimony. And each member will have an opportunity to question the witnesses for 5 minutes. We respectfully ask the witnesses to summarize their testimony in 2 minutes or less. Your written comments and statements will be made part of the hearing record.

With that, Mr. Thibeau, you may make your opening statement.

STATEMENT OF WILLIAM THIBEAU, DIRECTOR, AMERICAN MILITARY PROJECT, CENTER FOR THE AMERICAN WAY OF LIFE, THE CLAREMONT INSTITUTE

Mr. THIBEAU. Chairman Banks, Ranking Member Kim, and the members of this subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify this afternoon.

The military must only consider factors of policy that better the Armed Force's ability to fight and win our Nation's wars. Merit, or that which alludes to military professionalism and competence, must not be the first consideration, but the exclusive lens through which these leaders make decisions.

Race and gender diversity exists, supposedly, as something that the military must embrace and promote as if the Armed Forces march to the beat of a corporate or a university drum. In reality, the existence of a professional, permanent military in a democratic liberal society demands that the institution must exist apart from the ideologies and politics prevalent in modern-day America.

The military must balance functional considerations, or those capabilities required to fight and win our Nation's wars, with social considerations, or those ideologies which define American life outside the military.

This means that the military must maintain such a strict separation between values not specifically related to the military profession and those other values that are more prevalent.

A formal consideration of innate characteristics like race and gender is toxic for military units because it redefines the concept of standards. Standards are no longer how the military selects and promotes the very best, but they are the minimum floor of expectation before other considerations can be evaluated.

This is a subtle but fundamental change. When we assume that the military must reflect the demographics of the Nation, we presume proportionalism into the experiences of everyday soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines. Military leaders and the institutions they lead embed the imperative of racial representation into the lives of American service members, which is never guaranteed. The integrity of our republic is in tension with a military that evaluates matters of politics and identity. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Thibeau can be found in the Appendix on page 36.]

Mr. BANKS. Thank you, Mr. Thibeau.

Now, Mr. Greenway, you may make your opening statement. Turn on your microphone.

STATEMENT OF ROBERT GREENWAY, DIRECTOR, CENTER FOR NATIONAL DEFENSE, THE HERITAGE FOUNDATION

Mr. GREENWAY. Thank you, Chairman Bank, Ranking Member Kim, distinguished members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss issues vital to the defense of our Nation.

As a veteran, the ability of our Armed Forces to protect and defend us and those committed to serving in them is of personal significance.

Like many of you, I see the unrelenting commitment to competence, which has long established our military as the finest in the world has ever known, being degraded by pernicious ideologies which would replace merit and demonstrated ability in our accessions and promotions systems.

The result is a less capable and ready force, struggling to regain the trust of the public it serves and increasingly challenged to face the full range of threats that confront us. Diversity, equity, and inclusion, critical race theory, and related ideologies are eroding the effectiveness of our military by discarding that meritocracy and ensures our Armed Forces are led by the most qualified.

Our military has encountered at least three periods of personal turbulence and crisis before—since the adoption of the All-Volunteer Force in 1973.

The first was in 1978 following the withdrawal from Vietnam, the second in 1994 at the withdrawal from Somalia, and we're currently experiencing the third after the disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan and the worst recruiting crisis we have ever faced.

The present crisis bears hallmarks to those which preceded it. All three reflect challenges in recruiting environments, and a lack of focus on what matters—competence and effectiveness—and a focus on distractions like the adoption of corporate practices or the replacement of merit with various other criteria.

In all three cases, the cause was clear. The recovery took years. But it involved significant congressional oversight. Ultimately, the primacy of competence was restored and the force recovered.

War is an unforgiving enterprise. As a combat veteran with multiple tours in Iraq and Afghanistan, I can attest to it. Without question, the only proven criteria for promotion in the Armed Forces are character and competence as reflected by demonstrated performance, recognizing the brutal reality of combat in which they are tested. This approach ensures the highest quality personnel

enter and ultimately lead the force. We don't maintain a military to participate in war but to prevail.

I appreciate the opportunity to be with you today and look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Greenway can be found in the Appendix on page 40.]

Mr. BANKS. Thank you.

And finally, Mr. Levine, you may make your opening statement.

STATEMENT OF PETER LEVINE, FORMER ACTING UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PERSONNEL AND READINESS

Mr. LEVINE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Chairman Banks, Ranking Member Kim, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for inviting me here this afternoon. Even more than technology, our greatest military advantage over our competitors is our people. The capability of our total force, officer and enlisted, Active Duty and Reserve, military and civilian, organic and contractor, is multiplied many times over by the exceptional quality of our recruits and the unparalleled levels of their training and education.

I would like to make three quick points today. First, diversity strengthens our military and military leadership is most effective when it appropriately reflects the force. Only by recruiting in every region of the country and every demographic group can the Department access the personnel and talent that it needs.

A force that did not reflect the diversity of America would not only be smaller, it would be significantly less capable.

Second, the military promotion system is merit-based, but that does not mean that it could necessarily be as objective as we would like. Federal law requires merit-based protection—promotion decisions providing the selection boards convened by military departments recommend those officers whom they determine to be best qualified for promotion.

Board members and service members involved in the selection process have described the process as exceptionally fair and express the belief that board decisions are made based solely on the strength of the record. There are no quotas, or affirmative action, in today's military promotion system.

Third, the military has limited but important tools with which to promote diversity without undermining merit-based decisions.

The twin objectives of promoting on the basis of merit and developing a diverse and inclusive leadership may sound inconsistent but they are not. One step the Department can take to build diversity without undermining merit is to ensure that the pipeline of individuals who enter into the merit-based promotion system is as diverse as possible.

A second step the Department can take is to ensure that the boards that make the promotion decisions are themselves diverse. This is why section 612 of title 10, United States Code, requires that members of the selection board represent the diverse population of the Armed Forces concerned to the extent practicable. It matters who makes the decisions.

Taking these steps does not require—does not mean that the services are now acting on a basis other than merit or promoting less-qualified officers. Rather, it is an indication that they are now

able to recognize talent where they may not have been able to do so before. The result is a better and stronger force and one that draws on all of the many strengths of our society.

Thank you for inviting me to participate in today's hearing. And I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Levine can be found in the Appendix on page 49.]

Mr. BANKS. Thank you to each of you for your opening statements. Each member will have 5 minutes to ask questions. I will begin with that time now.

Mr. Thibeau, some people have claimed that a large portion of potential recruits see the U.S. military as racist or sexist. So that's why DEI [diversity, equity, and inclusion] training is necessary to correct their perception and to boost recruitment. Do you agree with that assessment?

Mr. THIBEAU. Mr. Chairman, I don't. I think when—if DEI training or recruitment based on race and sex is seen as the solution to perceived racism or sexism, that creates the "bogeyman" that the military seeks to eliminate with those programs. Instead, the military should maintain absolute objectivity and frankly almost indifference to those kinds of ideologies to maintain a fighting force that is competent; not competent to consider all viewpoints, but competent to fight and win wars.

Mr. BANKS. So you're saying it's a self-perpetuating narrative?

Mr. THIBEAU. I think so.

Mr. BANKS. Interesting. Mr. Greenway, what policy or other changes should be made to ensure that service members with the most talent and ability get promoted regardless of their race, gender, or other visible characteristics?

Mr. GREENWAY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think one place to start is instructions to promotion and selection boards. For example, would you want the "best qualified" or a "fully qualified" physician attending you for medical care? I think the answer for most would be the "best qualified."

But current instructions allow, I think, for far too much latitude and discretion against the subjective care and I think a lot of things can creep into the criteria. And so I would eliminate "fully qualified." And I think we should look for the "best qualified." And I think promotion boards are historically good at doing so.

Mr. BANKS. Many have argued that the Army Combat Fitness Test, the ACFT, results in disparate outcomes for women and men. Can you address why the ACFT is a good test for combat skill and fitness regardless of how it impacts women in the Army, Mr. Greenway?

Mr. GREENWAY. I think the first point goes to the rigors of the environment in which we must prepare our service members to perform in. And I think it's always been a struggle for myself and others to recognize why we have different standards.

And if the environment is the same, if combat in fact has the same conditions expected to perform in, we should probably have the same standard for everyone who is going to participate in it. And so I think the degree to which we don't, we create all kinds of problems for ourselves, not least of which is inability to perform in combat.

Mr. BANKS. Mr. Levine, in your opening statement, you mentioned that the promotion system was not as color-blind as it should be. What concrete changes can the services make to ensure promotion systems are more color-blind?

Mr. LEVINE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My point in the statement was that the promotion system cannot, in fact, be completely color-blind because even if we take photographs out of promotion files, we've still got names, we've still got histories, we've got seal associations, things that are on somebody's résumé that will indicate historic background, including background of race. It's very hard to mask gender, for example, if you can see the nominee's, the candidate's name.

On top of that, the main meat of a promotion board is the recommendations made by the officer's superiors and those recommendations are not blind. They are made by somebody who knows exactly who he or she is recommending or not recommending. So as much as we would like it to be color-blind, it can't be color-blind. And we just have to recognize that as a fact.

Mr. BANKS. Thank you. I will yield back the rest of my time, and yield to Mr. Kim for his 5 minutes.

Mr. KIM. Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. Thanks again to the three of you for coming on out here. And, Mr. Levine, I wanted to just kind of drill in a little bit more on what you were just talking about here, just fleshing out some of your testimony as well.

Just big picture, from what you see, is the process of military promotion as it is now, is it meritocratic? Is it based off of merit?

Mr. LEVINE. I believe that it is. I do not believe that it is quota-based.

I have participated in reviews which have, and reviewed studies in which people have interviewed numerous members of selection boards and the virtually unanimous view of people who participate in those boards is that they are merit-based. That they are making decisions purely on the basis of the file and extraneous considerations do not come into play.

Mr. KIM. You just mentioned this idea about quotas. And it was raised as well in the opening. And I'm sure it will be talked about. But I guess I just wanted to kind of clarify this. What are we actually talking about here?

You know, there obviously could be aspirational goals or other things like that. But just, when it comes to actual quotas dictating requirements of the services, does such a thing exist? Do those types of quotas exist in the current process?

Mr. LEVINE. I will tell you that it would be against current law, existing law. You don't need—you have a new statute that would also prohibit. But existing statute would prohibit having a quota saying that you to have a certain percentage of nominations coming in based on race or gender or any other characteristic like that.

So there are efforts to ensure, as I said, that the pipeline is diverse so that the people coming into the process start with—you start with a diverse group, but the decisions that are made with regard to whom to promote within that group are supposed to be made on the merits. And I believe that they are made on the merits.

Mr. KIM. Oh, I see what you're talking about. So the idea is that, you know, the more that we can do our best to try to make sure that diversity is reflected writ large in the broader force. But when it comes to the actual promotions, that there is no quota. That that is done on that purely meritocratic approach. Is that what you're saying?

Mr. LEVINE. Exactly. That is what I'm saying. Yes, sir.

Mr. KIM. So just to kind of clarify, you know, we had in a previous hearing talk about affirmative action. Is any of that involved in the promotion process?

Mr. LEVINE. I do not believe that there is affirmative action as is generally defined involved in the promotion process, no.

Mr. KIM. The chairman cited a quote of yours that I thought was really interesting. Well, you said—I'll read it out. "The military promotion system is merit-based, but that doesn't mean that we have been able to make it as color-blind or objective as we might like."

I just thought that was really interesting, what you just said back to the chairman kind of piqued my interest. I guess what I'm taking away from this in terms of what you just said is that in our minds sometimes we are associating the idea of meritocracy with objectivity. That that is what we should be achieving and striving for. But it sounded like what you were saying is that there is a limit to objectivity here. That there is always going to be some semblance of subjectivity, judgment because we're talking about things that are not always quantitative in that kind of way. Am I summing that up right?

Mr. LEVINE. Yes. We want our evaluators and we want our promotion boards to be as objective as they can possibly be. But at the end of the day, we're relying on human judgment. And human judgment on assessing characteristics like leadership, communication skills, ability to work with others, key characteristics that we expect our leaders to have in the military and that we look to promote. And different people with different experiences see those in different ways.

And, you know, the person I might see as a potential leader might be somebody that I recognize from my own past, the people that I've dealt with, the people that I have worked with, the kinds of characteristics of leadership that I've seen in my career.

Somebody else who has a different career and a different background might recognize other characteristics of leadership. So that's why I say that having a diverse group of people making those decisions is important because you might recognize talent that you would not otherwise recognize just as a result of having a group—the group of people who were making those decisions not be all out of the same rubberstamp—

Mr. KIM. Yeah.

Mr. LEVINE. [continuing]. And have the same set of views.

Mr. KIM. No, that's a really important point. And one that I've been really meditating on is just this understanding of just what does it mean to be a meritocracy? You know, what is it that we're going at? And I think that it's important for us to recognize that, you know, there are limits to what, you know, just quantitative objective approaches can do.

And in fact, if we do it solely based off of those things that we can measure in that kind of way, we'd be missing incredibly important characteristics that actually are there to help define and determine who is going to be the strongest leader. So thank you for your thoughts. I appreciate that. And I yield back.

Mr. BANKS. Thank you. Mr. Gaetz, your 5 minutes.

Mr. GAETZ. So, Mr. Thibeau, is there anything that should dictate whether or not someone gets a job in the DOD other than who is most qualified?

Mr. THIBEAU. No, Congressman, for that specific job, no. Whoever can do the job, whatever job it is best, should get it.

Mr. GAETZ. Should we consider whether or not the job is in a red State or a blue State?

Mr. THIBEAU. No.

Mr. GAETZ. Should we consider a State's critical race theory perspectives?

Mr. THIBEAU. No.

Mr. GAETZ. Should we consider a State's thoughts on gender ideology?

Mr. THIBEAU. No.

Mr. GAETZ. Should we consider our thoughts on a State's abortion policy?

Mr. THIBEAU. No, Congressman.

Mr. GAETZ. Mr. Greenway, can you think of anything other than the person's skill and their quality to align with the job that should be more important?

Mr. GREENWAY. No, Congressman.

Mr. GAETZ. None of the things I mentioned?

Mr. GREENWAY. None.

Mr. GAETZ. And why shouldn't a State's abortion policy influence what person gets what job in the military?

Mr. GREENWAY. Because the military's unique responsibility is to perform in circumstances where no other part of our government can or is expected to. And that environment is unforgiving. And so the standard has to be prerequisite. And in this case, I don't think we can afford to fail in the defense of our Nation and its citizens because we compromise on that.

Mr. GAETZ. Is that the same for like a State's maybe gender policy if you don't want the third-grade teacher picking your kid's gender, that shouldn't really impact who gets what job in the military, should it?

Mr. GREENWAY. No, absolutely not.

Mr. GAETZ. Mr. Levine, do you share that perspective?

Mr. LEVINE. I absolutely do, Congressman. We have a very diverse military. It reflects the diversity of American society. And if we were to pick and choose based on the views of people who were in the military, it would be very destructive to the military.

Mr. GAETZ. And we shouldn't pick or choose based on the views of a State legislature either, should we?

Mr. LEVINE. I can't see why we would.

Mr. GAETZ. Yeah, I can't either. I'm glad to hear that universally presented. So, you know, Mr. Thibeau, if someone were to say, look, first I look at who is most qualified, but then I also look at maybe what a State's abortion policies or gender policies are. What's the

risk of melding those things into one analysis about what jobs people do in the military?

Mr. THIBEAU. I think it creates, you know, two sides to a coin that doesn't exist, Congressman. You can either make it about who is most qualified, not merely who is qualified, or you can make it about other factors that a person doesn't choose, like their race or sex or like the State in which they may serve.

And you can either admit that those latter factors don't matter and just choose who is most qualified anyways, or you can make compromises on who is truly the best person for each job based on other factors that have been deemed priorities from some spot in the chain of command. And I think that's what many of these diversity initiatives lead to.

Mr. GAETZ. And so as I understand that, you are presenting a binary paradigm. Either it's the one most qualified, and then we have a meritocracy. Or it's the one most qualified plus anything else blended into that decision, you would say that is not a meritocracy.

Mr. THIBEAU. I think it creates a slippery slope to where you are making a choice about something else. And I think you're right, Congressman.

Mr. GAETZ. Mr. Greenway, do you agree that it is that binary? That once you start bleeding into the decision-making process, these other factors and other things, you can say that you consider first the qualifications, but really once it becomes muddled with something other than qualifications, the meritocracy train has kind of left the station?

Mr. GREENWAY. Absolutely. And I will give two examples of that. The first is in the 1970s corporate policy started to influence promotion process and we suffered significantly. It took us about 6 or 8 years almost for the force to recover.

And the second is in graduate degrees. It seems on the surface of it, a good idea to have the professional qualification of a graduate degree. And thankfully the pilot who ejected from the F-35 in South Carolina survived, but—

Mr. GAETZ. Got it, got it, got it. I got that. With my remaining minute, I'm going to play a video.

[Video shown.]

Mr. GAETZ. I yield back.

Mr. BANKS. Mr. Waltz, your 5 minutes.

Mr. WALTZ. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Does anyone disagree that our level of diversity in the military, at least according to race, exceeds that of the American public? We have more African Americans in the military than the public? We have more Hispanics in the military than broadly in the population?

Mr. LEVINE. Congressman, that's generally true. It's not necessarily true if you look at all levels of—

Mr. WALTZ. Right. So that's the next—that's what we tend to hear is yes, yes, yes, "but." That quick "but," though, touches all kinds of things we do in recruiting, enlistment, DEI training, let's kind of brush aside. But the general officers corps.

Does anyone disagree that at least across the services, most of our general officers are chosen from within, for example, in the Army combat ranks or the combat MOSes [military occupational

specialties]. And for a whole variety of reasons, we tend to see more minorities in the service and the service support usually because there is different skills or different preferences there.

So at least in my experience and what I've seen is that the generals are chosen from combat arms. And they tend to tilt more towards men. And they tend to tilt more towards White men. A reasonable explanation, one would say, right?

Mr. LEVINE. That's generally accurate.

Mr. WALTZ. Okay. So then we start skewing that percentage—sorry, Mr. Levine, what then in our general officer corps, since it tends to be less diverse, is acceptable? Is it to match the population?

Mr. LEVINE. I don't believe that there is a percentage that's an acceptable percentage. I think that as we look at the type of factor that you just described, the reaction of the military has been a reasonable one which is why are we seeing minorities go—minority officers go into support functions? Are there things that we can do—

Mr. WALTZ. Are support functions less important?

Mr. LEVINE. Not necessarily. But are there things we can do in terms of mentorship, or encouragement, to persuade them that perhaps they should look at the combat arms functions as well because if they are more—as you indicated, if they are more strongly represented in the lower grades in those functions, they're more likely to fleet up to the upper levels.

And that is the kind of action that we take to encourage diversity.

Mr. WALTZ. So how do we then do that for females and general officers? Let's just stick with that because there are all kinds of places we could go with that. But let's stick with that. How then do we do that, we encourage more females when—particularly when physical fitness and the ability to perform to a certain standard is a key metric, let's say in Army combat arms, infantry, armor, what have you?

Mr. LEVINE. You don't necessarily have the fully ability to do that with regard to women. And you have to defer to what—which [simultaneous speaking].

Mr. WALTZ. Would you agree then, really what this is about it's about standards? And it should be, if we have a meritocracy, and we've had some definition of meritocracy, it's about standards period. It's the standard needed to be an infantry man or woman. That may be a different as it applies to physical than it would be to say be a cyber warrior.

Mr. LEVINE. We have—

Mr. WALTZ. Different physicality needed to be in the infantry than to type on a keyboard.

Mr. LEVINE. Yes, Congressman. We have physical standards for specific MOSes. And those standards do not vary based on whether you are a woman or a man.

Mr. WALTZ. Actually, they do. Actually, that's just blatantly incorrect. We have a dual standard. Myself and Senator Tom Cotton have legislation to make them gender neutral and to make them according to the standard required.

Mr. LEVINE. Let me be clear. We have two different fitness standards. We have one fitness standard for an MOS. Those are two different things. The fitness standard is a general suitability to serve in the service, which you'll hear your—you can ask the professionals in the next panel, but they will explain to you that's about your general standard of fitness.

Mr. WALTZ. Right.

Mr. LEVINE. There is a separate standard, which is a standard for a combat arms MOS. And that does not vary. It does not vary based on gender.

Mr. WALTZ. But here is the issue with that. In order for promotion points and all kinds of other things, for example, you have a first female that goes through Ranger School, one standard. Proud of her, absolutely earned it. But she goes to command and infantry platoon and she has a now different physical standard than the men and women that she's asked to lead. That's unfair to her. That undermines her achievement. And, and, last I checked, the enemy's bullets don't make a distinction.

Mr. LEVINE. Again, she had to pass the same standard to get through Ranger School. She didn't get a different standard through Ranger School.

Mr. WALTZ. Right.

Mr. LEVINE. She had the same standard through Ranger School.

Mr. WALTZ. That's right.

Mr. LEVINE. She has a different fitness standard which I would think—what you think of as a health standard as a woman.

Mr. WALTZ. No.

Mr. LEVINE. The body weight is different.

Mr. WALTZ. No, it's called—it's deliberately called a combat fitness test. These are the standards you must hit for combat. They literally—the Army literally changed the name from physical fitness test, which is wellness and health, to a combat fitness test. And I think you are—frankly, I'm going to move on, but you are making a distinction without a difference there. And at the end of the day what I think we need to settle, and why this committee under the chairman's leadership is having so many hearings, it's about standards that we need to win and fight wars, not about all of these other factors.

Mr. LEVINE. I agree with you, Congressman.

Mr. BANKS. Time is expired. Mr. Mills, your 5 minutes.

Mr. MILLS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Will [Thibeau], you went to Ranger School. You know all about the ideas of going to Darby Phase and sitting up in Dahlonega, sitting in Florida Phase. When you went through based on your height, your size, or your physical strength, was your standards modified based on those things?

Mr. THIBEAU. No, Congressman.

Mr. MILLS. And do you feel that it would actually be something which is fair to modify Ranger School standards based on physical capability or capacity?

Mr. THIBEAU. No, Congressman.

Mr. MILLS. Mr. Levine, you just talked about, again, health and welfare. I have deployed multiple times as has my colleague, Mike Waltz, and our chairman. And I can tell you that 180-, 200-pound man with full kit, when he is shot, and you are actually trying to

pull him off the X, it doesn't matter your gender. It matters your capability, capacity, your combat fitness and readiness.

So do you feel then that it should be based upon what your capability is or what your gender or other type of distinction is on whether or not you can perform those same duties?

Mr. LEVINE. So the performance in any MOS, in any assignment should be based on your capability for that assignment. And I agree with you, and I agree with Congressman Waltz, that that should be absolutely standard-based.

