

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

SUBJECT: MORALE, WELFARE AND RECREATION (MWR) OVERVIEW

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and fellow Military Personnel Subcommittee members, for the opportunity today to present the status of Air Force MWR programs. We appreciate the leadership and support this Subcommittee continually provides on matters affecting the readiness and quality of life of our Airmen and their families. This has been another challenging year for the remarkable men and women of the United States Air Force. Overseas Contingency Operations and humanitarian support missions have continued to extend demands on our people and their families. Recognizing how important it is to “take care of families, so Airmen can focus on the mission,” we have expanded the scope of services we provide and enhanced our MWR programs to meet the full spectrum of challenges our Airmen face today. We continue to emphasize both of our primary objectives, supporting Air Force missions around the world and providing world-class community support at our home stations.

Although time does not permit me to recognize the work done by each of our nearly 47,000 member team of MWR professionals, I am pleased to highlight some of our traditional combat support and community service efforts, as well as new initiatives addressing warrior and survivor care, resiliency, fitness, food service and recreation. Our strategic direction—based on our current and more robust quality of life research—will target the emerging needs of our total force; ensuring relevant solutions for today’s and tomorrow’s Air Force community.

## **MISSION SUSTAINMENT**

In 2010, 1200 of our Force Support warfighters deployed and supported contingency operations globally, providing hot meals, lodging, fitness, protocol, and recreation programs while deployed in support of United States and coalition missions. Our focus remains the same, but our mission has changed. Our footprint in Iraq has been reduced and we are now supporting a more mobile concentration of forces and Provisional Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan. This evolving landscape has a unique set of challenges. We continue to seek innovative solutions not only to meet the basic needs of food and shelter, but also to give our Airmen outlets to relieve the increased stressors of living in a deployed and often hostile environment.

## **FITNESS**

We rely on our fitness centers to keep our Airmen functionally and physically fit for the increased demands on today's battlefield. There is a significant correlation between fitness and operational readiness. Our fitness centers have become centers of activity for base communities, where Airmen can exercise, socialize and relax in a safe and healthy environment. With the recent revisions to the Air Force fitness program, to include the stand-up of fitness assessment cells and twice-a-year fitness testing, the importance of and focus on our fitness centers is all the more critical. Striving to fulfill the Air Force Chief of Staff's vision to sustain a "culture of fitness," we continue to cultivate and maintain mission readiness through comprehensive fitness and sports programming, equipment and facilities. While we started construction on six projects totaling \$75.3 million in fiscal years 2009 and 2010, we have no new major construction projects programmed for fiscal years 2011-2013. We also funded fitness equipment and 76 repair and minor construction projects totaling \$25.3 million in 2010 with an additional \$71M for 193 repair and minor construction projects, fitness equipment, and other fitness initiatives for execution in 2011.

## **LODGING**

In November 2009, we completed a "right sizing" study to evaluate the current condition of lodging facilities and help determine the way ahead for future construction requirements. As a result, we accomplished project validation assessments for temporary lodging and visiting quarters at 12 installations, and expect to initiate design on nine projects during fiscal year 2011. In 2009, we also standardized room rates Air Force-wide. This allows us to continue an aggressive program of refurbishing guest rooms, which totaled \$102.8 million during fiscal year 2009 and \$108 million in fiscal year 2010.

## **LIBRARY**

Our library program distributed over 37,000 paperbacks and periodicals annually to over 250 contingency operations and remote sites around the world. Eight Learning Resource Centers in Southwest Asia provide educational resources and college-level practice tests, database access, and research materials for deployed military members enrolled in voluntary education

programs. We also purchased science, biography, international security, and global issues databases now available on the Air Force Portal.

The Air Force Library program added new downloadable e-book and audio titles to MyiLibrary, NetLibrary, and Safari databases that host over 14,000 online titles. All Air Force general libraries offered robust summer reading programs to children and teens, helping students retain and enhance their reading skills over the summer. The TUTOR.COM service, which is Department of Defense funded, provides 24/7 online tutoring for kindergarten through high school and college-level students in all major subject areas.

## **WARRIOR AND SURVIVOR CARE**

We are dedicated to building a culture of understanding and concern for wounded, ill and injured Airmen. Our wounded warriors get care that allows them to continue their lives and careers and gives them the opportunities to assist others.

This year we will again celebrate the achievements of our wounded warriors. The 2011 Warrior Games are scheduled on 17-21 May 2011 at the Olympic Training Center and United States Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado. To get our Air Force wounded warriors ready for the 2011 Warrior Games, we will hold two training camps in San Antonio, Texas. By mid-January we had already received thirty applications from Air Force wounded warriors. During the Warrior Games, Airmen will compete in shooting, swimming, archery, volleyball, cycling, track and field, and basketball. Last year the Air Force team earned 26 medals and will compete for the Chairman's Cup again this year. This event provides a focal point for Warrior and Survivor care and incorporating athletics into our military service programs. Once again, this would not be possible without your support for all Wounded Warrior programs.

The Air Force has hired 32 Recovery Care Coordinators to support 30 locations across the Air Force. Recovery Care Coordinators serve as the focal point for non-clinical case management for wounded, ill and injured Airmen, developing comprehensive recovery plans and creating timelines for personal and career accomplishments. Additionally, the Air Force implemented new personnel policies regarding retention, retraining, promotions, assignments and evaluation of Wounded Warriors. These policy changes help our Airmen continue pursuing their Air Force career goals during recovery. One Air Force wounded warrior, Senior Airman

Michael Malarsie, met with senior leaders and attended the Blinded Veterans Association Conference in Washington DC. He continues to represent the Air Force and assist other Airmen, despite suffering the loss of one eye and severe damage to the other, rendering him completely blind.