The question is whether the standard for fitness for participating in the armed services as a whole should also be a single standard or whether it is okay for that to be a dual standard. And my view is we have lots of jobs that are as you describe them where you have to carry a 140-pound kit or 200-pound kit, or whatever it is, and you better be able to carry it if you're going to carry it.

We also have desk jobs. We also have jobs operating—

Mr. MILLS. But we have people who are actually having a different standard who are in those combat arm positions.

Mr. LEVINE. I understand. So the question is can we let somebody into the service based on a fitness standard that is a gender-based standard for admission into—for accession into the service. It doesn't get you into a particular assignment because for that assignment, you have to meet the physical criteria for that assignment.

Mr. MILLS. Well, let me ask this question, because this is about meritocracy. This is about putting meritocracy over the ideas of DEI and all these other criterias.

And in August of 2022, the memo from the Secretary of the Air Force detailed percentage goals based on race and gender. What any reasonable person would see as an absolute quota, but yet we try to say that we don't have a quota.

Can you explain where these resources were redirected from in order to reach the race-based quota set out by the Biden administration? Anyone?

Mr. THIBEAU. So, Congressman, this is, you know, where I see a disconnect between the supposed premise of merit and the insistence that quotas don't exist because that memo you reference establishes percentage-based goals not based on where people live or how—you know, what their income level was growing up but based on their skin color and their sex.

And so, again, that goes back to this two-sided coin that I don't think exists. Either we can admit those goals are meaningless, and the Department of the Air Force and the subordinate units don't do anything to make sure they meet those goals for White men or Black men, or we can acknowledge that those are quotas. I don't understand what the difference is other than the label we give that policy.

Mr. MILLS. Mr. Thibeau, I absolutely agree with you. And I would argue the fact that most of this body actually believes in completely eliminating DEI, which is part of what's led to a deterioration, not just in the promotion of meritocracy, but also I think it's had a dire impact on our recruitment. And I think that we can acknowledge that we are at our lowest recruitment level since I believe it was 1973.

And so, my question to all three of you then would be how do you see pronouns, and by the way, of course, we are the greatest when it comes to the battlefield, we can out-pronoun any of our enemies. We can out he/her and she/him all day.

But how does pronouns, quotas, and DEI strengthen or diminish our Armed Forces. And I will start with you, Mr. Levine.

Mr. LEVINE. What I would say about pronouns is that there is a fundamental part of our military culture and our military values, which is treating others with dignity and respect.

And I believe that that fundamental principle should apply in the case of somebody who wants to have different pronouns used, which is don't disrespect them, don't intentionally insult them.

Now do I think that somebody should be directed to use a specific set of pronouns whether they believe it or not? No, not particularly. But should we treat somebody with dignity and respect?

Mr. MILLS. I don't think it's about dignity or respect. I think that it is absolutely the idea of trying to put ourselves into these individual sectors and boxes for division when the military is about cohesion, unification, not division.

Mr. Greenway, same question if you would.

Mr. GREENWAY. I don't see any benefit. But ultimately, these ideas lead exactly to that, to quotas that ultimately come at the expense of performance and merit. And when the Secretary of the Air Force promulgates written guidance, it is not seen as something that would be nice to achieve, at least unless the military has changed radically, and I don't think that it has.

Promulgated written guidance means that that is exactly what you are supposed to do. And so aspirational though they may be, instructions issued to subordinate commands means they need to be followed.

Mr. MILLS. I absolutely agree. My time has expired, but I thank you gentlemen. Again, I hope our Armed Forces gets back to not serving political agendas but serving our Nation and that we can actually identify that meritocracy is the most important thing. With that, I yield back.

Mr. BANKS. I want to thank the first panel. This was a great substantive healthy discussion that will precede another panel discussion that we will have with some of our senior leaders in the military.

So with that, we'll take a 3-minute recess, change panels. My hope is that we can get through the opening testimonies before members are called to vote and then we'll come back and ask questions. Thank you.

[Recess]

Mr. BANKS. All right. The hearing will now come to order. I would like to again welcome our witnesses. Each witness will have the opportunity to present his or her testimony. And each member will have an opportunity to question the witnesses for 5 minutes. We respectfully ask the witnesses to summarize their testimony in 2 minutes or less. Your written comments and statements will be made part of the hearing record.

With that, Lieutenant General Stitt, you may make your opening statement.

STATEMENT OF LTG DOUGLAS F. STITT, USA, DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF, U.S. ARMY

General STITT. Good afternoon, Chairman Banks, Ranking Member Kim, distinguished members of this committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you on behalf of the United States Army.

The Army's mission is to deploy, fight, and win our Nation's wars by providing ready, prompt, and sustained land dominance as part of the joint force.

Accomplishing this mission requires placing the right soldier into the right assignment at the right time. This starts with recruiting across the United States, casting a wide net to ensure that all who want to serve and to meet our standards are afforded that opportunity.

Programs such as the Future Soldier Preparatory Course provide our applicants the means to further develop themselves for successful enlistment, and completion of initial entry training.

Our promotion system operates under the construct of statute and DOD policies, ensuring that we consider all eligible soldiers and select only the best for advancement. As a standards-based organization, promotion board members consider each soldier's file and select only those who are best qualified based upon merit.

Our structural requirements determine how many of those best qualified soldiers on an order of merit list will advance for promotion to the next rank.

For the Army's most impactful leadership positions, our officers and NCOs [noncommissioned officers] undergo an additional assessment. Leaders who compete for brigade and battalion command as well as other select critical positions attend the Command Assessment Program, which ensures that we are selecting the right leaders, who in turn have the greatest impact upon the soldiers in our formations.

Our Army is ready because our accessions, selections, and promotions ensure that we are a force comprised of quality leaders and soldiers at all levels.

Chairman Banks, Ranking Member Kim, members of this committee, I thank you for your generous and unwavering support to our talented soldiers, civilian professionals, and family members. I look forward to your questions. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of General Stitt can be found in the Appendix on page 55.]

Mr. BANKS. Thank you.

Vice Admiral Cheeseman, you may make your opening statement.

STATEMENT OF VADM RICHARD J. CHEESEMAN, JR., USN, CHIEF OF NAVAL PERSONNEL AND DEPUTY CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS (PERSONNEL, MANPOWER, AND TRAINING), U.S. NAVY

Admiral CHEESEMAN. Good afternoon, Chairman Banks, Ranking Member Kim, and distinguished members of this subcommittee. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you to discuss meritocracy in the United States Navy.

In everything we do, our primary objective remains taking care of our people in order to produce and preserve the best combat-ready naval forces in the world.

To do that, our Navy will always maintain, train, and equip a combat-credible, dominant naval force to keep the sea lanes free and open, deter conflict, and when called upon, decisively win our Nation's wars.

Our entire Navy must leverage the best of our Nation by investing in trained, resilient, and educated sailors that are self-assessing, self-correcting, and always learning toward one goal, delivering warfighting advantage.

Our process for accessions, promotions, and command selections supports this by being solidly founded upon merit.

The Navy has a deliberate process for recruiting candidates, advancing our sailors, and selecting our personnel for leadership positions, which is constantly reviewed to ensure the finest Americans are available for service at all ranks, in all pay grades. These processes are rooted in law and sound policy.

I look forward to working with you as we continue shaping our Navy to meet future challenges and thank you for your unwavering support. I stand ready to answer your questions.

[The prepared statement of Admiral Cheeseman can be found in the Appendix on page 69.]

Mr. BANKS. Thank you.

Dr. Strobl, you may make your opening statement.

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL R. STROBL, ASSISTANT DEPUTY COMMANDANT FOR MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS, U.S. MARINE CORPS

Dr. STROBL. Chairman Banks, Ranking Member Kim, and members of the subcommittee, your United States Marine Corps is a meritocracy. We take pride in our commitment to recognizing and rewarding excellence in a fair, transparent, and methodical way, whether it is accessing, assigning, promoting, or awarding and retaining Marines, the Corps is dedicated to merit-based treatment of our warriors.

Marines understand that their advancement and opportunities depend on their excellence, creating an environment where everyone has an equal opportunity for success.

In our accessions, the Marine Corps' primary requirements are that an applicant wants to be a Marine, wants to defend our Constitution, and can meet our high standards of intellect, fitness, and character.

We welcome individuals of any race, religion, color, gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation from anywhere in our country who can meet these standards or wants to try. Everyone will be given a fair shot at the opportunity to become a Marine.

Similarly, we assign, promote, and select for command based on merit. Our officer promotion selection boards are grounded in law. For all our boards, both statutory and non-statutory, we use a standardized briefing format and conduct anonymous voting. Our explicit standard is to always select the best and fully qualified.

The success of the Marine Corps' meritocratic approach is reflected in Marine satisfaction. Marines demand fairness and ac-

countability. Our historically high retention rates suggest that they believe the Corps treats them fairly, cares about their satisfaction, and values their careers.

Marines choose to stay Marines because they have confidence that their careers will be determined by their excellence. This trust in our meritocratic principles is a driving force behind our sustained success.

Thank you and “Semper Fidelis.”

[The prepared statement of Dr. Strobl can be found in the Appendix on page 75.]

Mr. BANKS. Thank you.

Lieutenant General Miller, you may make your opening statement.

STATEMENT OF LT GEN CAROLINE M. MILLER, USAF, DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF FOR MANPOWER, PERSONNEL AND SERVICES, U.S. AIR FORCE

General MILLER. Good afternoon, Chairman Banks, Ranking Member Kim, and distinguished members of the subcommittee. I am honored to have this opportunity to appear before you today to focus on the most significant competitive advantage the Air Force has over its adversaries, our airmen.

Air Force talent management is focused on one simple principle: having the right airmen in the right job at the right time.

To successfully achieve that principle, we rely on the strength of individual merits in all facets of our personnel system from accessions to promotions to selection for command.

This year, the Active Duty Air Force is projected to fall short of recruiting goals by 11 percent. This is due to factors such as low propensity to serve and a decline in the eligible population.

To counter, we are increasing our direct engagement with citizens in areas of the country that are underrepresentative in our service.

To increase the eligible pool of applicants, we are modernizing our accessions policies to better align with the Department of Defense. Overall, our primary focus remains attracting and retaining individuals with superior abilities and talents.

Meritocracy is the foundation of the Air Force promotion system. In accordance with law and DOD policy, promotion boards for commissioned officers recommend to the Secretary the best fully qualified officers based on a whole-person concept.

Each officer selection record is assessed on its own merit without regard to race, gender, or ethnicity, using factors that demonstrate exceptional job performance and leadership potential.

Although non-statutory, command screening boards use the same review process for selecting senior officers for command.

Within the enlisted ranks, airmen are promoted to noncommissioned officer based on their objective cumulative score within the weighted airmen promotion system. Promotion to senior noncommissioned officer ranks follow a promotion board process similar to officers.

Three- and four-star general officer [GO] positions are nominatively filled using a slate of highly qualified candidates produced by the GO Future Assignment and Strategy Tool. The tool objectively

analyzes each position's requirements against qualifications of all general officers.

To preserve our supremacy in today's world against our adversaries, the Air Force must ensure the airman is in the right job at the right time.

Thank you for your continued advocacy for our airmen, both military and civilian, and their families.

[The prepared statement of General Miller can be found in the Appendix on page 82.]

Mr. BANKS. Thank you.

Ms. Kelley, you may make your opening statement.

STATEMENT OF KATHARINE KELLEY, DEPUTY CHIEF OF SPACE OPERATIONS FOR HUMAN CAPITAL, U.S. SPACE FORCE

Ms. KELLEY. Thank you. Chairman Banks, Ranking Member Kim, distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for the leadership and support you have provided to the United States Space Force. Your Guardians, both military and civilian, are preserving freedom of action in an increasingly contested space domain. It is a privilege to come before you today.

Developing a combat-credible force, ready for contested action in space is our imperative. To ensure that, we select the best, incorporating education, training, leadership, abilities, team building, and capabilities for past performance to generate the talent necessary to fight and win our Nation's wars.

We have also established in the Space Force values of character, connection, commitment, and courage.

The Space Force promotion system is grounded in statute and Air Force policy. Our program fulfills the requirements of section 619 of title 10, U.S. Code, and Secretarial policy focused on selecting and promoting the best qualified commissioned and noncommissioned officers to serve in positions of increased responsibility and increased authority.

Promotion boards are charged with recommending the best qualified based on whole-person concept, which includes their record, their education, their performance, and demonstrated potential.

We assign Guardians to team roles and leadership positions based on the needs of the service and the qualifications for the job.

As we continue to grow our foundation as the newest service, we are instituting policy and process to ensure we continue to attract the best our Nation has to offer.

Through partnerships with our sister services, and the excellent support of the Air Force, we are pleased that today we are achieving our recruiting targets, our accessions goals, and our authorized end strength.

Space is no longer a benign domain, and we know that. I am proud of the more than 13,000 military and civilian Guardians in the Space Force. Together we are building a force unilaterally focused on securing our Nation in, from, and to space.

I look forward to your questions. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Kelley can be found in the Appendix on page 88.]

Mr. BANKS. Thank you to each of you. I will begin with questions and yield myself 5 minutes.

I understand that boards are done based on U.S. Code. However, this administration has made DEI front and center through Executive order and that affects the Department of Defense. This question is for each of you. Lieutenant General Stitt, we will begin with you. How do you balance requirements by the President for diversity with your duty to a talent-based system?

General STITT. Chairman Banks, the Army does not utilize demographic goals or quotas in its promotion system. And every individual who is eligible for consideration is viewed by the merits of their file, which contains both their educational, their performance, and their assignment data that is available to all board members to review.

Those board members review that. They vote on a 1 to 6, 1 being the worst, 6 being the best. Those votes are tabulated. And those that are best qualified are deemed and come forward for final advancement.

Mr. BANKS. Vice Admiral.

Admiral CHEESEMAN. Chairman, thank you very much for that question. Much like my Army counterpart, our process is based solely on the best and most fully qualified standard.

That being said, we do recognize that the Navy is made up of, you know, many people with diverse backgrounds. It is important to understand that. Indeed, we do operate throughout the entire globe. So being able to operate with folks from all walks of life is pretty important to us.

But that being said, the standard is the best and most fully qualified, and the process is exactly the same as my counterpart mentioned.

Mr. BANKS. Doctor.

Dr. STROBL. Thank you for the question. The Marine Corps' overarching objective is to be ready, most ready when the Nation is least ready, and to be most lethal on the battlefield.

In order to do that, we follow the imperative to select the best and most fully qualified candidates for promotion, for command, for assignments, and for accessions.

Mr. BANKS. Lieutenant General.

General MILLER. Thank you, yes. Similar to my colleagues, we are a standard-based organization in the Air Force. And we are looking for the right person at the right time. And for promotion, we look at their career record and their performance. And we want to make sure that they are the best candidate for that position that is available.

Mr. BANKS. Ms. Kelley.

Ms. KELLEY. Chairman, it is based on the best qualified. It's based on their past performance. It's based on how well we think they are ready to advance to that next level of performance inside the service.

We take into account education, but basically we are picking the best and the brightest inside the Space Force.

Mr. BANKS. So is it fair to say that all of you are ignoring the President's Executive order. Can anyone respond to that?

Admiral CHEESEMAN. Chairman, thanks for the question. I don't think we are ignoring any specific Executive order. In the Navy, we do recognize diversity can be, you know, a force for good. As we are

mining talent throughout the country, we are making sure we have the best and most fully qualified available.

That must be the standard. The standard is who is capable of performing at the next higher administrative milestone or for the statutory position they are being considered for and that always will be the standard.

Mr. BANKS. Anybody else?

General STITT. Chairman Banks, under current statute, we provide board members guidance on considering diversity in assignment, educational background, and experiences when reviewing all eligible candidates for promotion. And that board member utilizes that in their own internal board voting philosophy, and resulting in selection of best qualified once the votes are tabulated.

Mr. BANKS. I think I will leave it at that and yield to Ranking Member Kim for his 5 minutes.

Mr. KIM. Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess I just wanted to kind of pick up and make sure I kind of got it because over the course of the last panel there is a lot of criticism saying that you all are doing something. You're saying, I'm guessing, the opposite of that.

So I guess I just want to start here with the Army and go down the line. Is the promotion process meritocratic and based solely off of capabilities? Army.

General STITT. Ranking Member Kim, the promotion process is fair and based on the merits assessed by the board members to determine those who are best qualified for advancement to the next rank.

Admiral CHEESEMAN. Chairman, I can confirm that it is exactly a meritocracy. Yes, sir.

Mr. KIM. Okay. Sir.

Dr. STROBL. Yes, for the Marine Corps, the promotion selection boards are based on merit.

Mr. KIM. Air Force.

General MILLER. Yes, the promotion board is based on merit.

Ms. KELLEY. It's the same in the Space Force.

Mr. KIM. Now, if you don't mind, I'll go the reverse way just to kind of get this on the table. Is race or gender or sexuality, is that at all a part of the consideration being judged for a promotion?

Ms. KELLEY. It is not in the Space Force.

Mr. KIM. Air Force.

General MILLER. It is not in the Air Force.

Mr. KIM. Marines.

Dr. STROBL. No.

Mr. KIM. Navy.

Admiral CHEESEMAN. No, sir.

Mr. KIM. Army.

General STITT. It is not, sir.

Mr. KIM. So thank you. I just wanted to kind of clear that up. I guess I just wanted to also kind of hone in. I'm not sure if you heard some of my questions in the first round, but, you know, I think sometimes on this committee, you know, I really do believe we're all trying to get to that place where we have the best leaders. I think a lot of us have that same goal in mind. I think there are difference of opinions on whether or not we're actually doing that.

But it's often kind of used in this way of saying, look, we want an objective process. That we want to get rid of the subjectivity.

But in the first panel, there was an interesting comment sort of saying, look, when we are assessing leadership, that is not something that numbers alone are going to tell you. So I guess I just wanted to kind of go down one more time, is that something that you would agree with, that there is still—you know, that we try to be objective as much as we can, but there is going to be certain elements of this in terms of qualities of leadership. So if you don't mind, just kind of—do you agree with that and can you give me an example of some question of leadership that you feel like does require some judgment? Army.

General STITT. Ranking Member Kim, utilizing the Command Assessment Program that I had spoke about in my opening statement, that's where we start to peel back and look at cognitive and non-cognitive abilities of those individuals before we place them into brigade, battalion command or a senior noncommissioned officer billet at the brigade or battalion command level.

We look at information from their peers and subordinates. These candidates participate in a double-blind panel before general officers who ask them a series of questions to determine their readiness and fitness for command.

Mr. KIM. Navy.

Admiral CHEESEMAN. Congressman, similar answer from the Navy. We have developed pilot programs, Navy Leader Assessment Program modeled off of the Army's lead.

We are doing exactly that on the front end of the selection process to really get at that character determination on the front end so we can mentor and train, you know, future naval officers to do the things we need them to do in positions of higher authority.

As mentioned in the first panel, character is hard to assess, and we do everything we can through our processes to ensure we have an accurate understanding of that before we place folks into positions of leadership.

Mr. KIM. Great. If you don't mind, I just want to pause since I'm kind of running a little low on time. I just want to get to one last question here. To the Air Force, in a previous testimony, there was some talk about this August, I guess, 2022 Air Force leadership memo detailing new diversity and inclusion goals for the Air Force officers.

This was criticized as setting quotas. The memo talks about aspirations. I guess I just want to ask you to explain what impact this memo had on the promotion board processes since it was signed. What changed because of that memo? What changed at all in that process?

General MILLER. Yeah, thank you for the question. Actually, for the promotion process, absolutely nothing changed. I mean, we still are merit-based. We are looking for the whole person.

That memo that General Brown signed essentially was talking about goals for accessions. There was, you know, we want to make sure that we have the best and brightest. That everybody across the United States has an opportunity to serve. And so he was just making sure that we did not eliminate—

Mr. KIM. Just to be clear here, nothing changed in the process after that memo.

General MILLER. In the promotion process, nothing changed. Yes, that is correct.

Mr. KIM. Okay. Thank you, and I yield back.

Mr. BANKS. Mr. Gaetz, 5 minutes.

Mr. GAETZ. So I guess I have the same question that I had for the last panel, and I will start with you, General Miller. Should a State's gender policy affect who is aligned to what position in the military?

General MILLER. Absolutely not.

Mr. GAETZ. Should it—

General MILLER. It's the needs of the Air Force.

Mr. GAETZ. Yeah, so it shouldn't mean the abortion policy either?

General MILLER. It's the needs of the Air Force and where [in-audible].

Mr. GAETZ. I just want to be really—I want to draw a fine point on it. The needs of the Air Force—

General MILLER. Yes.

Mr. GAETZ [continuing]. Do not require the Air Force to consider a State's abortion policy or gender policy before assigning a service member to a position in that particular State?

General MILLER. We do not.

Mr. GAETZ. So what was that general in that video talking about when she said that there are 400 anti-LGBTQ [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer] laws that have to be considered before she aligns an applicant to a position?

General MILLER. Congressman, I cannot speak for General Burt and what she was talking about there.

Mr. GAETZ. You're both in the Air Force, right?

General MILLER. Sir, she's in the Space Force.

Mr. GAETZ. Oh, Space Force, maybe you can tell us, Ms. Kelley. What was she talking about?

Ms. KELLEY. Sir, my understanding of what her intent behind those comments is that she is really describing the assignments matching process in the Space Force.

Mr. GAETZ. Okay.

Ms. KELLEY. And that is what I believe she was describing.

Mr. GAETZ. Right. Okay. So when we—I get that. That is pretty evident. But in that assignments matching process, should a State's abortion policy come into play?

Ms. KELLEY. So I don't want to speak for her, sir, but I will tell you—

Mr. GAETZ. I am asking you.

Ms. KELLEY. And I will—

Mr. GAETZ. Should a State's abortion policy come into play?

Ms. KELLEY. What we take into account in the Space Force is the needs of the service, the Guardian themselves and whether they are qualified for the job.

Mr. GAETZ. Do you take into account a State's abortion policy?

Ms. KELLEY. We take into account the preference of the individual if they are interested in the particular job.

Mr. GAETZ. Okay. Fascinating. I am not asking about those things. I am asking about whether or not you take into account a State's abortion policy.

Ms. KELLEY. We do not because it needs—

Mr. GAETZ. Do you take into account a State's LGBTQ policy, whatever that is?

Ms. KELLEY. No. We do not, Congressman.

Mr. GAETZ. Okay. So why did your fellow space warrior with a bunch of stars on her, you know, lapel, stand up and give a speech that said, when she is aligning someone to a particular job, she is evaluating these 400 anti-LGBTQ policies? Why did she say that?

Ms. KELLEY. Sir, I can't speak for why she said that.

Mr. GAETZ. Was that a mistake?

Ms. KELLEY. It certainly doesn't reflect what our processes are and what I know them to be.

Mr. GAETZ. All right. Okay. So this is a moment here. This is a bit of a moment. Because we heard a senior person in the Space Force say one thing, and then you are here in front of a congressional committee saying that this is not what the Space Force believes.

So I got to get to the bottom of this. So I sent a letter to General Burt saying, you said there are these 400 anti-LGBTQ policies that you are actively considering when you are aligning people to jobs. So I said, list them. If there are 400 of them, I would love to read them. And the answer that I got back from someone called Alex Wagner is that to answer your specific request, the Department of Air Force does not maintain a list of pending or enacted laws that impact military readiness.

So does the Space Force have such a list?

Ms. KELLEY. No, we do not, Congressman.

Mr. GAETZ. We are policymakers that have to make decisions based on the representations of people who work at the Pentagon, right? And what you are providing us are conflicting and irreconcilable representations. And then when we ask follow-up questions so that we might be able to reconcile those things, the answer is we don't have a list.

So as you are here today, can you just clear it up by denouncing those comments and saying that they are not the practice of what you all do?

Ms. KELLEY. Sir, I've described the practice that we do. And we do ask Guardians for their preferences on duty assignments. And we try to match Guardians to—

Mr. GAETZ. Okay. So if one of those preferences is someone saying I don't like Florida's views on critical race theory. Would you consider that in whether or not to send that person to Florida?

Ms. KELLEY. No. The Guardian would—

Mr. GAETZ. So what if they said the abortion policy. Would you consider that?

Ms. KELLEY. Sir, the Guardian would have to prove that there is some sort of hardship to them, which—

Mr. GAETZ. You don't accept as a de facto hardship that a 6-week abortion ban is a hardship, right?

Ms. KELLEY. That is not in our policy, no, sir.

Mr. GAETZ. I am just trying to figure this out, Mr. Chairman. And I think we might have to do further investigative work to maybe get General Burt here to—it is unfair to ask you to characterize those comments. But at the end of the day, we have to figure out where to send the money and what authorities and restraints to put on that money. And if General Burt has gone rogue and engaged in some ultra vires act to create a secret list of 400 policies that she deems discriminatory, I would sure like the committee to see them. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. BANKS. Mr. Waltz.

Mr. WALTZ. Thank you. Just to build on that for one more minute. I am also from Florida. So essentially what you are saying is you described the policy today; Lieutenant General Burt violated that policy, or at least what she described as her efforts as a senior commander to reassign people based on series of criteria. That's not in accordance with your policy—with the policies you described for the Space Force, correct?

Ms. KELLEY. Sir, I described our policies as you have heard.

Mr. WALTZ. But her statements, as you heard today, in accordance with your policy.

Ms. KELLEY. Well, she said she is compelled to consider. She did not say that she had.

Mr. WALTZ. Even if they are less qualified, was her statement.

Ms. KELLEY. We have multiple Guardians who are qualified for our positions, sir.

Mr. WALTZ. So, and you mentioned preferences, if—I mean, just to build on Representative Gaetz here, if perhaps their family feels unsafe because of a gun control policy, and they don't feel like they can appropriately buy firearms to protect them, would you consider that?

Ms. KELLEY. Sir, there is an exception to the process. But the Guardian would have to prove that there is some sort of an undue hardship on them.

Mr. WALTZ. Okay.

Ms. KELLEY. I would highly doubt that would meet the, you know, standard.

Mr. WALTZ. I would hope. Because I think what we have—what we are trying to demonstrate here is we have opened—statements from the senior leaders like that opens a Pandora's Box of political issues put on the table, enacted by State elected officials that in our view should not be considered. I am reassured to hear you say they should not be considered.

But when you have three-star generals saying not only should they be, she is doing it. Do you see how that introduces doubt into our constituents, and the American people, that the senior leaders of the Space Force or the rest of the services are following the law?

Ms. KELLEY. Sir, I certainly see how that could be construed, yes.

Mr. WALTZ. Is she still in her position?

Ms. KELLEY. She is.

Mr. WALTZ. So there was no consequences for that statement, which is not in accordance with the policy that you have outlined?

Ms. KELLEY. Again, she did not make a statement publicly that she has actually reassigned anyone.

Mr. WALTZ. No. She made a statement that she is considering it. And specifically State law in Florida, I mean, specified a State, specified a law that she is considering in furtherance of her command, and she is still in command.

Ms. KELLEY. I did not hear a specific State law specified.

Mr. WALTZ. Well, as it pertained. It was a pride event as it pertains to LGBTQ. That was specific.

Ms. KELLEY. She was speaking at a DOD event, sir.

Mr. WALTZ. Okay. I think the broader issue is we are hearing your testimony today. But when we have events like that, when we have a non-quota quota memo, goals, from the Secretary of the Air Force; when we have an orientation at the Air Force Academy, a slide that with a woman holding a picture saying "if you don't see my race, you don't see me"; when it instructs cadets to not use the term "color-blind," yet you are testifying that race isn't a factor; when the Superintendent of the Air Force Academy tells me in a meeting that he finds the term color-blind offensive; then we have either some massive disconnects or what my suspicion is is you have an informal set of policies that may not be specifically in writing. You may not call it a quota. You may call it a goal, where these factors are being considered.

General Stitt, you just testified that guidance is given in furtherance—or during the promotion board of how to incorporate diversity. That may not be directive, *per se*, but guidance is often taken as such.

So let me just ask you this in the time I have remaining. Does anyone on the board today have any data that you can provide the committee that shows that a more diverse or less diverse—let's take a submarine in the Navy, a crew, is more effective, is more ready?

Admiral CHEESEMAN. Congressman, thanks for the question. We do not have any specific data right now that talks about any diversity, equity, inclusion efforts and how it relates to combat effectiveness.

Mr. WALTZ. Okay.

General STITT. We do have an ongoing study at the Naval Post-Graduate School that is reviewing inclusion and how it relates to the topics that we are discussing. And we expect that study in the January 2024 timeframe.

Mr. WALTZ. General Miller, we have the non-quota quota memo. Do you have any data that a squadron, a bomber crew, any unit in the Air Force is more or less ready based on the percentages of their racial diversity?

General MILLER. No, sir, not on the percentages. No, sir.

Mr. WALTZ. Does anyone have any data showing—I mean, I understand the narrative that, you know, diversity of thought leads to a better unit. But do you have any data that shows that?

Mr. BANKS. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. WALTZ. I didn't think so, because it doesn't exist. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. BANKS. Thank you. Mr. Mills, quickly.

Mr. MILLS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am just going to follow-up on two things. One, I am pretty sure that everyone is aware of Henry II who had made the very popular statement where he said

"can no one rid me of this turbulent priest ,” or “no one rid me of this troublesome priest,” which resulted in his knights going off and killing an archbishop.

I bring that up because as my colleague, Mr. Waltz, just pointed out, General Stitt, things like “we are providing guidance” could very much be perceived as an actual directive. And so that is something that we might want to be very cautious of because that does lead—when you have as many stars as you do, sir, and being a noncommissioned officer as I was—as a directive more than it is just a basis of guidance.

I would also like to go back to General Burt because I am curious still on why there was no actual counseling, disciplinary actions, or at least something that had led to the statement of you may need to be cautious with what you are saying because it is against our actual policies and how we run things. Why was nothing done after that statement?

Ms. KELLEY. Sir, it is quite possible that a conversation like what you just described did happen.

Mr. MILLS. On record and it is in her file?

Ms. KELLEY. I am not aware of it.

Mr. MILLS. Okay. And General Miller, in August of 2022, the Secretary of the Air Force set the new race and gender goals for the Air Force's commissioned officer applicant pools, which we heard about earlier in my testimony. Can you please describe the steps and how you have taken to meet those goals?

General MILLER. These are accession goals—are you talking about the memo from the Chief of Staff, right?

Mr. MILLS. Mm-hmm.

General MILLER. They are accession goals. And they are just aspirations to make sure that we reach everybody across the United States.

Mr. MILLS. And can everyone—and I will let you individually go, and I will talk with you first, General Stitt. How does redirecting resources away from critical needs and towards DEI initiatives deter adversaries like China?

General STITT. I believe that our force today is ready, sir, to answer the Nation's call and take on a peer or near-peer adversary around the globe.

Mr. MILLS. Sir, I appreciate that. I am going to go back and ask for a more defined answer than just that. How does redirecting resources away from critical needs towards DEI initiatives help us prepare for China?

General STITT. Representative Mills, in order to give you a more detailed answer, may I take that question for the record, please?

[The information referred to can be found in the Appendix on page 95.]

Mr. MILLS. Please do. Vice Admiral.

Admiral CHEESEMAN. Congressman, thanks for the question. The Navy is focused on making it a place where all Americans can see themselves succeeding. And to do that, we want to be an inclusive environment. We want to make sure that every American who can meet the standard has a place in the Navy because we know the people are the ones that will fight and win our Nation's wars. So that's what we are focused on.

Mr. MILLS. You are talking about inclusiveness as if that didn't exist. So I guess when I was in the military, then it didn't exist back then and we had to frame an entire funding pool towards DEI to ensure inclusiveness that didn't exist previously?

Admiral CHEESEMAN. Congressman, I'm not saying that at all. I'm certain it did exist. I've enjoyed that for 34 years in my service.

Mr. MILLS. That is exactly my point.

Admiral CHEESEMAN. It absolutely is. My point is that we have areas of the country where we are underserved, where our word has not gotten out. And we need to mine talent from every possible ZIP Code to get the mission [inaudible].

Mr. MILLS. All right. Thank you very much. And to the Marine Corps, look. I almost don't need to ask the question. You know, hoorah Marines. You guys are the ones who are actually getting to your recruitment goals and continue to maintain. So I will let you comment on it, but we know what you guys are doing.

Dr. STROBL. Thank you, Representative. The Marine Corps is interested in being inclusive and exploiting the talents of all Americans who are willing and qualified to serve. And that focus on inclusivity, I think, has contributed to our historic high retention rates over the last 2 years, which will directly help us in any conflict with any adversary in the future.

Mr. MILLS. So you feel that additional resources was necessary for that?

Dr. STROBL. I don't know that they were additional. I think we already were resourcing.

Mr. MILLS. Well, I can tell you by the line items, it was definitely additional funding.

Mr. BANKS. Mr. Mills, in the interest of time, we will never make it to votes if we don't leave right now.

Mr. MILLS. All right.

Mr. BANKS. So I want to thank all of the panelists. I am going to save my closing statement. A very important conversation today. Thank you for joining us once again. Thank you for your service. The hearing is over.

[Whereupon, at 2:14 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

SEPTEMBER 20, 2023

PREPARED STATEMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

SEPTEMBER 20, 2023

Statement of
Chairman Jim Banks
“Meritocracy in the Military Services: From Recruiting and Accession to
Promotion and Command Selection”
Military Personnel Subcommittee
September 20, 2023

The hearing will now come to order.

I ask unanimous consent that the chair be authorized to declare a recess at any time.

Without objection, so ordered.

I want to welcome everyone to this hearing of the Military Personnel subcommittee. Today's hearing is on ***“Meritocracy in the Military Services: From Recruiting and Accession to Promotion and Command Selection.”***

I want to thank our witnesses for being with us today. I hope this hearing provides an opportunity for our Members to have a productive exchange with our witnesses and provide answers to their questions.

The questions we ask today may be focused on the military's personnel system. However, they have much broader implications.... These questions go to our Nation's founding principles: meritocracy, talent, and equality of opportunity.

Across the country, these principles are under attack. They are being sacrificed at the altar of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion bureaucracies....

Bureaucracies which demand racial and gender quotas...regardless of ability.

These performative social justice goals require Government Agencies, Large Corporations, top-tier Universities, and the Military to trade skill, productivity, hard work, and ingenuity for a workforce which looks good on a brochure.

This is demeaning to all Americans, including those singled out by quotas.

Millions of Americans are frustrated with the social justice agenda that pervades our schools, corporations, and now, the Pentagon bureaucracy.

For example, an August 9, 2022, memo from the Secretary of the Air Force explicitly laid out quota goals for its officer applicant pool...

Apparently, Air Force officer applicants should be fifteen percent Hispanic, ten percent Asian, sixty seven percent white, thirty six percent female and so on... Americans are fed up.

There is one place we simply can't afford to trade equal opportunity for radical ideology—the United States Military.

We must do whatever it takes to ensure that effort, hard work, and results are the ONLY relevant measures of our servicemembers.

Not only because every American deserves to be judged by their character.

But because no matter what our military does in peacetime, lethality is the only standard that will matter on the battlefield.

If these policies continue, we are placing Military Readiness and our national security at Risk.... And we are putting an end to one of the last great meritocratic systems in the United States.

Today you will hear from two panels. The first panel is a group of experts that will explain the costs of military readiness associated with trading merit for diversity quotas.

In the second panel, we will hear from DoD's military personnel chiefs. They will describe the factors and characteristics used to select military members for promotion and command. Additionally, they will address demographically targeted recruiting and accessions.

Before hearing from our witnesses, let me offer Ranking Member Kim an opportunity to make any opening remarks.

**Statement of
Ranking Member Andy Kim**
***"Meritocracy in the Military Services: Accession, Promotion, and Command
Selection"***
Military Personnel Subcommittee
September 20, 2023

Like the Chairman, I'm looking forward to hearing from today's witnesses.

I believe all of us in this room want the same thing. We want the strongest possible military to defend our nation. That goal requires the best leaders to step up and lead this military.

In pursuit of this absolute need, we need a process of accession, retention and promotion that is fair and transparent, and based on skill and merit.

All of us want and demand a meritocratic system. But let us keep in mind that meritocratic means weighing both quantitative and qualitative qualities. There is no solely quantitative way to identify the best leaders.

Academic achievement and tactical proficiency are easy to measure –

...You either have a degree or you don't;

...You're either a marksman or an expert with your assigned rifle.

But assessing and defining factors such as leadership, character, and integrity cannot be perfectly reduced to a number.

I'm interested in hearing from our witnesses how they assess those hard to measure attributes across the spectrum of service -- how we recruit, how we retain, and how we decide to promote our service members.

I also hope to hear our witnesses' insights on what improvements we need to make so our processes work as intended.

I hope Congress and the Department of Defense make every effort to encourage service by people from all types of backgrounds.

We should work together to foster a culture that encourages and rewards excellence, creativity, innovation, and critical thinking so our military can continue to meet emerging challenges around the globe.

As I close, I also have to say that our desire for the promotion of the best military leaders should also encompass the need for Congress to fulfill its role in this process.

Holding up military promotions is not the right way to make a political point. I hope all of us in this room can agree that our national security is vital and the threats we face are real. We need fully qualified leaders in their jobs doing the work to secure our nation.

We ask a lot of our service members, now we need to make sure they know we are supporting them and their mission.

Thank you to the witnesses again for being here and I yield the balance of my time.

CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY
September 20th, 2023

Merit in the Armed Forces
Will Thibeau

Chairman Banks, Ranking Member Kim, my fellow panelists, and the members of this Subcommittee.

The military must only consider factors of personnel, programs, and policy that genuinely better the Armed Forces' ability to fight and win our nation's wars. Merit must not be the first consideration, but the exclusive lens through which elected officials and military leaders make decisions.¹

Diversity exists in our social mores as something the military must embrace and promote as if the Armed Forces march to the beat of a corporate or university drum.² In reality, the existence of a professional, permanent military demands the institution exist apart from the ideologies and politics prevalent in modern-day America.³

Diversity advocates will have you simultaneously believe a diverse military is the cornerstone of our national security,⁴ all the while minimizing any effect diversity considerations have in practical application for men and women in uniform.⁵

A coin with these two sides does not exist; either the military's efforts at diversity serve a critical national need, or they are so insignificant that they are not worth the politicized effect on the military.

Instead, the military must balance functional considerations, those capabilities required to fight and win our nation's wars, with social considerations, or those political and ideological realities which define American life.⁶

Gratefully, our society is not militarized, and most children do not grow up with the presumption of combat as their way of life, so we should not assume the values that undergird American society are necessarily the values that make the military an effective fighting force.

This means, however, the military must maintain a strict separation between values unrelated to the military profession and those values necessary to maintain competence.

¹ James Burk, "Expertise, Jurisdiction, and the Legitimacy of the Military Profession," in *The Future of the Army Profession*, ed. Lloyd J. Matthews (Boston: McGraw-Hill Primis Custom Publishing, 2002), 21.

² Signal, Jesse. What if Diversity Training is Doing More Harm Than Good. *New York Times*. Jan 17, 2021.

³ Huntington, Samuel P. *The Soldier and the State*, p 143. Belknap/Harvard. 1957.

⁴ Roth-Douquet, Kathy. Diversity and Inclusion are Critical to Future Military Readiness. *Military Times*. May 17th, 2022

⁵ "The Military is not Woke. I don't Even Know What That Means" Milley, Mark. CNN Interview. September 17th, 2023.

⁶ Owens, Mackubin. "War Goes Woke" *The Washington Examiner*. April 1st, 2021. Senior Fellow, Foreign Policy Research Institute.

Like a drop of ink in a glass of water, the hint of ideology outside the scope of the military profession is corrosive to the force's effectiveness.⁷ Historical examples from 18th Century France to the Soviet Army of the late-Cold War reveal a slippery slope once factors outside the explicit context of military competence affect military decisions.

Increasingly, objective military professionalism is instead seen as one factor among many that allows leaders to "comprehensively" evaluate a person, system, or policy; this, of course, being a euphemism for considerations of race and sex.

This programmatic consideration of innate characteristics is toxic for military units, because it redefines the concept of merit-based standards. When "diversity goals" exist for the Air Force Academy and West Point,⁸ standards become minimum expectations to meet before fully evaluating applicants. Standards are no longer how the military selects and promotes the very best from society. This is a subtle, but fundamental change.

The mere factor of political considerations outside military competence demands that human characteristics one does not choose become critical filters for military personnel decisions. Considerations for diversity is but one mark of the blend of Samuel Huntington's "military mind" with the hallmarks of a society built around contrary ideals. History tells us that this blend never ends well.

Senior military leaders and elected representatives often insist that, to receive inspiration and motivation, a Soldier must see a leader who looks like him to strive for excellence.⁹ There exist few more toxic narratives to military units small and large that depend on unit cohesion and teamwork for violence of action.

When we assume that the military must reflect the demographics of the nation, we presume proportionalism into the experience of soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines. Senior military officers and the programs and institutions they lead embed the imperative of racial representation into the lives of American servicemembers. If such representation does not take place, service members can assume that something is unjust.

All these premises – that diversity is a central value to military readiness, that a black soldier cannot receive inspiration from a white leader or officer, and that units must be demographically proportional to the population as a whole – represent DEI as military policy carried to its logical conclusion.

At stake is much more than the relative quality of military units. Instead, the integrity of our Republic is in tension with a military that evaluates matters of politics and identity.

History is littered with examples of militaries whose consideration of political ideology precipitated a collapse in military professionalism, all of which served as a precursor to the

⁷ Huntington, Samuel P. *The Soldier and the State*; p. 59-79. Belknap/Harvard. 1957.

⁸ MLP Hearing: Admissions, Curriculum, And Diversity of Thought at the Military Service Academies. House Armed Services Subcommittee on Military Personnel. July 19th, 2023.

⁹ Ibid. Testimony of LTG Clark of the United States Air Force Academy

collapse of their respective nations. America should not wait to find out if we can outrun the drumbeat of such history.¹⁰

¹⁰ Huntington, Samuel P. *The Soldier and the State*, p. 19-58. Belknap/Harvard. 1957.

William Thibeau

Will Thibeau is the Director of the American Military Project at the Center for the American Way of Life. A veteran of The Heritage Foundation, The American Conservative, and Palantir Technologies, Inc, Will is a Catholic husband and father of three originally from Illinois who now lives in Northern Virginia. As a graduate of Fordham University, where he earned his commission as an Army Infantry Officer, Will served as an Army Ranger during multiple deployments to the Middle East.



CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY

Meritocracy in the Military Services: Accession, Promotion, and Command Selection

**Testimony Before
The House Armed Services Committee / Subcommittee on Military Personnel**

United States House of Representatives

September 20, 2023

Robert Greenway
Director
Center for National Defense
The Heritage Foundation

My name is Robert Greenway. I am the Director of the Center for National Defense at The Heritage Foundation. The views I express in this testimony are my own and should not be construed as representing any official position of The Heritage Foundation, the Department of Defense, the United States Army, or any other organization.

Woke ideologies and the politicians who promote them are eroding the effectiveness of our military by discarding the meritocracy which ensures it is led by the most qualified and replacing it with policies that seek to promote based on criteria other than performance and potential. These policies have undermined the trust and confidence between leaders and those they are responsible for and produced the lowest trust the American people have held in our U.S. military since 1988.¹ This reduces readiness and degrades effectiveness and has resulted in recruiting and retention challenges at a time of persistently high suicide rates within our military and among our veterans. We depend on our armed forces to protect and defend our nation against a growing number of global threats. We must fulfill our Constitutional obligation to ensure a strong national defense and preserve the trust and confidence the all-volunteer force requires within its ranks and among its fellow citizens from whom it draws its members.

The U.S. military has faced periods of personnel turbulence and crisis before. Since the adoption of the all-volunteer forces in 1973 our military has faced three crises in morale and personnel management. In 1978-9, following the withdrawal from Vietnam, corporate policies corrupted military ethics, recruitment and retention rates rapidly declined, and the force was in danger of losing

¹ Muhammed Younis, "Confidence in U.S. Military Lowest in Over Two Decades," Gallup, July 21, 2023, [Confidence in U.S. Military Lowest in Over Two Decades \(gallup.com\)](https://www.gallup.com/poll/367310/confidence-u-s-military-lowest-over-two-decades.aspx) (accessed September 2023).

CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY

its competitive edge to the Soviet Union². A similar crisis occurred in 1994-5 following the withdrawal from Somalia, the introduction of controversial policies like social engineering, efforts to increase diversity, and the largest defense budget cuts since the end of the Second World War resulting in rapid decline in retention and recruiting. From 1992 to 2001, the quality of recruits went down from 74% "high quality" to 61%.³ The current crisis bears the hallmarks of those which precede it and are striking in similarity.

War is an unforgiving enterprise. Competence alone can ensure success. Without a doubt, the best policy for promotions and personnel management in the military is to use the quality of the candidate's skills, experience, and character, and how those factors correspond to the demands of the job as the only criteria for advancement. This approach ensures the highest quality personnel enter and progress to positions of greater responsibility, enhancing the overall quality of the force. This commonsense approach is reflected in DoD policy. DoD's official promotion criteria and process (DoD Directive 1320.14) was implemented on December 16th, 2020. DoD promotion criteria requires that candidates be the "best qualified" and "fully qualified" to receive promotions. Specific documents are allowed to be considered by promotion review boards, and specific criteria are used to judge candidates. Criteria include both performance and character considerations such as professionalism, integrity, and ability to treat others fairly.⁴ However, the statements and actions of President Biden and senior military leaders contradict the focus on performance, in favor of identity politics.

Rather than emphasizing merit and performance, President Biden and the senior leaders he has appointed choose to focus on the race and gender of candidates, attempting to use the military to promote their ideology. President Biden's Executive Order on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce requires Federal departments and agencies to adopt DEI plans. It forces agencies to "strongly consider for employment, to the extent permitted by applicable law, qualified applicants of any background who have advanced diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in the workplace", thereby making it a factor in employment. The Executive Order implies that this is applicable to promotions as well.⁵ This basically amounts to a demand to sign a political loyalty oath not just to one party, but to the extreme left wing of one party as a condition of employment and promotion. Using and promoting such criteria directly undermines the principle of merit as the best criteria for promotions and selecting the best candidate for the job based on performance.

This thinking is not only held by the president but has also been espoused by his senior defense leaders. Air Force Chief of Staff and current CJCS nominee General CQ Brown, along with Undersecretary of the Air Force Gina Ortiz Jones, Secretary of the Air Force Frank Kendall, and Chief of Space Operations John Raymond all signed a memorandum detailing new diversity and inclusion goals for

² Richard Gabriel and Paul Savage, *Crisis in Command: Mismanagement in the Army* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1979). (accessed September 2023).

³ Congressional Research Service, "Recruiting and Retention in the Active Component Military: Are There Problems?", *Congressional Research Service Report for Congress*, February 25, 2002, [Recruiting and Retention in the Active Component Military: Are There Problems? \(congress.gov\)](#) (accessed September 2023).

⁴ Department of Defense, "DoD Commissioned Officer Promotion Program Procedures," DoDI 1320.14, December 16, 2020, DoDI 1320.14, "DoD Commissioned Officer Promotion Program Procedures," December 16, 2020 ([whs.mil](#)) (Accessed September 2023).

⁵ President Joseph Biden, "Executive Order on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce," Executive Order 14035, June 25, 2021, [Federal Register :: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce](#) (Accessed September 2023).

CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY

Air Force officers. These new goals would reduce the quota of white officers from 80% (as dictated in 2014) to 67%. More specifically, white men would be capped at 43%. White officers in the Air Force are currently around 77%, and 86% of pilots are white men.⁶ In 2021, the Acting Secretary of the Navy, Thomas Walker, released a memorandum calling for the Navy to “continue making transformative and meaningful steps that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in our policies, programs, and operations across the enterprise.”⁷ This indicates a clear preference for using DoD policy to reshape the DoD to a more diverse and inclusive organization, as opposed to the most effective and capable organization. It does not require a stretch of the imagination to believe that diversity considerations are an increasingly strong criteria for advancement in a military run by these leaders.

This approach of prioritizing candidates based on diversity rather than merit can be seen in the President’s choices for leadership positions. President Biden recently decided to nominate Admiral Lisa Franchetti for the position of Chief of Naval Operations, against the advice of Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin. Secretary Austin recommended Admiral Samuel Paparo, the Commander of the Pacific Fleet,⁸ whose appointment would have sent a strong message to China that America is serious about confronting its challenges at sea in the Indo-Pacific. However, the president chose Admiral Franchetti instead. An Administration official said, “Biden understands the historical nature of the nomination and believes that Franchetti will be an inspiration to sailors, both men and women.”⁹

The issue is that senior leaders are confusing true performance and merit for the perceived benefits of a diverse society. Assistant Secretary of the Air Force Alex Wagner implies that DEI efforts are needed to compete with China, rather than more emphasis on training and/or technology. “As the People’s Republic of China seeks to increasingly compete with us technologically in the air and space domains, I believe that the diversity of the United States—including racial and gender, but also regional, cultural, socioeconomic, and intellectual diversity—is what distinguishes our force and provides us unique advantages on today’s battlefield as well as the battlefield of the future.”¹⁰ He also sees diversity and inclusion as key to recruitment.¹¹

Testimony from witnesses at the March 2023 Military Personnel Subcommittee hearing indicated that the service branches were using DEI to make themselves more attractive employers to younger generations, who they claim highly value DEI. In other words, they believe DEI can serve as a tool to

⁶ Air Force Chief of Staff General Brown, et.al, “Officer Source of Commission Applicant Pool Goals,” Department of the Air Force, August 9, 2022, Officer_Source_of_Commission_Applicant_Pool_Goals_memo.pdf (af.mil) (Accessed September 2023).

⁷ Thomas Harker, “Department of the Navy Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Planning Actions,” Memorandum for Assistant Secretaries for the Navy, Chief of Naval Operations, Commandant of the Marine Corp, May 3, 2021, <https://media.defense.gov/2021/May/17/2002645340/-1/-1/0/DON%20DIVERSITY%20EQUITY%20AND%20INCLUSION%20PLANNING%20ACTIONS.PDF> (DON%20DIVERSITY%20EQUITY%20AND%20INCLUSION%20PLANNING%20ACTIONS.PDF) (Accessed September 2023).

⁸ Lolita Baldor, “Biden picks female admiral to lead Navy. She’d be first woman on Joint Chiefs of Staff,” AP News, July 21, 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/navy-chief-first-woman-franchetti-3508e41a3e9ff0e17782de81299acf13> (Accessed September 2023).

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Alex Wagner, Opening statement, Subcommittee on Military Personnel, Committee on Armed Services, U.S. House of Representatives, 118th Congress, 1st Session, March 23, 2023, <https://armedservices.house.gov/sites/republicans.arms.house.gov/files/Wagner%20Testimony.pdf> (accessed September 2023).

¹¹ Ibid.

CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY

boost recruitment.¹² "In 2015, 18.6% of young, white Democratic men expressed a desire to serve in the military (only slightly lower than the 19.9% of non-Democratic men who wanted to serve). By 2021, that number had dropped to only 2.9%...and young, white Republican men (25.3%) were all at least 4 time more likely than young, white Democratic men in 2021 to "want" to serve in the armed forces. Young Democratic white men were also significantly less interested in military service than young black women (9.5%) and young white Republican women (10.9%)."¹³ These policies do not appeal to the groups of people most likely to join.

Readiness and Effectiveness of the Joint Force have been negatively impacted. In just two years, the active-duty Army has shrunk from 485,000 to only 452,000 troops. This directly impacts both readiness and effectiveness as the Army is unable to fully man its formations. The Army had planned to increase its End Strength to 500,000 around 2028 by adding 2,000 soldiers to the force every year. However, the recruitment shortfalls meant that number slid in the opposite direction, and the Army cut End Strength further by 12,000 in FY 2023. This has meant the 31 Brigade Combat Teams that currently make up the Army's active-duty force must support all of the mission requirements, and growing the force will be exceptionally difficult as the Army will simply not have the soldiers to fill the uniforms.¹⁴

Navy ships are undermanned. While the Navy needs to grow to support the larger fleet it is trying to build, its end strength is moving in the wrong direction. It has gone from 347,677 personnel in FY 2021 to 346,300 in FY 2023, and is in danger of slipping further, with projections showing it could hit 336,600 personnel in FY 2027. When the Navy had almost 600 ships in the 1980's, it was able to sustain about 100 deployed at any one time, with a deployment rate of 17%. As of June 2022, the U.S. had approximately 94 ships deployed at any given time, out of a fleet of 298 total ships, a deployment rate of 31.5%. The operations tempo for Navy ships is about double what it was during the Cold War.¹⁵ This results in crews that are not getting the training time they need to execute their missions, and a force that is generally worked too hard, leading to lower morale. The combined effect of too few ships and sailors is reducing the Navy's effectiveness and leading to increased wear and tear on both the equipment and personnel.

Air Force operational readiness rates are abysmal, in large part due to the sustained pilot deficit. In 2022, it was short 650 pilots, coupled with incredibly low sortie rates and flying hours that have resulted in a situation where combat-coded fighter squadrons would not have the competency to execute most of the wartime missions they would be asked to accomplish. Air Force flight schools only fail .27% of candidates for competency, meaning that it is almost impossible to wash out based

¹² Hearing, *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Impacts to the Department of Defense and the Armed Services*, Military Personnel Subcommittee, 118th Cong., 1st session, March 23, 2023, [Military Personnel Subcommittee Hearing: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Impacts to the Department of Defense and the Armed Services | Armed Services Republicans \(house.gov\)](https://www.congress.gov/118/congress/1st-session/documents/hearings/118-100) (accessed September 2023).

¹³ Kevin Wallsten, "What the Data Says About the Military's Recruiting Crisis," RealClearDefense, February 23, 2023, https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2023/02/23/what_the_data_says_about_the_militarys_recruiting_crisis.html.

¹⁴ Thomas Spoehr, "U.S. Army," The Heritage Foundation, October 18, 2022, <https://www.heritage.org/military-strength/assessment-us-military-power/us-army> (accessed September 2023).

¹⁵ Brent Sadler, "U.S. Navy," The Heritage Foundation, October 18, 2022, <https://www.heritage.org/military-strength/assessment-us-military-power/us-navy> (accessed September 2023).

CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY

on poor performance. This passes incompetent pilots to the operational units, contributing to the degradation of the effectiveness of the force. The service has avoided directly addressing readiness rates for years, but in 2017, the Secretary of the Air Force informed Congress that it was the lowest in the service's history. Based on the negative trends in mission capable rates and pilot sorties, it can be inferred that the situation has not improved. While maintenance manning remains healthy, the deficits in funding for flying hours and spare parts contribute to the low mission capable rates.¹⁶

A record number of Americans have indicated declining trust in the military which is adversely impacting all services recruiting goals as they compete for fewer qualified candidates. According to research, 77% of young Americans are unfit to join the military due to obesity, drug use, health issues or criminal activity¹⁷. Of those 23% that are eligible to serve, even fewer are willing to serve. Polls showed a drop in Americans' confidence in the military to 60%, the lowest since 1988 with the exception of one lower score in 1997.¹⁸ Another poll showed 57% of young Americans worry their mental health would be damaged by serving.

Since the adoption of the all-volunteer force, recruiting for the force in FY2022 was the worst on record,¹⁹ and 2023 is not likely to be any better. In 2022, the Army missed its recruitment goal by about 25%.²⁰ Admiral Franchetti testified that the Navy will miss its recruitment goals by 7,000 sailors in 2023.²¹

If the services cannot recruit enough new personnel into the force, then they will need to increase retention as a means of sustained required personnel. For retention, the Army turnover rate in 2021 was 29.7%, versus 18.6% for the Marine Corps; other branches were between the two. For comparison, only one NATO country has a lower retention rate. The private sector turnover rate is 26%.²² Unless the recruitment situation improves quickly, additional effort will be required to increase retention rates, particularly in the initial enlistment term.

Taken as a whole, current policies prioritizing DEI and related ideologies over merit are not only degrading recruitment and retention, trust and confidence, readiness and effectiveness, but may also

¹⁶ John Venable, "U.S. Air Force," The Heritage Foundation, October 18, 2022, <https://www.heritage.org/military-strength/assessment-us-military-power/us-air-force> (accessed September 2023).

¹⁷ Thomas Spoehr, "The Administration and Congress Must Act Now to Counter the Worsening Military Recruiting Crisis," July 28, 2022, <https://www.heritage.org/defense/report/the-administration-and-congress-must-act-now-counter-the-worsening-military> (accessed September 2023).

¹⁸ Muhammed Younis, "Confidence in U.S. Military Lowest in Over Two Decades," Gallup, July 21, 2023, [Confidence in U.S. Military Lowest in Over Two Decades \(gallup.com\)](https://www.gallup.com) (accessed September 2023).

¹⁹ Thomas Spoehr, "The Administration and Congress Must Act Now to Counter the Worsening Military Recruiting Crisis," July 28, 2022, <https://www.heritage.org/defense/report/the-administration-and-congress-must-act-now-counter-the-worsening-military> (accessed September 2023).

²⁰ Thomas Spoehr and Dr. Ken Hartman, "Biden's Pentagon Can't Recruit New Soldiers and That Threatens Us All," Fox News, June 13, 2023, <https://www.heritage.org/defense/commentary/bidens-pentagon-cant-recruit-new-soldiers-and-threatens-us-all> (accessed September 2023).

²¹ Diana Correll, "Navy will miss recruiting goals by 7,000 sailors this year," Navy Times, September 14, 2023, <https://www.navytimes.com/news/your-navy/2023/09/14/navy-will-miss-recruiting-goals-by-7000-sailors-this-year/#:~:text=%E2%80%9CWe're%20going%20to%20be,years%20to%20hit%20that%20mark> (accessed September 2023).

²² Bol Ring, "Scientific Approach to Solving Army Retention and Recruiting Problem – Self-Determination Theory and authentic Leadership Theory" Small Wars Journal, September 10, 2022.

CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY

be contributing to another unprecedented crisis in the force. Suicide rates for the 18-34 general population have risen by 30% (18/100k) since 2005, versus 50% for veterans and 150% for veterans of post 9-11 wars (45.9/100k).²³ Alarmingly, these rates have not improved along with the reduction of deployments, but have remained high, despite the reduction in combat deployments. 30,177 active duty and veterans of post-9/11 wars have died by suicide in comparison to 7,057 KIA.²⁴ For comparison, suicide rates among U.S. Army personnel in World War II until 9/11 measured in the mid-teens per 100,000, while after 2008 exceeded 20 per 100,000, sometimes approaching as many as 30 per 100,000.²⁵

Recommendations:

All military personnel should be held to the highest standards, and promotions should be based entirely on performance and merit. Congress must hold the Biden administration accountable for any substitution of merit-based promotions which degrade readiness, effectiveness, recruiting, retention, and the trust and confidence the American people must have in their military. Military personnel appropriations should, as appropriate, be correlated to merit based promotions and successful recruiting and retention rates reflecting effective application of resources.

The Department of Defense and Government Accountability Office should provide Congress with an objective detailed assessment of the challenges to recruitment, retention, readiness, and the alarming suicide rates within the military and among our veterans providing specific recommendations to address each.

* * * * *

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²³ Thomas S. Howard, "High Suicide Rates Among United States Service Members and Veterans of the Post 9-11 Wars". Watson Institute International and Public Affairs. 21 June, 2021 (Pages 5 and 6).

²⁴ Thomas S. Howard, "High Suicide Rates Among United States Service Members and Veterans of the Post 9-11 Wars". Watson Institute International and Public Affairs. 21 June, 2021 (Page 1).

²⁵ Jeffrey Smith PhD et al, "A Historical Examination of Military Records of US Army Suicide, 1819 to 2017", JAMA Netw Open, December 2019, [A Historical Examination of Military Records of US Army Suicide, 1819 to 2017 | Depressive Disorders | JAMA Network Open | JAMA Network](#) (accessed September 2023).

CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY

work.

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Robert Greenway has more than 30 years experience in public service culminating as the senior U.S. government official responsible for developing, coordinating and implementing U.S. government policy for all the Middle East and North Africa on the National Security Council. Prior to service on the NSC he served as a Senior Intelligence Officer at the Defense Intelligence Agency and a veteran of the United States Army Special Forces with six combat tours in Afghanistan and Iraq. Following his government service, he established and led the Abraham Accords Peace Institute dedicated to strengthening and expanding the historic agreements.

While Deputy Assistant to the President and Senior Director of the National Security Council's Middle Eastern and North African Affairs Directorate he planned and executed the United States' most significant economic sanctions since the Cold War as part of a broad strategy for Iran which doubled the sanctions pressure of the previous three administrations in one third the time. He was a principal architect of the historic Abraham Accords, the most significant diplomatic breakthrough in Middle East peace since 1994. Personally supervised development of a first-ever presidentially approved strategies for Iran, Syria, Iraq, Libya, Lebanon and Israel, and established the first national level efficacy and assessment process to quantify outcomes and measure progress toward strategic objectives. He was instrumental in the removal of the world's most dangerous terrorist leaders greatly improving regional stability and safety. He coordinated the implementation of a comprehensive strategy with a broad international coalition to defeat ISIS resulting in the liberation of the 20,000 square miles of territory it controlled, and the elimination of its leadership in Syria and Iraq.

Before being assigned to the NSC he served at the Defense Intelligence Agency as a Senior Intelligence Officer in U.S. Central Command. While assigned to USCENTCOM he deployed twice to Afghanistan as the Senior Intelligence Analyst for the Commander, Special Operations Joint Task Force from 2013-2014, and as Senior Intelligence Advisor for the Commander International Security Assistance Forces in 2011 he identified new approaches to mapping bulk financial transactions using big data to identify illicit activity enabling legal action against global illicit trade networks for which he was awarded the David Rist Prize for research contributing to the forfeiture or seizure of hundreds of millions dollars in illicit funds.

Mr. Greenway retired from active duty prior to joining the DIA having commanded Special Forces units at every level from Team through Battalion. In October 2001 he deployed in support of Operation Relentless Pursuit and Enduring Freedom I while assigned to an Army Special Mission Unit immediately following the attacks of 11 September. He deployed again in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom with 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) in 2003 and 2004 where his duties included establishing the Iraqi Counterterrorism Force. Mr. Greenway was selected by the Deputy Secretary of Defense to report on the status of the Iraqi Insurgency before serving as a Counterterrorism Policy Advisor to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict. Following his service at the Pentagon he exercised daily control over the Special Forces Assessment, Selection, and Qualification Courses from 2008 until retiring in July 2010 where he realigned the military's most complex training process allowing unprecedented expansion of high- demand Special Forces without compromise in quality.

Mr. Greenway has an MA with Honors from Webster University and a BA from the Virginia Military Institute.

His civilian awards include the Secretary of Defense Medal for Outstanding Public Service, two National Intelligence Meritorious Unit Citations, the Army's Outstanding Civilian Service Award, Defense Intelligence Agency's Civilian Combat Support Award, three Joint Meritorious Unit Awards and NATO Service Medal. In addition, he received the Military Operations Research Society's highest award, the David Rist Prize.

His military awards and decorations include the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster; the Defense Meritorious Service Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster; the Meritorious Service Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster; the Joint Service Commendation Medal; the Army Commendation Medal; the Joint Service Achievement Medal; the Army Achievement Medal with three Oak Leaf Clusters; the National Defense Service Medal with star; the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal; the Afghanistan Campaign Medal; the Iraq Campaign Medal; the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal; the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal; the Special Forces Tab; the Ranger Tab; the Combat Infantry Badge, and Senior Parachutist Badge.

STATEMENT OF PETER LEVINE,
FORMER ACTING UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
FOR PERSONNEL AND READINESS

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL
HEARING ON MERITOCRACY IN THE MILITARY SERVICE ACCESSION,
PROMOTION, AND COMMAND SELECTION

September 20, 2023

Chairman Banks, Ranking Member Kim, Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting me here this afternoon for your hearing on merit-based decision-making in the accession, promotion, and command selection of military officers. The views that I express today are my own, based on my past experience in the Department of Defense, and should not be interpreted as reflecting the position of my employer, the Institute for Defense Analyses.

Even more than technology, our greatest military advantage over our competitors is our people: our Armed Forces are filled with countless highly-trained professionals, including officers whose leadership qualities are the envy of the world. The capability of our total force – officer and enlisted, active duty and reserve, military and civilian, organic and contractor – is multiplied many times over by the exceptional quality of our recruits and the unparalleled levels of their training and education.

I would like to make three basic points today.

First, diversity strengthens our military, and military leadership is more effective when it appropriately reflects the force.

Only about one in six of American young people today meet the academic standards for recruitment and are otherwise eligible to serve in the military. The numbers are even smaller when you look at high skills – such as technological savvy and computer literacy – that are increasingly needed for the future force. That is why our search for talent must draw on every sector of our society. Only by recruiting in every region of the country and in every demographic group can the Department access the personnel and talent that it needs.

As a result, we have a force today that reflects the diversity of the American people. The U.S. population is roughly 60 percent non-Hispanic White, 18 percent Hispanic, 12 percent Black and 10 percent Asian, Pacific Islander and other. Our active duty military has about the same mix, roughly 55 percent non-Hispanic White, 17 percent Hispanic, 17 percent Black, and 10 percent Asian, Pacific Islander and other. Only about 17 percent of active duty members today are female, but without these women our force would not only be smaller, it would also be significantly less capable.

A force as diverse as ours is at its most effective when its members feel respected and included. And a key to that feeling is a leadership that is as inclusive as the force. As Admiral Gary Roughead, then the Chief of Naval Operations, stated in 2010, “when someone who is attracted to the Navy . . . looks up that chain of command, they have to see themselves. If they can’t see themselves, they won’t believe.”¹ Admiral Roughead’s statement was reflected by the findings of the Military Leadership Diversity Commission, which concluded a year later:

“[S]ervicemembers’ vision of what is possible for their career is shaped by whether they see individuals with similar backgrounds excelling and being recognized in their Service. The performance of the Nation’s military is tied to the individual’s belief that he or she will be treated fairly regardless of his or her background.”²

Similarly, the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services has found that women in senior positions enhance recruitment and retention by serving as role models and mentors for more junior servicewomen.³

Our best force is a force that draws on the strengths of all sectors of our society, and we are unlikely to achieve such a force without an inclusive leadership that sends the message that all are welcome and have an opportunity to succeed.

Second, the military promotion system is merit-based, but that doesn’t mean that we have been able to make it as color-blind or objective as we might like.

Promotion decisions are made by boards of senior officers who are convened to assess the performance records of eligible officers and advance those who are

¹ From Representation to Inclusion: Diversity Leadership for the 21st-Century Military, Final Report, Mil. Leadership Diversity Comm’n (Mar. 15, 2011), 15 <https://www.hsl.org/?view&did=11390>.

² From Representation to Inclusion, xvi.

³ <https://dacomwits.defense.gov/Portals/48/Documents/Reports/2019/Annual%20Report/DACOWITS%202019.pdf>.

best qualified. Federal law requires merit-based decisions, providing that selection boards convened by the military departments must recommend those officers whom they determine to be “best qualified for promotion.”⁴ Board members take an oath that they will perform their duties “without prejudice or partiality,”⁵ and each Board must certify that the officers it recommends are the “best qualified for promotion to meet the needs of the armed force concerned.”⁶ Board members and Service staff involved in the selection process have described the process as exceptionally fair and expressed the belief that board decisions are made based solely on the strength of the record. There are no quotas or affirmative action in today’s military promotion system.

Saying that the military promotion system is merit-based is not the same as saying that it is or can be “color-blind,” however. In recent years, several military Services have tried eliminating photos from the files available to promotion boards in an effort to minimize consideration of race and gender. Research conducted by IDA and others shows that the elimination of these photos had no statistically significant impact on promotion rates. This is hardly a surprising result, since personnel files include many other indicators of race and gender, including names and personal histories. Even if these other indicators could also be removed from personnel files, the promotion process would not be “color-blind,” since the senior officers who write the officer evaluation reports that are at the heart of the process know exactly who they are rating.

Moreover, a merit-based process is not the same thing as an objective process. One of the vital purposes of the accession, promotion, and command selection processes is to identify and advance future military leaders. Although academic achievement and proficiency at tactical tasks are important, they are not the only attributes that matter, and may not even be the attributes that matter most. A retired officer for whom I have the deepest respect says that integrity is far more important in a future leader than intelligence. He has explained:

First, last, and always is people have to believe you and you have [to] believe in them... They don’t necessarily have to like you...but they [have to] believe that they can trust you when you look them in the eye and say, “This is it. This is what I need. This is what I have to do.” They [have to]

⁴ 10 U.S.C. Section 616.

⁵ 10 U.S.C. Section 613.

⁶ 10 U.S.C. Section 617.

believe that it's true—or at least you think it's true. Integrity is the foundation for everything else.

For this reason, officer evaluations and promotion decisions include assessments of character traits in areas such as judgement, innovation, and communication, along with capabilities as a leader, mentor, motivator, and team player. The evaluation of these character traits and capabilities is merit-based and candidates are rated on a numeric scale, but the ratings are inherently subjective in nature. I may recognize leadership skills that you don't and vice versa, because what we see is the product of who we are, where we have been, and what we have experienced. This inherently subjective nature of character evaluation does not have to be a weakness. It can be a strength – as long as we use it as a tool to recognize and advance talent in all of its many shapes and forms.

Third, the military has limited – but important – tools with which to promote diversity without undermining merit-based decisions.

The twin objectives of promoting on the basis of merit and developing a diverse and inclusive leadership may sound inconsistent, but they are not.

One step that the Department can take to build diversity without undermining merit is to ensure that the pipeline of individuals who enter into the merit-based promotion process is as diverse as possible. For this reason, the Services work extremely hard to develop a robust and diverse applicant pool from which to select future officers. Just as the military Services seek to recruit enlisted members in diverse communities and in all segments of our society, they work to fill the officer candidate pool with the full range of talent that our country has to offer by reaching out to appropriate geographic regions and academic sources, including Minority Serving Institutions and affinity-based professional organizations.

The need to ensure a diverse pipeline to senior ranks does not end with accession. The Services have also worked hard to ensure that officers with diverse backgrounds are not disadvantaged in the promotion process being pigeon-holed into career fields and assignments with historically low promotion rates.⁷ For

⁷ Research has shown that certain career fields in which women and racial and ethnic minorities have historically been underrepresented—primarily operational and combat specialties—are more likely to lead to promotion than others. Julie Lockwood et al., *Explaining Differences in Predicted O-5 Promotion Outcomes by Race and Gender among Naval Officers*, IDA Paper P-20452, December 1, 2020; Beth J. Asch, Trey Miller, & Alessandro Malchiodi, *A new look at gender and minority differences in officer career progression in the military* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2012), https://www.rand.org/pubs/technical_reports/TR1159.html; Beth J. Asch, Trey Miller, &

example, the Air Force recently initiated an action plan to provide more resources and exposure on operational career fields to minority recruits, increase recruiter awareness and appreciation for diversity in career field matching, and support mentoring to foster officer development and career objectives.⁸ Efforts like these to inform career choices and provide a fair shot at key assignments can help ensure that our military leaders appropriately reflect the force that they lead *without* undermining the merit-based selection processes.

A second step that the Department can take is to ensure that the boards that make promotion decisions are themselves diverse. A few years ago, I interviewed a senior executive at a large corporation who told me that his company's attempts to diversify its executives were unsuccessful until the company recognized that personal recommendations by the existing, non-diverse executives carried a large weight in the promotion process. His point was not that personal recommendations need to be eliminated for a company to successfully identify a diverse set of future leaders, but that the people making these personal recommendations should be diverse themselves. I have spoken to many senior military leaders who have told me similar stories.

This is undoubtedly why Section 612 of title 10, U.S. Code requires that "The members of a selection board shall represent the diverse population of the armed force concerned to the extent practicable." By ensuring that women and minorities are represented on selection boards, the military Services seek to avoid the trap of "group think," in which individuals who look alike and think alike continue to advance others who look and think like them. This does not mean that the Services are now acting on a basis other than merit or promoting less qualified officers. Rather, it is an indication that they are now able to recognize talent where they may have been unable to see it before. The result is a better and stronger force, and one that draws on all of the many strengths of our society.

Thank you for inviting me to participate in today's hearing. I look forward to your questions.

Gabriel Weinberger, *Can We Explain Gender Differences in Officer Career Progression?* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2016), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1288.html.

⁸ https://www.af.mil/Portals/1/documents/2021SAF/09_Sept/RDR_6_Month_Assessment.pdf

Peter Levine

Peter Levine is a Senior Fellow at the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA) and the Director of IDA's Defense Management Institute (DMI). Mr. Levine is the author of *Defense Management Reform: How to Make the Pentagon Work Better and Cost Less* (Stanford University Press, 2020).

In 2022, Mr. Levine was appointed by the Secretary of Defense to serve as a member of the Commission on Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution Reform. He previously served as a panel member for the NAPA report on the Office of Personnel Management (Elevating Human Capital: Reframing the U.S. Office of Personnel Management's Leadership Imperative, 2021); a panel member for a National Academy of Sciences study on the acquisition workforce (Empowering the Defense Acquisition Workforce to Improve Mission Outcomes Using Data Science, 2021); and a co-chair of the Independent Panel to Assess EMS Organizational Alternatives (IDA Group Report GR-10527, 2019).

From April 2016 to January 2017, Mr. Levine served as Acting Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. In this capacity, he was the principal assistant and advisor to the Secretary of Defense on military and civilian personnel policy and management.

From May 2015 to April 2016, Mr. Levine served as the Deputy Chief Management Officer of the Department of Defense. As DCMO, he was the senior advisor to the Secretary of Defense on business transformation.

Prior to his appointment as DCMO, Mr. Levine served on the staff of the Senate Armed Services Committee from August 1996 to February 2015, including two years as Staff Director, eight years as General Counsel, and eight years as minority counsel.

Mr. Levine served as counsel to Senator Carl Levin of Michigan from 1995 to 1996, and as counsel to the Subcommittee on Oversight of Governmental Management of the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs from 1987 to 1994.

Mr. Levine was an Associate at the law firm Crowell and Moring from 1983 to 1987. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree summa cum laude from Harvard College and a Juris Doctor degree magna cum laude from Harvard Law School.

RECORD VERSION

STATEMENT BY

LIEUTENANT GENERAL DOUGLAS F. STITT, USA
DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF, G-1

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FIRST SESSION, 118TH CONGRESS

ON MERITOCRACY IN THE MILITARY SERVICES: ACCESSIONS, PROMOTIONS,
AND COMMAND SELECTIONS

SEPTEMBER 20, 2023

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED BY THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

Chairman Banks, Ranking Member Kim, distinguished members of this Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you on behalf of the men and women of the United States Army.

The Army's mission remains unchanged, to fight and win our Nation's wars. The Army of 2030 requires a highly trained, disciplined, and fit force across the Total Army. Army readiness and dominance on the battlefield relies on ensuring we have the right Soldier, in the right place at the right time, with the right resources. The Army conducts all promotion and special selection boards and processes in full compliance with all applicable statutes and Department of Defense (DoD) guidance. The United States Army's dominance in warfighting is sustained through meritocracy, in which qualified personnel are recruited, assigned to specialties, assigned to positions within a unit, retained, and promoted based on their demonstrated aptitude and performance in the roles they are assigned to perform. This, in essence, is at the heart of our current campaign, "Be All You Can Be".

Forecasting the Personnel Requirements for the Army of 2030

The Army of 2030 will provide the Joint Force trained and ready forces, capable of combined arms maneuver in a multi-domain operating environment. Building the Army of 2030, while maintaining readiness, depends on a high-quality All-Volunteer Force. Moreover, we need quality officers to lead it. To meet this need, the Army shapes officer accessions, retention, and promotions to ensure the requisite number of officers are available to meet current and projected requirements. The majority of the Army officer inventory is a closed loop system, meaning almost all mid-career officers must be developed from junior officer ranks. The Army accesses thousands of new officers each year, with the intent of having the required number of officers today and in the future. For every 100 second lieutenants the Army accesses, approximately 50 are still serving at the tenth year of service, typically when their cohort is considered for promotion to major. The leading causes of officer attrition are resignations upon completion of active-duty service obligation, retirements, and medical separations. The Army carefully manages officer retention and promotions, in accordance with law and policy, to ensure

the necessary quality and quantity of officers exist at each grade. This effort places the right officer in the right place at the right time to meet the needs of the force. Ensuring we retain and advance the best qualified individuals is central to this effort.

Accessing the Best in the Nation

Investing in the Army of 2030 requires investing in our youth and helping them realize their full potential. Our Nation stands ready to meet its global challenges because of the world-class talent resident in our ranks. Nowhere is this more evident than in our Nation's premier leadership institutes, where we train and commission the future officer leadership of our Army through the United States Military Academy (USMA), Senior Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) Programs in our Nation's college and university campuses and through our Officer Candidate School (OCS). Each commissioning source offers its own unique path to training and selecting top quality future officers while ensuring that the highest ethical standards and commitment to selfless service remain the bedrock of the Army's officer corps.

Direct Commissioning Authorities:

The Army has been direct commissioning officers into special branches (Army Medical (AMEDD), Judge Advocate General's Corps (JAGC), and Chaplain (CH)) for decades. In 2018, Section 502 of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) enhanced availability of constructive credit for commissioned officer original appointments opening the option to direct commission officers across the Service in all branches. This has and will continue to allow the Army to leverage the strength of the American workforce to bridge capability gaps of emerging importance to future warfare, up to the grade of colonel, to acquire the necessary talent (knowledge, skills, and behaviors) in order to maintain our human capital advantage to win our nation's wars. In September 2019, the Department of Army (DA) published Army Directive 2019-27 – Direct Appointment of Officers Up to the Grade of Colonel (Other Than Special Branches), which directs Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1 to issue implementing guidance governing selection and constructive credit boards considering direct appointment applicants for other than special branches.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic impeded the immediate traction of the program, several critical branches such as Cyber and Civil Affairs began placing emphasis on leveraging this new commissioning pathway upon inception, as has the Army published refining guidance and messaging across the enterprise to encourage enhanced marketing and execution of filling critical skills gaps by using the direct commission option. Since the direct commission program opened to all branches, active proponents have successfully completed these accessions in 12 to 18 months. The direct commission program continues to gain momentum and interest within all Army components and the civilian marketplace. Basic branch direct commissions have averaged approximately 104 accessions annually between FY19 and FY23. Additionally, based on current applications in process, we project 120 accessions in FY24. With increased program messaging and proponent utilization, the Army expects direct commission accessions to increase each year moving forward.

The Directorate of Military Personnel Management, DA G-1 manages a Direct Commission Community of Interest Group to monitor, manage, and refine the program, in coordination with multiple program stakeholders, such as the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, U.S. Army Recruiting Command, Human Resources Command and all Army basic branch and functional area proponents. Efforts are currently underway to implement program and policy refinement to further streamline the process ensuring highly qualified talent is accessed into critical vacancies in the most expedient time possible.

Talent Based Branching:

In the Army's People Strategy, we have come to understand how foundational our people are to the success of our mission to deploy, fight and win in multi-domain operations. It's our people that provide us with the enduring advantage to remain that ready, lethal and capable land combat force that supports the nation's warfighting efforts. Reimagining how we acquire, develop, employ and retain our talent challenged us to shift from simply distributing personnel to more deliberately managing the talents

that our Soldiers and Civilians possess. The Army has recognized that we need to capitalize on the unique knowledge, skills, and behaviors possessed by every member of our team so that we are capable of employing each member to the maximum effect to remain the world's premier combat force.

In 2020, we began to redesign how we aligned our officer branching process through a process called Talent-Based Branching; first with our West Point cadets and then later with our ROTC cadets and now our OCS candidates. Moving beyond a manual process of branching officers based on a static order of merit list, the Army integrated a market approach using a matching algorithm between the Army branches and the individuals' preferences and knowledge, skills, and behaviors. Participants are given an opportunity to communicate their qualifications through an interview process and then rank the specialties they desire to serve in. Simultaneously, Army branches rank participants by most preferred candidates and then the algorithm matches both to arrive at a selection that best fits the participant's preferences and the Army's needs. No longer is the matching solely a flat selection process of ranking files, but an agile assessment tool and alive marketplace, where competition and merit rule the progression.

Now, in its third year of practice, Talent Based Branching continues to evolve with each year using emerging technology to refine and automate each evolution, improving both officer satisfaction and organizational fit. The result is better talent alignment, higher quality fits, and increased transparency all driving towards that ready, diverse, integrated, professional force needed to lead America's Army.

The Branching market is doing what it was designed to do, put more cadets in branches where they are likely to thrive as junior officers. Since the Branching market has been in place at USMA, the 1:1 match rate has increased from 35% to 61%. At ROTC, the 1:1 match rate increased from 35% to 58%.

The Branching market has resulted in more high-quality matches and fewer cadets being placed in branches where they are least preferred, providing the branches with

the right talent to execute their missions. At USMA, the number of cadets branching into a branch where they were most preferred increased from 40% in 2019 to 84% in 2023. At ROTC, that number rose from 50% in 2020 to 85% in 2023.

Investing in the Enlisted Accessions

In August of 2022, the Army introduced the Future Soldier Preparatory Course (FSPC), first at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, then later at Fort Moore, Georgia, to better prepare young Americans physically and academically to meet the military's entry requirements. Since its inception, the Army's FSPC has graduated 95% of the over 10,000 participants. Students in the academic track have increased their Armed Service Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) scores by an average of 18.5 points, and those in the fitness track lost an average of 1.7% body fat per week. These increased scores have opened more opportunities to critical specialties the Army needs for its future force structure. The participants who improved their scores have also seen increased access to bonus opportunities, paying out more than \$19.7M in bonuses to graduates of FSPC since inception. The FSPC gives the Army another accelerant to accessing America's talent by getting the right Soldier, to the right place, at the right time while keeping the quality high and better preparing future Soldiers to "Be All That They Can Be" to meet the Army's readiness priorities for today and the future.

Promoting the Best within the Army

Commissioned Officers

The process for officer promotions of both Active-Duty List and Reserve Active Status List members are based on the requirements in Title 10 of the United States Code, as well as the policy guidance provided by Department of Defense Instructions and Army regulations. The Army generally evaluates officers for promotion as a group based on the year they access into the Army, which becomes their accession year group. This provides officers a similar opportunity for promotion from year to year. Promotion boards are provided selection objectives by branch and functional area that reflect a continuously updated five-year plan that takes gains, losses, career developmental

needs, and Army requirements for officers into consideration. Over the course of any given year, the Army screens close to 16,000 officers considered for promotion to grades of lieutenant through colonel for exemplary conduct. On average, fewer than 1,600 of those considered will have adverse information in their files that requires further review. Finally, less than half of one percent of the approximately 16,000-officers screened are either not promoted or asked to show cause for retention in the service. These statistics speak to the effectiveness of our promotion review processes, and the growing awareness in the force on the importance of exemplary military leadership.

Centralized promotion selection boards for officer grade O4 thru O6 (and when appropriate O3) review and vote eligible officer files from below, in, and above the zone and establish an order of merit list (OML). This OML is reviewed against the Army's branch, functional area, and specific skill selection requirements and adjusted to meet those accordingly. Finally, the board determines whether the top 20% of the final OML merits promotion ahead of their peers. If the majority of the board agrees that top group of officers is designated for earliest promotion regardless of date of rank, with the remainder of the recommended list promoted in accordance with date of rank precedence, as specified in statute. Resulting promotion nominations flow through the Secretary of the Army for vetting and to the Secretary of Defense, the President, then on to the Senate Armed Services Committee, and ultimately to the Senate for confirmation, as applicable in accordance with law and policy.

Promotion board voting members are predominantly drawn from general officer and colonel ranks, and represent the makeup of the eligible officer population under consideration to the greatest extent possible. This includes ensuring representation by competitive category, component, and joint qualification. Member requirement matrices are assessed and updated annually to adapt to changing Army demographics. The distribution of members is key to ensuring that promotions are made on merit as demonstrated by past performance across the variety of jobs held.

Officers are selected on merit by a centralized selection board. The following is a breakout of this past year's O6 (colonel), O5 (lieutenant colonel) and O4 (major) promotion selection board results.

For promotion to colonel in our Operations specialties, of 874 considered, 173 were selected for promotion for a 20% selection rate (17% for African Americans, 10% for Hispanics, and 21% for Whites). For Operations Support specialties, of 770 considered, 165 were selected for promotion for a 21% selection rate (19% for African Americans, 23% for Hispanics, and 21% for Whites). For Force Sustainment specialties, of 546 considered, 113 were selected for promotion for a 21% selection rate (20% for African Americans, 18% for Hispanics, and 23% for Whites). Finally, for Information Dominance specialties, of 55 considered, 16 were selected for promotion for a 29% selection rate (29% for African Americans, 0% for Hispanics, and 35% for Whites).

For promotion to lieutenant colonel in our Operations specialties, of 1184 considered, 468 were selected for promotion for a 40% selection rate (35% for African Americans, 35% for Hispanics, and 40% for Whites). For Operations Support specialties, of 1076 considered, 436 were selected for a 41% selection rate (40% for African Americans, 27% for Hispanics, and 44% for Whites). For Force Sustainment specialties, of 775 considered, 305 were selected for promotion for a 39% selection rate (36% for African Americans, 33% for Hispanics, and 41% for Whites). For Information Dominance specialties, of 81 considered, 35 were selected for promotion for a 43% selection rate (67% for African Americans, 44% for Hispanics, and 40% for Whites).

For promotion to major in our Operations specialties, of 1,492 considered, 975 were selected for promotion for a 65% selection rate (60% for African Americans, 63% for Hispanics, and 53% for Whites). For Operations Support specialties, of 849 considered, 442 were selected for promotion for a 52% selection rate (44% for African Americans, 56% for Hispanics, and 56% for Whites). For Force Sustainment specialties, of 891 considered, 468 were selected for promotion for a 53% selection rate (25% for African Americans, 46% for Hispanics, and 44% for Whites). For Information Dominance

specialties, of 69 considered, 30 were selected for promotion for a 43% selection rate ((0% for African Americans (none in the population), 44% for Hispanics, and 50% for Whites)).

Selection rates for minorities vary due to the smaller populations of these officers among the aggregate populations at a given grade, but our selection rates for minorities are encouraging. Because our promotions are made on merit principles and assess performance as an indicator of potential for increased responsibility, the rates for our lieutenant colonel promotions indicate that minority populations are very competitive. Our rates at colonel are improving for minorities, but they show that it is a very competitive cut for all personnel at the top of our field grade structure.

In 2020, based on guidance from then-Secretary of Defense Mark Esper, the Army began masking elements of information in officer promotion files that could induce biases based on factors other than performance, potential, and suitable mission skills. Eliminating photographs, marital status, and other potentially biasing information is expected to ensure that boards recommend those officers, who merit advancement and higher responsibilities. Since August 2020, the Army conducted 302 selection boards (including commands, schools, selective continuation, advisory boards, etc.) using the masking criteria. Out of that total, 108 were promotion selection boards.

The Army continues to employ personnel authorities granted in the FY 2019 NDAA for increased flexibility in how we manage and retain talent. This includes adjustments to promotion sequence for officers of significant merit and allowing officers to opt out of promotion consideration under certain conditions. Additionally, the Army began to employ the temporary promotion authority for officers with critically needed skills and qualifications to fill positions at higher grades temporarily when those skills were not available otherwise. Brevet promotions consist of two processes. The first process consists of determining critical positions to brevet and add to the Brevet Critical Position List. Commands identify critical positions for brevet; this recommendation goes to a General Officer Review Panel and to the Secretary of the Army for approval. The

second process includes the assignment market process, where commands nominate officers to fill approved brevet positions. Nominations approved by Secretary of the Army go forward through the normal process for Senate confirmation.

Noncommissioned Officers

Organizations conduct local promotion boards for the ranks of staff sergeant, while an annual centralized board conducted by Headquarters, Department of the Army, selects Soldiers for promotion to sergeant first class and above. In 2019, the Army terminated a long-standing annual promotion selection board process and transitioned to an annual noncommissioned officer (NCO) evaluation board process to capitalize on the expanded capabilities a centralized board process offers. Each evaluation board evaluates eligible NCOs (staff sergeant and above) with the mission to produce order of merit lists informed by individual performance and potential. These order of merit lists inform multiple human merit-based decisions to include selection to attend professional military education courses, promotion for the purpose of satisfying valid vacancy requirements, selection for assignments and appointment to command sergeant major positions, and potential denial of continued service.

This talent management effort facilitates accomplishment of the Army's strategic mission to improve readiness and sustain an All-Volunteer Force of trusted professionals by recognizing and capitalizing on the unique talents each noncommissioned officer possesses. It allows for employment of our noncommissioned officers to the maximum effect, while mitigating mismatches of our people to requirements. The expanded application of a merit-based list of talent, not only improves readiness, but supports professional development and reinforces the professionalism of our NCO corps.

Training and education of our NCOs remains an essential element of our institutional success. Recognizing the challenges with an individual's availability to attend timely professional military education courses to comply with training and education requirements to qualify for promotion, the Army will continue to utilize temporary

promotions for a select group of individuals. Temporary promotions provide continued promotion opportunity prior to graduation of a requisite course of instruction, under specific conditions. This disciplined approach better prepares our NCOs for the complexities of today's operational environment, while reinforcing the benefits of a deliberate, continuous, sequential, and progressive professional development strategy.

Talent Management and Command Selection

The Army's decisive advantage is its Soldiers and leaders. Continuous investment in talent management innovation advances our competitive edge in an unpredictable environment. The aim of talent management is to better prepare our force for the dynamic conflicts ahead. The FY 2019 NDAA provided the Army with new authorities to modernize the officer personnel systems. The Army Talent Management Task Force (ATMTF) has implemented eight of the nine authorities granted in the FY 2019 NDAA. These authorities enhanced the retention and career management of military officers, while expanding opportunities for the Total Force to increase its talent pool and fill critical shortages. Enhancing talent management and promoting merit-based promotions creates a more efficient officer corps capable of meeting future challenges.

Command Assessment Program (CAP)

The Command Assessment Program (CAP) continues to assess and select more capable leaders at the battalion and brigade levels. In November 2022, the Army completed the fourth iteration of the CAP; over 5,200 leaders at lieutenant colonel, colonel, GS-14, GS-15, and E-9 levels have assessed through CAP over the last four years. The CAP continues to conduct assessments for the Acquisition Corps leaders and Program Executives, Medical Corps commanders, brigade command sergeants major, division chaplains, and candidates from the U.S. Army Reserve and National Guard. Additionally, CAP participants are offered the opportunity to utilize executive coaching under the Army Coaching Program. This program provides professional feedback to support the development of leaders and their understanding of personal strengths and weaknesses. CAP-selected leaders continue to be more cognitively

capable, superior communicators, more physically fit, more self-aware, and less likely to exhibit counterproductive or ineffective leadership traits. The Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military recognized CAP as a promising practice for identifying leaders, who are committed to the wellbeing of those under their command, as well as screening for leaders who do not show similar commitment. We continue to monitor the performance of CAP-certified leaders as they assume commands and key billets across the Army.

Results to date from the Command Assessment Programs are as follows:

Battalion Commander Assessment Program (BCAP) –

To date, 3,030 Army Competitive Category lieutenant colonels competed for battalion-level commands and key staff positions in BCAP. Of those, 2,621 (86.5%) were found ready for command.

Colonel Command Assessment Program (CCAP) –

To date, 944 Army Competitive Category colonels competed for brigade-level commands and key staff positions in CCAP. Of those, 812 (86%) were found ready for command. The first cohort of CCAP candidates took command in the summer of 2022 and are currently completing their first year in commands or key billets.

Sergeant Major Assessment Program (SMAP) –

To date, 743 sergeants major competed for brigade-level command sergeant major (CSM) positions. Of those, 647 (87.1%) were found ready and are being slated into brigade-level CSM openings in 2023 and 2024.

Since the implementation of the CAP, 168 LTC/COL leaders have been found Not Yet Ready for Command based on Counterproductive Leadership (CPL) behaviors evaluated during the CAP process, who would have been Principal Selects under the legacy (OERs only) CSL selection system. This number of leaders would have directly impacted roughly 200,000 Soldiers with potential CPL behaviors.

Conclusion

The people of the United States Army—these servicemembers who serve our Nation, both in and out of uniform, along with their families—are our strength and our legacy. Their talents, qualifications, merit, courage, and commitment make our Army the greatest in the world. These warriors embody our mantra to “Be All You Can Be”, each day, at home and away. To keep our Army strong, we must continually build our force with talented, qualified individuals who embody the best of America, and we must offer them opportunities to allow both their careers and Families to flourish. We will be relentless in our unequivocal pursuit of placing the right Soldier at the right place at the right time.

Thank you for your generous and unwavering support of our outstanding soldiers, civilian professionals, and their families.

Douglas F. Stitt
Lieutenant General

Lieutenant General Douglas F. Stitt is a Distinguished Military Graduate of Norwich University in Northfield, Vermont. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree in History and was commissioned as an Armor Officer in 1990. He holds two Masters Degrees, one in Defense Studies and one in Strategic Studies from the Canadian Forces Staff College and the Army War College.

Lieutenant General Stitt's initial assignments were as a Rifle Platoon Leader and Executive Officer in the 3rd Battalion, 6th Infantry at Fort Polk, Louisiana; Company Command of the 129th AG Company (Postal), Fort Bragg, North Carolina; and Battalion Commander of the 1st Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

Lieutenant General Stitt's key staff assignments include Adjutant, 1-41 Infantry, Fort Hood, Texas; Assistant Professor of Military Science, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey; Chief of Strength Management, 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, North Carolina; Deputy G1 and Secretary of the General Staff, Southern European Task Force, Vicenza, Italy; Brigade Adjutant, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, Deputy G1/AG, 82nd Airborne Division, Deputy Personnel Operations Division, United States Army Special Operations Command, G1, XVIII Airborne Corps, Fort Bragg, North Carolina; Director, Enlisted Personnel Management Directorate, U.S. Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky; Executive Officer, HQDA DCS G-1, Pentagon, Virginia; Director, Officer Personnel Management Directorate, U.S. Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky; and Director, Military Personnel Management, HQDA DCS G-1, Pentagon, Virginia. Lieutenant General Stitt is currently serving as the Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1, Pentagon, Virginia.

Major deployments include Operation Enduring Freedom 2005-2006, Operation Enduring Freedom 2007-2008, Operation Iraqi Freedom 2009-2010, and Operation Enduring Freedom 2014.

His awards and decorations include the Distinguished Service Medal, the Legion of Merit (1 Oak Leaf Cluster), the Bronze Star (2 Oak Leaf Clusters), the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Ranger Tab, Master Parachutist Badge, and Combat Action Badge.

Lieutenant General Stitt and his spouse Beth, Norwich University Class of 1992, have two daughters, Laura and Anna.

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HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

STATEMENT OF
VICE ADMIRAL RICHARD J. CHEESEMAN JR., U.S. NAVY
CHIEF OF NAVAL PERSONNEL
AND
DEPUTY CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
(PERSONNEL, MANPOWER, & TRAINING)
BEFORE THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL
ON
MERITOCRACY
IN THE
MILITARY SERVICES:
ACCESSION, PROMOTION, AND COMMAND SELECTION
SEPTEMBER 20, 2023

NOT FOR PUBLICATION
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HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

INTRODUCTION

Chairman Banks, Ranking Member Kim, and distinguished Members of the Military Personnel Subcommittee, I appreciate and thank you for the opportunity to appear before this Committee to discuss meritocracy in the United States Navy. Our Navy must always build, maintain, train and equip a combat-credible, dominant Naval force to keep the sea lanes open and free, deter conflict, and when called upon, decisively win our Nation's wars. This requires our entire Navy to leverage the best of our Nation by investing in trained, resilient, and educated Sailors that are self-assessing, self-correcting, and always learning toward one goal – delivering warfighting advantage. The United States Navy remains one of the most meritocratic organizations in the world, thanks to the principles established by President Truman in Executive Order 9981. Our Navy is dedicated to selecting and advancing only the best and most fully qualified our Nation has to offer.

NAVY ACCESSION PROCESS

Navy is committed to a process that attracts, recruits, develops, and retains individual Americans with the motivation required to be transformed into a member of a highly skilled, operational, and combat-ready warfighting team. Competition for talent has never been more complex; our target demographic of 18–24-year-olds have more options today than in previous years. As such, it is a strategic imperative for the Navy to remove barriers for entrance and service. Our accession pipeline rating determination process is merit based, specifically using the Armed Forces Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB), the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT), and associated individual ASVAB sub-tests used for rating assignment.

Enlisted Sailor Accessions

All military applicants must take the ASVAB that is comprised of ten individual sub-tests. Four of those sub-tests (similar in nature to Scholastic Aptitude Test/American College Testing) are combined to form the AFQT which is used as a general assessment of qualification for military service. However, the AFQT does not form the basis by which the Navy assigns individuals to ratings. Ratings are assigned based on a data-informed combination of ASVAB sub-test results known as 'line scores.'

No recruit is accepted into the Navy that does not qualify for a rating based on the data informed combination of ASVAB line scores. For example, to qualify as a Cyber Warfare Technician, an ASVAB line score of at least 255 is required. As another example, Electronics Technicians must have an ASVAB line score of at least 222. CAT IV recruits (AFQT 10 through 30) are not eligible for line waivers. They must meet all necessary rating-specific line score requirements.

AFQT scores, expressed on a percentile scale, reflect an applicant's standing relative to the national population of men and women 18–23 years of age. The scores are grouped into five categories based on the percentile score ranges shown in the table below:

AFQT Categories and Corresponding Percentile Score Ranges	
AFQT Category	Percentile Score Range
I	93–99
II	65–92
IIIA	50–64
IIIB	31–49
IV	10–30
V	1–9

The data-informed combination of ASVAB line scores predict success through the training pipeline with a high degree of confidence. This confidence is further validated through a detailed review of actual performance compared to predicted performance over periods of time. Based on these reviews, line score requirements are frequently reviewed and adjusted to ensure the high rate of predicted success is maintained through the training pipeline.

This accession process is entirely based on the merit of the individual candidate.

Naval Officer Accessions

Commissioned Officers are members of the Navy or Navy Reserve who have a degree from a four-year college or university as a minimum educational requirement and have gone through Officer Training. Applicants for Officer Candidate School, Naval Reserve Officer's Training Corps, and the United States Naval Academy are evaluated under a grading rubric that yields high-scoring candidates with high potential to succeed as a Navy leader. Scoring categories include a motivational statement, grade point average, officer aptitude rating, educational background, past employment, physical stamina and agility, oral and written statements, interviews, letters of recommendation, and recruiter comments. This accession process is entirely based on merit of the individual candidate.

NAVY PROMOTION PROCESS

Promotion in the United States Navy, whether officer or enlisted, is based on transparent processes known to those subject to evaluation. Promotion eligibility is based on time, and selection for promotion relies on the best and most fully qualified standard.

Enlisted Promotion Process

Enlisted promotion to E2 through E4 is based on time in service, applicable to all Sailors. Enlisted promotion to E5 through E6 is determined via the administration of a Navy-Wide Advancement Exam, the results of which feed into a Sailor Scoring Criteria. This approach considers the exam score, as well as performance mark average, service in paygrade, awards, education points, and pass not advance points (credit from previous exam cycles). Sailors selected for the next higher paygrade exceed the required Sailor Scoring Criteria for their rating. Enlisted promotion to E7 through E9 is determined by a board of Senior Enlisted and Officers

who are under oath. Selection for promotion is based on a best and most fully qualified standard, governed by precepts and convening orders. The best and most fully qualified standard is discussed in more detail in the Command Selection Process discussion below.

Officer Promotion Process

Officer promotion to O2 and O3 occurs through the All Fully Qualified Promotion process in line with Title 10. Officer promotion to O4 and above, to include Flag Rank of O7 and O8 is determined by a board of senior officers who are under oath. Selection for promotion is based on a best and most fully qualified standard, governed by precepts and convening orders. The best and most fully qualified standard is discussed in more detail in the Command Selection Process discussion below.

The enlisted and officer promotion processes are entirely based on merit of the individual candidate.

COMMAND SELECTION PROCESS

Our Navy employs a robust, data-driven process to select and assign personnel to command leadership positions. Through Administrative Selection Boards, the Navy considers eligible candidates through a careful and detailed review of their records by senior officers who are under oath during the process. Each record represents years of service by the individual candidate and only the written record is considered by the board. Command selection is based on a best and most fully qualified standard, governed by precepts and convening orders.

An Administrative Selection Board Precept governs the standard, promulgated by the Deputy Chief of Naval Personnel (DCNP). Fully Qualified means the candidate must be capable of performing the duties for which selected, and they must demonstrate the appropriate level of leadership, professional skills, integrity, management acumen, business practices, and resourcefulness in difficult and challenging assignments. Necessary professional attributes include adaptability, intelligent risk-taking, critical thinking, innovation, adherence to Navy and Department of Defense ethical standards, physical fitness, and loyalty to Navy core values. Among the fully qualified candidates, the board recommends the best qualified from the group. Proven and sustained superior performance in command and other leadership positions in difficult and challenging assignments is a definitive measure of fitness. Additionally, successful performance and leadership in combat conditions demonstrate exceptional advancement potential.

Command selection results are reviewed by the individual community lead Flag Officer, the Chief of Naval Personnel, the Vice Chief of Naval Operations, and the Chief of Naval Operations.

At the Flag Officer level, all Navy assignments, including command, are determined through a rigorous process of record reviews and discussions with community lead Flag Officers,

stakeholders and Fleet Commanders prior to submission via the Chief of Naval Operations for approval by the Secretary of the Navy.

This command selection process is entirely based on merit of the individual candidate.

CONCLUSION

Our Navy is a meritocratic institution that ensures our accessions, assignments, command selections, and promotions are based on established standards. The Navy has a deliberate process for recruitment, advancement, and selection for leadership positions which is constantly reviewed to ensure the finest Americans are available for service at all ranks and paygrades. I look forward to working with you as we continue shaping our Navy to meet future challenges. On behalf of the Sailors of the United States Navy, thank you for your unwavering support.

Vice Admiral Rick Cheeseman
Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Personnel, Manpower, and Training, N1,
Office of the Chief of Naval Operations and Chief of Naval Personnel

Vice Adm. Rick Cheeseman is a native of Carney's Point, New Jersey, and a 1989 graduate of The Pennsylvania State University, where he earned a Bachelor of Science degree and was commissioned through the Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps Program. Cheeseman earned a Master's degree in Joint Campaign Planning and Strategy from National Defense University's Joint Advanced Warfighting School in 2007.

A career Surface Warfare Officer, he served onboard guided missile cruisers, guided missile destroyers, guided missile frigates, fleet replenishment oilers, and various afloat staffs. His afloat commands include USS Bulkeley (DDG 84) and USS Monterey (CG 61). Ashore, he served overseas as the officer in charge of the Naval Forces Korea Detachment in Chinhae, Republic of Korea, and as the Maritime Operations Center director for Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command/Commander, U.S. 5th Fleet in Bahrain. In addition, he has served in a variety of manning/manpower tours, to include an assignment as deputy for Manpower, Training and Strategy at OPNAV N96 and as director, Surface Warfare Assignments (PERS-41).

As a flag officer, he recently served as commander, Carrier Strike Group TEN. Other tours include assignment as commander, Carrier Strike Group TWO and as assistant commander, Navy Personnel Command for Career Management (PERS-4).

Cheeseman assumed duties as the Navy's 60th Chief of Naval Personnel June 3, 2022. Serving concurrently as the Deputy Chief of Naval Operations (manpower, personnel, training and education) (N1), he is responsible for the planning and programming of all manpower, personnel, training and education resources for the U.S. Navy. He leads more than 26,000 dedicated professionals engaged in the recruiting, talent management, training and development of over 400,000 Navy personnel. As the Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DE&I) Officer for the Navy, he leads the development of initiatives to integrate and implement strategic DE&I initiatives into Department of Navy's culture, policies, programs and core functions. His responsibilities include overseeing Navy Recruiting Command, Navy Personnel Command and Naval Education and Training Command.

His personal awards include the Legion of Merit (five awards), Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal (four awards), Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal (six awards), Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal (two awards), and various unit and expeditionary awards.

Last Updated: 22 July 2022

NOT PUBLIC UNTIL RELEASED BY THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

STATEMENT
OF
MICHAEL R. STROBL, Ph.D.
SENIOR EXECUTIVE SERVICE
ASSISTANT DEPUTY COMMANDANT
FOR
MANPOWER & RESERVE AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON PERSONNEL
OF THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
CONCERNING
MERITOCRACY IN THE MILITARY SERVICES
ON
20 SEPTEMBER 2023

NOT PUBLIC UNTIL RELEASED BY THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

Chairman Banks, Ranking Member Kim, and members of the Subcommittee, I thank you for the opportunity to testify today on your Marine Corps, specifically the meritocratic principles inherent in our personnel processes.

The United States Marine Corps is a notable example of a meritocratic institution. The Corps takes pride in its commitment to recognizing and rewarding excellence among its ranks in a fair, transparent, and methodical way. A meritocracy, by definition, is a system where advancement, rewards, and opportunities are based on an individual's abilities, achievements, and contributions. The Marine Corps embodies the principles of a meritocracy in its personnel policies. Whether it is assessing, assigning, promoting, awarding, or retaining Marines, the Corps is dedicated to merit-based treatment of its warriors.

This unwavering commitment to equal treatment underscores the Corps' dedication to meritocracy. Marines understand that their advancement and opportunities depend solely on their abilities and achievements – their skills, performance, education, leadership, and character – creating an environment where everyone has an equal opportunity for success.

Meritocracies are essential in our military – and in society at large – because they incentivize excellence, and the Marine Corps is no exception. Marines who earn advanced skill sets, certifications, and qualifications are actively rewarded and encouraged to excel. By doing so, the Corps not only recognizes exceptional performance but also motivates Marines to continually improve themselves. To provide a specific example, the Marine Corps has implemented an officer merit reorder process which allows Marines who have shown elite excellence to promote sooner than their peers.

The commitment to incentivizing excellence extends beyond technical skills. Leadership qualities, discipline, and physical fitness are also highly valued and rewarded. In essence, the Marine Corps offers a clear path for individuals to distinguish themselves and advance based on their merits.

Accessions

Now at the 50th anniversary of the All-Volunteer Force, we are reminded that it is more accurately an “All-Recruited Force.” Recruiting is more challenging today than perhaps ever before. The good news is that our officer recruiting remains strong. By every metric, the quantity and quality of officer candidates is exceptional.

Similarly, the quality of your enlisted Marines remains exceptionally high, and we will never sacrifice this quality. We continue to exceed the Department of Defense (DOD) quality metrics. In short: The Marine Corps continues to make mission and continues to sustain high standards of our all-recruited force. Specifically, the Department of Defense (DOD) requires 90 percent of enlistees to have a high school diploma or equivalent (Education Tier 1) and 60 percent of enlistees to score in the Mental Groups I-IIIA (mental aptitude). Thus far this year, the Marine Corps has achieved 98 percent for Education Tier 1 and over 65 percent for Mental Group I-IIIA. We assess zero (0) Tier IVs.

We continue to reach out to all our Nation’s youth to find tomorrow’s Marines. Vital to this success is assigning our best Marines to recruiting duty. Our recruiters reflect the face of the Nation, which is a testament to our intentional efforts to recruit a diverse force. We connect with all communities by assigning Marines to cover every zip code in our Nation and we are constantly striving to reach all qualified youth and their influencers – from the most rural small towns to the largest cities.

However, our enlisted mission challenges remain. In order to ensure recruiting success, we need your help. We need to continue to fund recruiting advertising and facilities, appropriately support

Military Entrance Processing Stations, ensure school access, and bolster a whole-of-Government national dialog on military and public service. Our veterans serve ably in industries, commercial sectors, and government across our Nation, bringing enhanced leadership and an exceptional work ethos back to their communities. We must converge at the highest levels to inform young men and women, and their parents and influencers, about the value of honorable service in uniform.

Junior Enlisted Performance Evaluation System (JEPES)

At the heart of the Marine Corps' meritocracy are transparent and objective evaluation systems. The Junior Enlisted Performance Evaluation System (JEPES) serves as a prime example. JEPES provides a single, comprehensive framework to evaluate and reward talented and high-performing Marines. This system's transparency and objectivity are vital to ensuring that promotions and retention decisions are based on merit.

First, JEPES allows Marines to access their performance evaluations and promotion scores through a user-friendly and mobile-friendly application. This accessibility ensures that every Marine knows precisely on what factors they are being assessed. Transparency is a cornerstone of meritocracy because it empowers individuals to understand their standing and strive for improvement.

Second, JEPES assesses Marines across numerous, specifically outlined, critical dimensions such as warfighting, mental agility, physical toughness, character, mission accomplishment, and leadership. This comprehensive approach ensures that excellence in various aspects of a Marine's duty is recognized and rewarded. In recent internal surveying, 67 percent of enlisted Marines and 82 percent of officers reported that they believe the performance evaluation system is fairer in the Marine Corps than in the private sector. These statistics demonstrate that Marines themselves perceive the meritocratic nature of their institution positively.

Promotion and Assignment Policy

The Marine Corps' selection processes for promotions and key assignments, such as command, begin with our selection standard of "*best and fully qualified*." Whether governed by statute or Service policies, our selection board processes are chartered to ensure that Marines of every race, religion, color, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, and national origin are given fair and equitable consideration.

Our officer promotion selection boards are statutory and grounded in law. Title 10 governs the conduct of officer promotion boards from pre-board actions to post-board reports. We execute these events by convening a board, preparing records of all eligible Marines, presenting the records using a standardized briefing format to all board members, and then conducting iterations of anonymous voting to select the best and fully qualified. Board membership includes Marines of diverse gender, ethnicity, and rank with representation from military occupational specialties throughout the Fleet Marine Forces.

The Marine Corps applies the same rigor and deliberate execution across all selection boards. As an example, we convene boards to select our best and fully qualified officers for command – not only at the O-5 and O-6 level – but importantly for our Recruiting Station Commanding Officers (RSCOs), and for Professional Military Education. These boards are developed using diverse board membership, precepts, and legal review consistent with Title 10 boards to ensure fair and equitable consideration for the awesome responsibility of commanding Marines and for the important career opportunities provided through advanced education programs.

As for assignments, the Marine Corps' policies expressly direct that the Corps "will ensure equal opportunity in assignments for all Marines without regard to color, race, ethnicity, religion, age, national origin, marital status (except for dual-military couples), gender, and sexual orientation."

Retention

Ultimately, the success of the Marine Corps' meritocratic approach is reflected in Marine satisfaction. Marines are discerning individuals who demand fairness and accountability. They vote with their feet, and our historically high retention rates in Fiscal Years 2022 and 2023 suggests that they believe the Corps treats them fairly, cares about their satisfaction, and values their careers and quality of life.

Not only did the Corps exceed its retention goals in FY22 and FY23, but we also saw a significant year-over-year increase in the objective quality of Marines reenlisting, resulting in a more mature and capable force. Marines choose to "stay Marine" because they have confidence that their careers will be determined by their excellence in leadership, job performance, skills, education, discipline, and physical fitness. This trust in the meritocratic principles of the Corps is a driving force behind its sustained success.

In conclusion, the Marine Corps has an enduring commitment to recruiting, developing, and retaining elite warriors through policies and personnel processes that are fair and transparent. Its focus on choosing the "best and fully qualified" Marines to meet the nation's needs ensures that meritocracy remains at the core of its culture and values. The Marine Corps expects and holds high standards. Marine leaders identify and reward excellence and our Marines earn opportunities through dedication, hard work, talent, and commitment. This will never change.

Thank you and Semper Fidelis.

**Michael R. Strobl, Ph.D.
Assistant Deputy Commandant
for Manpower and Reserve Affairs
Headquarters, United States Marine Corps**

Michael Strobl is the Assistant Deputy Commandant for Manpower and Reserve Affairs (ADC M&RA) and assists the Deputy Commandant in the operations and management of the M&RA Department ensuring integration of all its diverse human resource functions towards accomplishment of Marine Corps missions. The M&RA Department develops policies and programs across a broad range of functions directly supporting active and reserve component Marines, their family members, and Civilian Marines.

Michael Strobl enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1983 and was commissioned a second lieutenant in December of 1987 and served around the world in various duties as a field artilleryman. Dr. Strobl deployed with both the 13th and 15th Marine Expeditionary Units (Special Operations Capable) and served in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait as an artillery platoon commander in 11th Marines during Operation Desert Storm. Other operational tours include battery command at 12th Marines, and Battalion Operations Officer and Regimental Fire Direction Officer at 10th Marines. Supporting establishment tours include instructor and Staff Platoon Commander at The Basic School; Assistant Operations Officer, Total Force Structure Division (MCCDC); and Head, Officer Distribution Branch at HQMC, Manpower & Reserve Affairs.

Retiring from the Marine Corps as a Lieutenant Colonel in 2007, Dr. Strobl accepted a position as an Operations Research Analyst in the Office of the Secretary of Defense (Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation) at the Pentagon. While serving at CAPE, he was the lead analyst on military manpower and compensation issues as well as the Defense Health Program. He was appointed to the Senior Executive Service in September 2016 and served as the Deputy Director, Manpower Plans and Policy Division until assuming his current duties in August 2021.

Dr. Strobl holds a Bachelor's of Business Administration (BBA) degree from Colorado Mesa University, a Master's of Business Administration (MBA) degree from Averett University, a Master's of Science (MS) degree in Manpower Systems Analysis, with distinction, from the Naval Postgraduate School, and a Ph.D. in economics from George Mason University.

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE PRESENTATION
TO THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SUBJECT: MERITOCRACY IN THE MILITARY SERVICES: ACCESSION, PROMOTION
AND COMMAND SELECTION

STATEMENT OF:

LIEUTENANT GENERAL CAROLINE M. MILLER
DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF FOR MANPOWER,
PERSONNEL AND SERVICES

September 20, 2023

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED BY
THE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES

INTRODUCTION

Good afternoon, Chairman Banks, Ranking Member Kim and distinguished members of this subcommittee. I am honored to have this opportunity to appear before you with my fellow service personnel colleagues. My focus today is on the Air Force's most significant competitive advantage over our adversaries: our Airmen. We need to ensure our Airmen possess the abilities and talents to maintain and increase our competitive advantage. Air Force Talent Management is focused on one simple principle: having the right Airman, in the right job, at the right time. Today's Air Force, more than ever, relies on the strength of our meritocracy in all facets of our personnel system to achieve that principle. From Accessions to Promotions and Selection for Command, we are rooted in our conviction that our continued success depends on attracting, promoting and retaining those who have the competencies to ensure operational success.

ACCESSIONS

Today's military recruiting environment is one of the most challenging it has ever been, due to a near-record-low propensity to serve and a decline in the eligible population. The United States Air Force is aggressively engaging in both areas to reverse these negative trends. We are increasing our direct engagement with citizens—"a call to serve"—to internalize the importance of protecting our Country, our way of life, our families and all Americans. Initiatives such as 'GO Inspire' are aimed at high school and college youth to educate them on the opportunities available to them in the Air Force. We are also focused on selecting recruiters with life experiences in areas of the country that are underrepresented in our Service. To increase the eligible pool of applicants, we are making significant progress in updating over-restrictive policies, including relaxing some tattoo and body composition restrictions, re-evaluating requirements for driver's licenses and offering Naturalization at basic training. Additionally, we have increased incentives for personnel with civilian-sector cyber certifications to enter the Service at higher pay grades than standard accessions. Throughout all of these efforts, our primary intention remains attracting and retaining individuals with the abilities and talents we need to maintain and further our competitive edge.

PROMOTIONS

Meritocracy is the foundation of the Air Force promotion system. It is an Air Force imperative to promote the best qualified commissioned and noncommissioned officers (NCOs) with the requisite competencies for successful mission execution across the entire range of Air Force operations.

Officer Promotions

The Air Force promotion board process strictly adheres to provisions outlined in law and Department of Defense policy. Officers are considered for promotion based primarily on their “eligibility window,” determined by time spent in their current grade. Promotion boards convened to consider officers for promotion are charged with recommending the best fully qualified officers based on a ‘whole-person’ concept. Board members review each officer’s Officer Selection Record, which includes career history and performance evaluations. Each record is assessed on its own merit without regard to race, gender or ethnicity, using factors in the officer’s record that highlight exceptional job performance with specific achievements (the most important factor), professional qualities, leadership, depth & breadth of experience, job responsibility and advanced academic & developmental education. Once the Promotion Board produces a list of officer nominees for promotion, the Secretary of the Air Force must certify that the submitted nominees meet the exemplary conduct provisions of Title 10, USC by conducting financial disclosure reviews and monitoring all agency systems for adverse or reportable information.

Noncommissioned Officer Promotions

Eligibility for promotion within the enlisted ranks is also based primarily on time spent in their current grade. Airmen are selected for promotion to the NCO ranks (Staff Sergeant and Technical Sergeant) based on their objective cumulative score within the Weighted Airman Promotion System, which assigns qualitative points for performance evaluations, scores on the Specialty Knowledge Test for their assigned career field and decorations for superior performance. Candidates for promotion to the Senior NCO ranks of Master Sergeant through Chief Master Sergeant go through a promotion board process similar to officers. Board packages are assessed without regard to race, gender or ethnicity, focusing on sustained superior performance measured by performance reports and decorations.

Lieutenant General and General Officer Selections

Lieutenant General and General Officer positions are nominatively filled. The process starts in the Air Force General Officer Management Office, which uses the General Officer Future Assignment and Strategy Tool to objectively analyze each position’s requirements against the qualifications of all general officers, including duty history and career progression paths, in order to produce a slate of highly qualified candidates. The proposed slate is then briefed to the Chief of Staff of the Air Force and Secretary of the Air Force, who select a candidate to forward to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for concurrence based on joint duty experience. The candidate must then be approved by the Secretary of Defense for nomination by the President to the Senate for confirmation.

COMMAND SELECTION

The process for selecting senior officers for command is very similar to promotions. However, unlike promotion boards, Command Screening Boards (CSBs) are non-statutory and controlled by the Chief of Staff of the Air Force under the purview of the Secretary of the Air Force. CSB members also review each officer's Officer Selection Record without regard to race, gender or ethnicity, focusing on exceptional job performance with specific achievements and demonstrated leadership potential to produce a final candidate list. Individuals who are selected for the final list must undergo a review by the Air Force Inspector General for adverse information prior to final approval by the Chief of Staff of the Air Force.

CONCLUSION

In order to maintain supremacy in today's world against two peer adversaries, the Air Force must maintain an unwavering focus on its most significant competitive advantage over our adversaries: our Airmen. Ensuring the right Airman will be in the right job at the right time requires that we not only attract talented individuals with critical skills, but that we promote and increase responsibility for those individuals who clearly demonstrate exceptional job knowledge and performance. For that reason, the Air Force processes for Accession, Promotion and Command Selection are based on individual merit to advance those Airmen who are best qualified to maintain and increase our competitive advantage. Thank you for your continued advocacy for our Airmen, both military and civilian, and the families who support them.

Lieutenant General Caroline M. Miller

Lt. Gen. Caroline Miller is the Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower, Personnel and Services, Headquarters U.S. Air Force, the Pentagon, Arlington, Virginia. Lt. Gen. Miller serves as the senior Air Force officer responsible for comprehensive plans and policies covering all life cycles of military and civilian personnel management, which includes military and civilian end strength management, education and training, compensation, resource allocation, and the worldwide U.S. Air Force services program.

Lt. Gen. Miller commissioned from Officer Training School at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, in 1994. She has held several command and staff positions at the base, major command, Air Staff and Joint levels. Her command tours include the 1st Mission Support Squadron, 1st Force Support Squadron, 379th Expeditionary Mission Support Group and 633rd Air Base Wing.

Prior to her current position, Lt. Gen. Miller served as the Commander of the 502nd Air Base Wing at Joint Base San Antonio, Texas.

EDUCATION

1990 Bachelor of Arts, Psychology, University of the Pacific, Stockton, Calif.
 1992 Master of Arts, Experimental Psychology, American University, Washington, D.C.
 1999 Squadron Officer School, Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala.
 2002 Master of Arts, Organizational Management, The George Washington University, Washington, D.C.
 2006 Air Command and Staff College, Maxwell AFB, Ala., by correspondence
 2007 Master of Arts, National Security and Strategic Studies, Naval Command and Staff College, Newport, R.I.
 2010 Master of Arts, Strategic Studies, Air War College, Maxwell AFB, Ala.

ASSIGNMENTS

June 1994–December 1995, Squadron Section Commander, 3rd Equipment Maintenance Squadron, Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska
 December 1995–May 1996, Chief, Personnel Readiness, 3rd Mission Support Squadron, Elmendorf AFB, Alaska
 May 1996–May 1997, Chief, Customer Support, 3rd Mission Support Squadron, Elmendorf AFB, Alaska
 June 1997–May 1999, Executive Support Officer, Headquarters Air Combat Command, Langley AFB, Va.
 May 1999–July 2000, Special Actions Officer, Headquarters Air Combat Command Commander's Action Group, Langley AFB, Va.
 July 2000–May 2002, Student, Air Force Intern Program, Headquarters U.S. Air Force, the Pentagon, Arlington, Va.
 May 2002–June 2004, Flight Commander, Military Personnel Flight, Headquarters Air Force Office of Special Investigation, Andrews AFB, Md.
 June 2004–September 2005, Executive Officer, Air Force Senior Leader Management Office, Headquarters U.S. Air Force, the Pentagon, Arlington, Va.
 September 2005–May 2006, Assistant Executive Officer, Office of the Vice Chief of Staff, Headquarters U.S. Air Force, the Pentagon, Arlington, Va.
 May 2006–June 2007, Student, Naval Command and Staff College, Naval War College, Newport, R.I.
 June 2007–April 2008, Commander, 1st Mission Support Squadron, 1st Fighter Wing, Langley AFB, Va.
 April 2008–July 2009, Commander, 1st Force Support Squadron, 1st Fighter Wing, Langley AFB, Va.
 July 2009–April 2010, Director of Staff, 633rd Air Base Wing, Langley AFB, Va.
 April 2010–May 2011, Student, Air War College, Maxwell AFB, Ala.
 June 2011–June 2012, Executive Officer, Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower, Personnel and Services, Headquarters U.S. Air Force, the Pentagon, Arlington, Va.
 June 2012–July 2014, Director, Manpower and Personnel, U.S. Strategic Command, Offutt AFB, Neb.
 July 2014–July 2015, Commander, 379th Expeditionary Mission Support Group, 379th Air Expeditionary Wing, Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar

July 2015–June 2017, Commander, 633rd Air Base Wing, Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Va.
 June 2017–June 2019, Chief, Senate Legislative Liaison, Office of the Secretary of the Air Force, the Pentagon, Arlington, Va.
 June 2019–June 2020, Director of Manpower, Organization and Resources, Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower, Personnel and Services, Headquarters U.S. Air Force, the Pentagon, Arlington, Va.
 June 2020–May 2022, Commander, 502nd Air Base Wing and Joint Base San Antonio, Texas
 May 2022–present, Deputy Chief of Staff, Manpower, Personnel and Services, Headquarters U.S. Air Force, The Pentagon, Arlington, Va.

SUMMARY OF JOINT ASSIGNMENTS

1. June 2012–July 2014, Director of Manpower and Personnel, U.S. Strategic Command, Offutt Air Force Base, Neb., as a colonel

MAJOR AWARDS AND DECORATIONS

Defense Superior Service Medal
 Legion of Merit with two oak leaf clusters
 Meritorious Service Medal with four oak leaf clusters
 Air Force Commendation Medal with oak leaf cluster
 Joint Meritorious Unit Award
 Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with three oak leaf clusters
 Air Force Organizational Excellence Award with oak leaf cluster
 National Defense Service Medal
 Global War on Terrorism Service Medal

EFFECTIVE DATES OF PROMOTION

Second Lieutenant Jan. 21, 1994
 First Lieutenant Jan. 21, 1996
 Captain Jan. 21, 1998
 Major April 1, 2004
 Lieutenant Colonel June 1, 2008
 Colonel Oct. 1, 2013
 Brigadier General July 3, 2019
 Lieutenant General May 26, 2022

(Current as of June 2022)

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE PRESENTATION
TO THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SUBJECT: MERITOCRACY IN THE MILITARY SERVICES: ACCESSIONS, PROMOTIONS,
AND COMMAND SELECTION

STATEMENT OF:

MS. KATHARINE KELLEY
DEPUTY CHIEF OF SPACE OPERATIONS FOR HUMAN
CAPITAL
UNITED STATES SPACE FORCE

September 20, 2023

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL
RELEASED BY THE COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES

INTRODUCTION

Chairman Banks, Ranking Member Kim, distinguished members of this subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you and represent your United States Space Force. Building and managing a capable force is essential to defending our Nation's vital interests in space. Protecting our national security interests in space requires the right Guardian, with the right talents, in the right position, at the right time, equipping them with the tools and experiences necessary for space superiority, and the protection of the joint force, our allies, and our partners. I look forward to sharing the Space Force promotions, accession, and recruitment processes with the entire committee today.

THE FORCE WE NEED

The United States Space Force (USSF) operates in a unique and dynamic personnel environment. We must be able to successfully build and develop a highly-skilled, ready, resilient, and combat-credible force.

We have engaged in a modern approach to talent management incorporating education, training, and individualized development in addition to supporting a healthy work-life balance, holistic health and family programs. We continue to build on the principles outlined in the Guardian Ideal, amplifying the Guardian spirit by expanding on the Space Force values of character, connection, commitment, and courage. We do all of this while remaining true to the statutory requirements set forth in promotions and selections for all Guardians.

The needs of the Nation require that we be operationally capable of deterring conflict and defending our Nation's interests in the now contested space domain. To this end, we continue developing the training, processes, and experiences necessary to be the most effective digital force necessary to deter our adversaries. At the same time, we are enhancing our end strength through new accessions to include inter-service transfers, lateral entry opportunities, investment in K-12 Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM), and higher education to generate our pipeline of talent, along with maximizing civilian personnel authorities. Our Guardians, both military and civilian, are our greatest strength. I am proud to share with you that we anticipate achieving our highest end strength to date of 8600 military guardians by the end of this month.

RECRUITING AND RETENTION

The competitive market for STEM talent creates significant competition for those unique and essential capabilities necessary for the Space Force. Despite the environment, the Space Force, with the help of the Air Force Recruiting Service, has met recruiting goals to acquire exceptional talent for STEM and cyber-related disciplines for this complex mission set. While we have been successful to date, the recruiting landscape is dynamic; there is a high demand for talent in these technical communities, across the Department of Defense, the United States (U.S.) Government, and industry. This year, the Department of Defense's Joint Advertising Market Research Studies program recorded an historic low of 10% propensity to serve. This low propensity for military service, along with the general lack of awareness concerning the Space Force "brand," require uniquely innovative outreach and incentive methods to attract and retain highly-qualified talent in a challenging marketplace. To address this, the USSF is investing to increase brand awareness and tap into key talent pipelines.

While we have met our recruitment goals for this year, we are not content to presume this to continue and we anticipate a potential need for growth in outyears. Our focus today is on expanding our reach to parents, coaches, friends, and prospective Guardians in order to ensure our talent pipeline remains robust. We are focusing investments to ensure that our nation understands what the Space Force contributes to our national security and how a Guardian career offers opportunity to serve, educate, contribute, and defend our national interests.

ASSIGNMENTS, COMMAND, AND SENIOR MATERIAL LEADER SELECTION

USSF senior leader officer and enlisted assignment selection processes are board-based. They are governed, planned, and executed in accordance with Title 10 USC as well as DoD and DAF instructions. These processes provide for thorough review of Guardian performance and potential, ensuring only the most qualified and deserving Guardians—based upon performance and needs of the service—are selected for Senior Leader Positions.

Colonels competing for Command and Senior Enlisted competing for Senior Material Leader (SML) positions will be reviewed by the board panel based on performance reports, decorations, and Guardian Statements of Intent to develop an order of merit for all nominees competing for command and SML positions. The Board identifies the best-qualified based on leadership potential, performance and “best fit” for the leadership positions available. The board considers evidence of fitness for selection in duty performance, breadth of experience, Professional Military Education, civilian education, and/or any other facet of the member’s record.

PROMOTIONS

It is crucial that we pick the best and the brightest to help shape the space domain for the Joint fight. The Space Force promotion system is regulated by law, Department of Defense and Department of the Air Force policy. Our promotion program fulfills the requirements of section 619 of Title 10, United States Code and Secretarial policy by promoting the “best qualified” officers to positions of increased responsibility and authority. The Space Force promotion system selects the best qualified commissioned and noncommissioned officers with regard to their record, their education, their contributions and demonstrated potential. Promotion boards convened to consider officers for promotion are charged with recommending the best fully qualified officers based on this ‘whole-person’ concept. We leverage the Air Force Personnel Center to help the Space Force execute its statutory requirements for promotion of officer, enlisted and General Officers.

As we continue to grow our foundation, we are thoughtfully instituting Space Force policy and process changes to bring us into closer alignment to the future state described in the Guardian Ideal, in line with the Guardian Spirit.

CONCLUSION

Your Guardians, both military and civilian members, are preserving U.S. freedom of action in an increasingly contested space domain. This requires a military force specifically trained and equipped for the purpose. U.S. projection for space superiority demands space capabilities our Guardians provide to this nation. Developing our force, both military and civilian, is a national imperative and a once in a lifetime opportunity. Guardian talent and expertise is our most important

operational advantage. Amplifying the Guardian Spirit starts with taking care of our personnel and shaping their experiences. Doing so unleashes the creativity, innovation, determination, and patriotism of our force. We thank you for your continued support for our Space Force, its uniformed and civilian Guard and their families, caregivers, and survivors.

Katharine Kelley

Ms. Katharine Kelley, a member of the Senior Executive Service, is the Deputy Chief of Space Operations for Human Capital, U.S. Space Force. She provides executive leadership and managerial direction for the Space Force in all functional areas of personnel management to include force structure analysis; personnel programs; civilian personnel; readiness; senior officer matters; quality force issues; equal opportunity; and family support for military and civilian personnel located at 175 locations worldwide in support of the service's space launch, space surveillance, missile warning, and satellite command and control operations.

Ms. Kelley earned a commission through the Army Reserve Officer Training Corps program at Villanova University as a Logistics Officer for the 1st Infantry Division. She transitioned to a civilian role within the Department of the Army working the most comprehensive base realignment and closure process in the department's history, as well as managing logistics, enterprise infrastructure, and space management. In 2016 Ms. Kelley assumed responsibilities as Superintendent at Arlington National Cemetery where she was responsible for rebuilding trust and confidence in the Army's operation of the cemetery and setting the strategic direction for recapitalization, expansion and technology innovations. Prior to her current position, Ms. Kelley served as the Chief Human Capital Officer for Army Futures Command. There, she stood up the command's headquarters in Austin, TX and served as the senior advisor on all aspects of human resources including the establishment of the Army's first software focused training for soldiers and civilians.

EDUCATION

1999 Bachelor of Arts in Political Science, Villanova University, Villanova PA
 2003 Masters of Arts in International Relations, University of Oklahoma, Heidelberg GE
 2012 Masters of Arts in National Security and Strategic Studies, U.S. Naval War College, Newport RI

ASSIGNMENTS

1999-2003, Logistics Officer, European Command, J4 & 1st Infantry Division - Stuttgart GE
 2004-2007, Business Process Associate, Booz Allen Hamilton - Washington DC
 2007-2008, Strategic Planner, Army Materiel Command - Ft Belvoir VA
 2008-2011, Chief, Base Realignment and Closure, Army Materiel Command - Ft. Belvoir VA
 2012-2013, Chief, Standards and Evaluation, Arlington National Cemetery - Arlington, VA
 2013-2014, Director, Enterprise Management, Information Technology Agency - Pentagon
 2014-2016, Chief of Staff, Headquarters Services, Administrative Assistant to the Secretary of the Army - Pentagon,
 2016-2019, Superintendent, Arlington National Cemetery - Arlington, VA
 2019-2022, Chief Human Capital Officer, Army Futures Command - Austin TX
 2022-Present, Deputy Chief of Space Operations for Human Capital, U.S. Space Force - Pentagon

AWARDS AND HONORS:

Naval War College's James D. Forrestal Award for Excellence in Force Planning
 Distinguished Civilian Service Medal (2nd award)
 Meritorious Civilian Service Award (2nd award)
 Superior Civilian Service Award (3rd award)
 Meritorious Service Medal
 Army Commendation Medal
 Army Achievement Medal
 Joint Service Medal

(Current as of September 2022)

**WITNESS RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ASKED DURING
THE HEARING**

SEPTEMBER 20, 2023

RESPONSE TO QUESTION SUBMITTED BY MR. MILLS

General STITT. Our Army is a superior fighting force on all accounts—and its true strength is in its people. The diversity of our Force does not detract from deterring our adversaries, but instead is a critical foundation for readiness and mission effectiveness. In 2022, RAND published research showing that integrated and diverse teams produce positive operational impacts, including exchange of a wider range of information, enhanced ability to project influence, and improved engagement with partners, allies, and domestic and international audiences. A more representative institution can also help to increase trust and legitimacy between the military and the society it serves. When people feel that the military is representative of them, they are more likely to trust it and be supportive of its actions. Ultimately, a diverse Army that represents its nation demonstrates the superiority of American democracy.

As the Nation becomes increasingly more diverse, the Army must continue capitalizing on the ideals of inclusion, embracing the opportunity to innovate, focusing on excellence, and expanding capabilities. We must acquire, develop, employ, and retain the best and brightest of America's talent pool. Our increasingly complex global responsibilities require that we not only acquire people with different skillsets, experiences, values, and backgrounds, but also invest in the development and employment of all our Soldiers and Civilians. Investment in our people as our strongest asset directly influences our ability to successfully execute the mission, as research shows that highly unequal armies suffer higher casualty rates and attrition than more inclusive ones. Failing to account for the human elements of war presents risks to mission success. [See page 26.]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS POST HEARING

SEPTEMBER 20, 2023

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MS. STEFANIK

Ms. STEFANIK. To address the current recruitment crisis, the US Army is currently operating the Army Future Soldier Prep Course. In your testimony, you highlighted the success of this course graduating 95% of the over 10,000 participants. Can you provide additional insight into your assessment of the Future Soldier Prep Course program? Additionally, how can Congress support the expansion of this program?

General STITT. The Army's Future Soldier Prep Course (FSPC) aims to provide Soldiers the academic and fitness capabilities to be successful in the Army. This program is holistically intended to invest in individual Soldiers so they can overcome obstacles and serve in a capacity they previously didn't see as a possibility. While initial results of the pilot program have been promising, the Army's Research Institute is utilizing longitudinal data collection measures and methodology to perform a comprehensive assessment of the Army's academic portion of the Future Soldier Prep Course. By performing comparative methods of similar populations of non-FSPC Soldiers, the Army can make lasting policy decisions for the program. The Army will continue to assess and scale the course to ensure we are successfully preparing and building quality Soldiers who will thrive in the Army's all professional force. If further expansion is planned, congressional support for this as part of the President's budget would assist the Army's accession efforts.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. GAETZ

Mr. GAETZ. Based on the response of the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force (AF) Alex Wagner, dated September 8th, 2023, the Department of the AF (DAF), "does not maintain a list of pending or enacted [state or federal] laws that impact military readiness. Additionally, the Department does not declare state laws to be "anti-any demographic." Yet LTG. DeAnna Burt made political statements that do not reflect DAF or the Department of Defense (DOD) policy. She made these comments at an official DOD event in her official capacity as a General Officer and a Commander within Space Force. Did her actions violate DOD Directive 1344.10, "Political Activities of the Armed Forces on Active Duty?" Furthermore, section 4.1.5. prohibits activities that may reasonably be viewed as directly or indirectly associating the DOD with a partisan political activity or is otherwise contrary to the spirit or intent of this directive. Lastly, section 4.3.3.2. prohibits making statements or answering questions to the media regarding political issues or regarding government policies or activities unless specifically authorized by an appropriate supervisor or commander. After todays hearing we know, the comments made by LTG. Burt were not authorized and don't reflect the DOD or DAF's policy. Why hasn't she been punished and will the DAF pursue accountability and corrective actions based on violations of DODD 1344.10 against LTG. Burt?

General MILLER. Lt Gen Burt is a member of the U.S. Space Force and is, therefore, subject to a separate chain of command outside of my purview. As the Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower, Personnel, and Services, Headquarters U.S. Air Force, I am the senior Air Force officer responsible for comprehensive plans and policies covering all life cycles of military and civilian personnel management for Airmen and civilians assigned to the Air Force. Personnel matters and management of Guardians and civilians assigned to the Space Force fall under Ms. Katharine Kelley, the Space Force's Chief Human Capital Officer, and I refer you to her to address any Space Force personnel management questions you may have.

Mr. GAETZ. Based on the response of the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force (AF) Alex Wagner, dated September 8th, 2023, the Department of the AF (DAF), "does not maintain a list of pending or enacted [state or federal] laws that impact military readiness. Additionally, the Department does not declare state laws to be "anti-any demographic." Yet LTG. DeAnna Burt made political statements that do not reflect DAF or the Department of Defense (DOD) policy. She made these comments at an official DOD event in her official capacity as a General Officer and a Commander within Space Force. Did her actions violate DOD Directive 1344.10, "Political Activities of the Armed Forces on Active Duty?" Furthermore, section 4.1.5. prohibits ac-

tivities that may reasonably be viewed as directly or indirectly associating the DOD with a partisan political activity or is otherwise contrary to the spirit or intent of this directive. Lastly, section 4.3.3.2. prohibits making statements or answering questions to the media regarding political issues or regarding government policies or activities unless specifically authorized by an appropriate supervisor or commander. After todays hearing we know, the comments made by LTG. Burt were not authorized and don't reflect the DOD or DAF's policy. Why hasn't she been punished and will the DAF pursue accountability and corrective actions based on violations of DODD 1344.10 against LTG. Burt?

Ms. KELLEY. Active duty Service members are prohibited from participating in partisan political activities, which is defined in Enclosure 2 of DODD 1344.10 as "activity supporting or relating to candidates representing, or issues specifically identified with, national or State political parties and associated or ancillary organizations or clubs."

Lt Gen Burt's remarks at the official DOD Pride Month observance did not constitute direct advocacy for or against a political party, candidate, or partisan cause. She spoke hypothetically on the possible effect of certain policies on readiness. This type of statement is not partisan political activity as defined by DODD 1344.10.

The Space Force regularly reinforces the obligations of its members to abide by DODD 1344.10 and its prohibitions on certain political activities and takes disciplinary action for violations of DOD and DAF regulations when it is appropriate to do so.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. WALTZ

Mr. WALTZ. As you know, the Navy is going to miss its recruiting goals by 7000 sailors this year. The Air Force will miss its recruiting goals for the first time since 1999 by 2,700 airmen. The Readiness Subcommittee heard earlier this year that the Army was anticipating a 10,000 soldier shortfall.

I believe part of problem is lack of familiarity with and exposure to the military in too many of our communities. One way that could help would be to expand the JROTC program to more schools.

The JROTC program is a citizenship training program designed to educate and train high school students in citizenship, promote community service, and self-discipline. While not the goal of the program, it can serve as a natural recruitment pool.

Do you agree expanding the program to more communities across the country could help alleviate the recruitment shortfalls?

Mr. THIBEAU. JROTC expansion is an important step for the military to incentivize to alleviate recruitment goals. Many enlisted and officer recruits start to consider military service in high school, and JROTC programs can provide an early "net" into more serious discernment. A recent article in Real Clear Defense makes clear how JROTC offers one of the more cost-effective means of military recruiting. JROTC provides for a recruit acquisition cost of approximately \$8,500 per recruit, while other recruiting strategies average almost \$20,000 per recruit. (1)

Even more, JROTC can serve an essential cultural mission to re-establish our conception of the military as an institution in civil society. In culture, school, and in media, young Americans are surrounded by a sense of individualism. JROTC programs can offer a critical alternative of teamwork, sacrifice, and professionalism that is essential to the flourishing of the military as an institution.

(1) https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2023/10/20/solving_the_recruiting_crisis_reaching_the_next_generation_through_jrotc_987591.html#:~:text=Roughly%2020%25%20of%20all%20recruits,or%20%248%2C500%20per%20JROTC%20recruit.

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Mr. GREENWAY. Yes, expanding the JROTC program to more communities could help alleviate the recruitment shortfalls the services are currently facing. The program would educate young Americans in civics and patriotism, as well as exposing them to what military life looks like, and both would have a positive impact on improvement. JROTC programs have many benefits for American young people, like encouraging physical fitness, learning leadership and conflict resolution skills, as well as teaching important values like discipline and accountability. Expanding them would be a win for America's youth, as well as the services hoping to recruit them. The recruitment challenge could be helped if more young Americans were patriotic and understood the important role the military plays in defending the United States and Americans' way of life. It is no secret that young people today are woefully ignorant of even basic civics, and many do not express much pride about being an American. Patriotism and a willingness to serve a cause larger than oneself are important factors in motivating someone to join the military. Our society in general could use more patriotic young Americans, but especially needs them to fill the ranks. Expanding the program to more communities would have a positive impact here, as more students would be exposed to patriotism, and see examples of service.

Those examples of service are perhaps the most important benefits the program would add to the recruitment challenges. Research has shown that 79% of young people who join the military had family members who served before them. This shows the importance that exposure to the military has on young people when deciding to serve. Many are simply unaware of what military life and its many benefits actually looks like. Having more servicemembers in more communities engaged in supporting JROTC programs would expand the number of young people who would see examples of service, and would also expand their understanding of what life in the military would actually look like. This would have a positive impact on recruiting, as well as society. Too many Americans are woefully ignorant of the men and women who make up our military services, and the only inputs to their perceptions come from the media, movies, and social media. These sources do not reflect the reality of military service.

Additional reading and sources:

Tom Spoehr and Isaac Tang, "Why Junior ROTC Programs in U.S. High Schools Are Needed Now More Than Ever," The Daily Signal, May 23, 2023, <https://www.heritage.org/defense/commentary/why-junior-rotc-programs-us-high-schools-are-needed-now-more-ever> (accessed October 24, 2023).

Mackenzie Eaglen, "The Secret to Fixing the Army's Recruiting Troubles," AEI, March 30, 2023, <https://www.aei.org/foreign-and-defense-policy/the-secret-to-fixing-the-armys-recruiting-troubles/> (accessed October 24, 2023).

Kyle Rempfer, "Army leaders weigh expanding JROTC in high schools," Army Times, November 7, 2019, <https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2019/11/07/how-increased-footprint-in-high-schools-may-help-army-fix-recruiting-shortfall/> (accessed October 24, 2023).

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Do you agree expanding the program to more communities across the country could help alleviate the recruitment shortfalls?

Mr. LEVINE. I agree with your statement that lack of familiarity with and exposure to the military in many of our communities contributes to military recruiting difficulties. A large variety of DOD programs, including JROTC, seek to address this problem by making young people more aware of the Armed Forces and what they do. Expansion of these programs should help build propensity to military service and provide a more favorable background for recruiting. In general, however, significant trends in military recruiting appear to be attributable to larger economic and cultural developments that will be difficult to overcome through enhanced recruiting efforts alone.

Mr. WALTZ. In 2011, Army Chief of Staff Martin Dempsey and Sec Arm John McHugh signed the Army's Equal Opportunity and Discrimination Policy stating in part "Soldiers will not be accessed, classified, trained, assigned, promoted or otherwise managed on the basis of race, color, gender, religion, or national origin, except

as required by Federal law. Such discriminatory behaviors and practices undermine teamwork, loyalty and the shared sacrifices of the men and women of America's Army."

Is this still Army policy, or has it been revised or replaced?

The statement contains the qualification "except as required by Federal law." Can you identify which Federal law, if any, "requires" the Army, or DOD at large, to use race, gender, religion, etc. in accessing, classifying, training, assigning, or promoting military service members?

General STITT. The 2011 Army Equal Opportunity and Discrimination Policy is no longer directly relied upon as a source of current Army policy. The current Army policy is the Military Equal Opportunity and Harassment Prevention and Response Policy dated 7 March 2022. The current policy does not include the phrase "except as required by Federal law." The current policy strives to maximize human potential and ensure fair treatment for all Soldiers based solely on merit, performance, and potential in support of force structure, modernization, and readiness.

Eleven Title 10 statutes mention or relate to race, gender, religion, and other demographic categories in the context of accessing, classifying, training, assigning, or promoting military service members. Of these 11 statutes reviewed, none require or mandate the use of demographic categories when accessing, classifying, promoting, training, or assigning Soldiers.

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Do you agree expanding the program to more communities across the country could help alleviate the recruitment shortfalls?

General STITT. Across all the Services, the presence of a JROTC program in high schools where a geographical military presence is small, helps reconnect those communities with our Armed Forces. Within statute, recruiters maintain access to high schools and the Army routinely works with OSD to ensure the execution of that program. JROTC Cadets have higher attendance, graduation rates, and GPAs than their peers who do not participate in the program. While JROTC is not a recruiting program, a large portion of Army enlistees came from a school with a DOD JROTC program. Army JROTC expanded to 1,729 programs in FY23 and will expand to 1,734 programs in FY24. The Army's JROTC program is an overwhelmingly positive youth citizenship program supporting more than 272K Cadets at more than 1,700 high schools across our nation. The Army will continue to pursue this initiative and explore all options.

Mr. WALTZ. The Defense Readiness Reporting System (DRRS) is the tool our military uses to monthly measure & assess combat readiness of all battalions/squadrons and above. The "C-Level" is the overall rating of a unit's ability to execute its wartime mission and has four specific subordinate ratings: P-Level (Personnel Authorized & On-Hand); S-Level (Equipment and Supplies Authorized & On-Hand); R-Level (Equipment Condition); T-Level (Training Status).

In DRRS, is there a provision where race and gender are measured?

Is race or gender a component of combat readiness?

Is there any empirical data compiled by your service department which demonstrates that units with greater gender and racial integration correlates with combat readiness?

General STITT. In DRRS, is there a provision where race and gender are measured? No. Demographic data is captured and recorded in the Human Resources systems.

Is race or gender a component of combat readiness? As noted above, DRRS data does not include race or gender.

Is there any empirical data compiled by your service department which demonstrates that units with greater gender and racial integration correlates with combat readiness? It is not in DRRS, but the Department does study these issues, and we can connect you with the proper points of contact for further information.

Mr. WALTZ. Navy Aviation Incentive Pay is a retention tool, but the Secretary of the Navy is not following his own instructions on flight pay with regards to retaining aviators coming from Tactical Air Control Squadrons. I've read the Navy's report

to Congress on the issue and it doesn't tell the whole story behind the self-inflicted problem that has effected dozens of Naval Aviators.

What is the Navy doing to retain Naval Aviators who serve past their department head tours and why is the Navy stripping flight pay from aviators who are perfectly capable and willing to do flying jobs?

Admiral CHEESEMAN. The Navy's primary tool to retain Naval Aviators is the Aviation Bonus which is currently offered at two critical points in a Naval Aviator's career. The Aviation Department Head Retention Bonus (ADHRB) is offered to aviators who have selected for Lieutenant Commander (LCDR) and is contingent on selection for aviation department head. This bonus generally obligates an officer for five years past the obligated service that resulted from flight training. However, three-year contracts (sufficient to carry an officer through the department head tour) are also offered. In FY23, seven-year contracts were offered for the first time.

Post-DH retention through the aviation command milestone is generally good and a retention bonus is not required to meet billet requirements involving flying at this stage of the career. The most common flying assignments at this point in aviation careers are commanding officer/executive officer of a squadron and permanent flight instructor, both of which hold competitive boards to select the best qualified officers for the limited opportunities. However, DH-served or serving aviators do receive a higher rate of Aviation Incentive Pay (AvIP) than those not selected for DH (\$1,000 per month versus \$840).

The second critical career point for aviation retention is the post-command commander tour. The Navy pays the Aviation Command Retention Bonus to incentivize retention past retirement eligibility for command served aviators to complete critical tours at sea and ashore that require command experience and the skills of an aviator, although these billets generally do not involve flying as a pilot or aircrew.

In addition to the Aviation Bonus, Navy offers education opportunities such as War College, a wide range of shore tours, and flying opportunities in the production pipeline to incentivize retention.

With regard to AvIP, also known as flight pay, 37 USC 334 permits the payment to an aviator not currently engaged in operational or proficiency flying duty under regulations prescribed by the Secretary of Defense when the Secretary Concerned determines it is in the best interests of the Service. The Secretary of Defense has established a gate system that permits continuous payment of AvIP for officers who accumulate sufficient flying duty prior to the gate. The DOD regulations permit the Secretary Concerned to waive the gate requirements when in the interest of the Service. The Report to Congress explained the criteria used to determine if a waiver is in the interest of the Navy. A willingness to return to a flying job, medical qualification, and continued designation as an aviation officer are necessary conditions for a waiver, but they are not sufficient. Officers whose waivers are denied for continuous AvIP remain eligible for AvIP if and while assigned to flying duties past their flight gate.

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The JROTC program is a citizenship training program designed to educate and train high school students in citizenship, promote community service, and self-discipline. While not the goal of the program, it can serve as a natural recruitment pool.

Do you agree expanding the program to more communities across the country could help alleviate the recruitment shortfalls?

Admiral CHEESEMAN. The Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) program has historically had a positive impact on the Navy's recruiting efforts. JROTC instills a sense of patriotism and a desire for younger individuals to serve their country. This early exposure significantly increases the likelihood of students to consider a career in the Navy. JROTC emphasizes leadership skills by fostering personal growth and self-discipline in its participants. These qualities are highly valued in the Navy.

By nurturing leadership abilities, JROTC prepares students for future Naval Service, making them more attractive candidates to recruiters. Most importantly however, the program's strong presence in high schools facilitates recruiter access to the student population by developing relationships with school administrators and their faculty. These relationships provide Navy recruiters with an easier path to engage with school officials, thereby gaining access to the student population.

This access allows recruiters to provide firsthand information about Navy opportunities, career paths, and benefits to students who may be curious about the Service and those who may already be interested in serving.

Mr. WALTZ. The Defense Readiness Reporting System (DRRS) is the tool our military uses to monthly measure & assess combat readiness of all battlions/squadrons and above. The "C-Level" is the overall rating of a unit's ability to execute its wartime mission and has four specific subordinate ratings: P-Level (Personnel Authorized & On-Hand); S-Level (Equipment and Supplies Authorized & On-Hand); R-Level (Equipment Condition); T-Level (Training Status).

In DRRS, is there a provision where race and gender are measured?

Is race or gender a component of combat readiness?

Is there any empirical data compiled by your service department which demonstrates that units with greater gender and racial integration correlates with combat readiness?

Admiral CHEESEMAN. The Defense Readiness Reporting System (DRRS) does not track or measure race or gender to determine C-level ratings. For personnel readiness, DRRS measures authorized billets and assigned number of personnel filling the billets, tracking whether they are Active Duty, Reservist, enlisted, or officers filling the billets. For DRRS specifically, race or gender is not a component of combat readiness. DRRS determines combat readiness based on a unit's status in the maintenance, training, or sustainment phase of the Optimized Fleet Response Plan.

The Navy is deepening and broadening its ability to use data to measure our culture, analyzing from the broader community level down to our units. In doing so, the service will train leaders on how to build great people and great teams that work together to enhance unit effectiveness by targeting risk factors (e.g. toxicity, hostility, and harassment), and building protective factors (e.g. inclusion and connectedness). As part of this, Naval Postgraduate School is working on a study entitled "Assessing the Relationship Between Diversity, Inclusion and Navy Unit Performance." The study will look at the relationship between diversity and inclusion and objective unit performance measures in the Surface Warfare community and is anticipated to be complete in January 2024. The Navy will provide an update to Congress once the report is ready.

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General MILLER. An expanded AFJROTC presence increases knowledge of the military to youth who may not otherwise have influencers with military experience available. This expansion could grow the propensity to serve.

Investments in JROTC beyond what is included in the FY 2024 would require tradeoffs in other areas. Further, any expansion of the AFJROTC program would require careful selection by the Air Force of new unit locations. This ensures that new AFJROTC locations are not established ad hoc but follow a strategy based on a careful analysis of multiple factors intended to ensure sustained unit success.

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Is there any empirical data compiled by your service department which demonstrates that units with greater gender and racial integration correlates with combat readiness?

General MILLER. The Defense Readiness Reporting System, the readiness reporting system of record, does not contain demographic information on assessable units with respect to gender or race, nor does the system factor such demographics when analyzing and/or measuring combat readiness of assessable units.

The DAF draws upon the broadest possible set of backgrounds, talents, and skills to maximize our warfighting capabilities, deter threats and challenges, and take advantage of new opportunities to strengthen the Total Force. With recruiting and retention challenges shaped by a competitive labor market and decreasing propensity to serve, attracting and retaining a wide range of skilled candidates is more important than ever. Reinforcing unit cohesion and mission effectiveness through evidence-backed policies and programs can help ensure we maintain the combat readiness of the Total Force.

RAND research noted that highly integrated and diverse teams produce positive operational impacts, including the exchange of a broader range of information and the generation of original ideas through different communication styles. It also found that a diverse force has the potential to foster external legitimacy, enhance the ability to project influence, and improve engagement with partners, allies, and domestic and international audiences. Research shows diverse groups of problem solvers can outperform high-ability problem solvers since solely high-ability groups tend to congregate and experience groupthink.

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Do you agree expanding the program to more communities across the country could help alleviate the recruitment shortfalls?

Dr. STROBL. JROTC is among the largest youth development programs in the United States, and one of many ways we can reconnect the military with our communities. These programs instill the value of citizenship and civic responsibility, service to our country (including opportunities within the military, national, and public service sectors), personal responsibility, and a sense of accomplishment in participating students. Over the last decade, Marine Corps JROTC has served over 27,000 students in 254 high schools. The program seeks to provide a safe learning environment that fosters opportunities for personal development and skill building through co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, such as drill, cyber competitions, and physical training. It also helps students improve their career readiness by introducing them to emerging workforce careers in science, technology, engineering, math, computer science, and cybersecurity. Although recruiting is not the purpose of JROTC, our historical data continues to demonstrate a benefit of the program to service. The data from our last four cycles of graduates show the following:

Graduation Year	2020	2021	2022	2023
Graduating Seniors	4849	4683	4442	3652
Service Academy Appointments	35	29	40	38
ROTC Scholarships	88	75	143	150
Service Enlistments	1011	853	1119	955
Total Military Service	1134	957	1302	1143
Percentage Military Service	23.4%	20.4%	29.3%	31.3%

Mr. WALTZ. The Defense Readiness Reporting System (DRRS) is the tool our military uses to monthly measure & assess combat readiness of all battalions/squadrons and above. The “C-Level” is the overall rating of a unit’s ability to execute its wartime mission and has four specific subordinate ratings: P-Level (Personnel Authorized & On-Hand); S-Level (Equipment and Supplies Authorized & On-Hand); R-Level (Equipment Condition); T-Level (Training Status).

In DRRS, is there a provision where race and gender are measured?
Is race or gender a component of combat readiness?

Is there any empirical data compiled by your service department which demonstrates that units with greater gender and racial integration correlates with combat readiness?

Dr. STROBL. No, neither race nor gender are not metrics captured within DRRS. The Personnel (P-Level) is based on the unit's ability to provide deployable, Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) qualified personnel and DOD civilians to accomplish the unit's missions.

No, neither race nor gender are components of combat readiness. Marines are trained and qualified to perform MOSs specific to the design and capabilities of the unit to which they are assigned. It is the correct mix of these MOSs that contributes to the combat readiness of a unit.

No, we have not compiled empirical data demonstrating units with greater gender and racial integration correlate with combat readiness. Unit and combat readiness are accomplished through the aggregate of investments in personnel, training, and equipment to ensure units are prepared to perform missions at any time. In order to achieve this state of personnel readiness, we are committed to recruiting qualified candidates from across all populations of the United States.

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Do you agree expanding the program to more communities across the country could help alleviate the recruitment shortfalls?

Ms. KELLEY. JROTC is a valuable program promoting citizenship, public service, and offers an avenue to reach the Nation's youth who may not have contact with influencers who have military experience. While expanding the program to more communities is a laudable goal, it is unlikely to alleviate recruitment shortfalls as experienced within DOD. In FY23, 35 of 517, or 6%, of USSF recruits had JROTC experience. The percentage of recruits with JROTC experience was about the same for FY22. While we may gain additional recruits with a broader institutional cohort, it is my professional opinion that an expansion is unlikely to fully mitigate shortfalls the Services experience.

Mr. WALTZ. The Defense Readiness Reporting System (DRRS) is the tool our military uses to monthly measure & assess combat readiness of all battalions/squadrons and above. The "C-Level" is the overall rating of a unit's ability to execute its wartime mission and has four specific subordinate ratings: P-Level (Personnel Authorized & On-Hand); S-Level (Equipment and Supplies Authorized & On-Hand); R-Level (Equipment Condition); T-Level (Training Status).

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Ms. KELLEY. The Defense Readiness Reporting System, the readiness reporting system of record, does not contain demographic information on assessable units with respect to gender or race, nor does the system factor such demographics when analyzing/measuring combat readiness of assessable units. The captured demographic data is limited to a population break down between officer and enlisted populations within a unit.

The Department of Defense Readiness Reporting System does not factor demographics such as race and gender when analyzing/measuring combat readiness of assembled units. The Space Force's greatest strategic advantage over the Nation's adversaries is our people. We strive to recruit and retain the best talent from across America in order to maintain and increase the effectiveness of our combat readiness. We recognize diverse units, groups, and teams come up with innovative ideas for solving problems. While the Space Force does not track diversity data within our readiness factors, we do recognize the diversity of our force increases productivity and innovation as validated in studies from the private sector.

The DOD's current efforts are heavily grounded in existing research and data from a range of fields directly related to people, culture, the warfighting and security missions, and combat effectiveness. This research and data have repeatedly

identified how diversity and inclusion lead to greater effectiveness and directly support DOD mission accomplishment by enabling the development of qualified and capable teams and organizations; driving innovation; increasing access to the most talented and skilled people possible; informing comprehensive, effective problem-solving in conflict conditions; and enabling effective operational decision-making.

Finally, research, data, and lessons learned demonstrate inclusive leaders are more effective enhanced performance, and best match to the mission at hand. Absent these leaders, DOD may fail in adequately leveraging the strengths of its people, maximizing cohesion and trust, and fielding the most capable, ready Total Force.