## **MORTUARY SERVICES**

Air Force Mortuary Affairs Operations, headquartered at Dover Air Force Base, Delaware, continues to enhance our ability to fulfill our nation's sacred commitment of ensuring dignity, honor, and respect to our fallen service members, as well as providing care, service, and support to their families.

In April 2009, the Department of Defense implemented the policy to allow media and family access to dignified transfers of the remains of fallen as they arrive at Dover. Since that time, 934 fallen have been returned home, with over 3,927 family and friends attending the dignified transfers. Approximately 87 percent of the families chose to allow some form of media coverage.

A significant development during 2010 was the completion of the Families of the Fallen Campus at Dover Air Force Base. This center provides a warm, home-like atmosphere to host family members while they await the dignified transfer of their loved one. The facility offers gathering areas, private meeting rooms, a children's room, and a kitchen. In January 2010, the Secretary of the Air Force accepted a gift from the Fisher House Foundation to construct a new facility on Dover Air Force Base. The Fisher House for the Families of the Fallen was dedicated on 10 November 2010. This 8,462 square foot facility has nine lodging suites for families of the fallen who travel to Dover for the dignified transfer, and also a 1,713 square foot meditation pavilion. The campus now provides families of the fallen a secure, peaceful location to mourn and grieve the loss of their loved one.

## **RECREATION PROGRAMS**

Our recreation programs have historically served as gathering points in Air Force communities that are often geographically separated from major cultural centers. We have shifted our focus to reach out to Airmen and family members trying new activities and opportunities specific to the location where they are assigned. Our golf and bowling programs

have taken advantage of industry downturns in use patterns to place more emphasis on beginner instruction programs.

At Mountain Home AFB, Idaho, we train Airmen to be volunteer guides leading white-water rafting trips. These programs offer opportunities for participants to graduate as certified experts and give back to our programs as volunteer instructors. These Airmen-led trips allow us to offer inexpensive opportunities to other Airmen who could not otherwise afford them in the civilian community. Our outdoor programs take full advantage of the wide range of locations the Air Force serves world-wide. The 7,000 activities organized annually run the gamut from snowmobile trips through Yellowstone National Park, scuba diving in Guam, snowboarding in the Alps, to climbing Mt Fuji in Japan.

## **INCLUSIVE RECREATION**

The Air Force continues its progress towards making our facilities, programs, and services more inclusive to support both wounded warriors and others with physical challenges. We have benefited from Department of Defense funding support for the Inclusive Recreation for Wounded Warriors training at Penn State University and targeted support for pool lifts, adaptive golf carts, bowling equipment and accessible playgrounds.

## **CARING FOR PEOPLE**

We are merging Airman & Family Readiness and Child and Youth Programs into our Airman and Family Services organization. In April 2010, we followed up on the success of the inaugural event and hosted the second annual Caring for People Forum, which focused on resiliency. This event brought together over 200 professionals who affect the programs and services available to Airmen and their extended family members in six key areas: deployment support, family support, school support, special needs child support, Guard and Reserve family support and single Airman support. Attendees worked to identify initiatives to support the larger concept of Air Force family, which includes Airmen, spouses, children, parents, friends and employers of Guard and Reservists. We also hosted a Single Airmen Summit to provide a mechanism to identify current issues affecting our Airmen. We also established Caring for People coordinator positions at nine high-deployment locations to provide direct support to families throughout all phases of deployment.

To strengthen our efforts in that area, our new Air Force Resiliency Division is building a corporate program with two distinct yet integrated focus areas: Airmen resiliency and family resiliency. The program will address the span of issues Airmen can expect to encounter over the course of their career. The goal is to develop skills that foster happier, more productive Airmen who can better cope with everyday life and the stressors unique to a military lifestyle. We opened a Deployment Transition Center on 1 July 2010 at Ramstein Air Base, Germany; as of 20 January 2011 over 1000 Airmen have spent time here en route home from deployments. The new facility augments current post-deployment programs and provides a unit-based approach to decompression and reintegration activities for Airmen returning from deployed locations globally.

From July 2009 to July 2010, we celebrated the Year of the Air Force Family, focusing on four pillars of emphasis: health and wellness, Airman and family support, education and development, and housing and communities. From the initial declaration of the Year of the Air Force Family, the Air Force Secretary and Chief of Staff made it clear that developing and caring for Airmen and families remains one of their top priorities. As part of our MYAIRFORCELIFE.COM initiative, we hosted artistic competitions to illustrate why the Air Force is such a great place to live, work and play. We received over 5 million website hits in 2010. Based on the success of the MYAIRFORCELIFE.COM website, we are converting it to a patron facing website portal to support future programs. Leaders at all levels engaged and recognized the achievements and contributions of the Air Force family through programs, special events and initiatives. Additionally, Air Force service providers examined ways to expand existing programs to meet the ever-changing needs and expectations of Airmen and their families.

In January 2010, the Air Force launched the *FitFamily* program to raise awareness of the importance of family fitness and proper nutrition, and thereby encourage healthy lifestyles for all family members. *FitFamily* meets two of four goals of the White House Task Force on Childhood Obesity. The program advocates for Air Force families to “Get Up, Get Out and Get Fit – Together” by registering online as teams, and achieving various participation levels through family fun activities, sports and fitness events, and healthy food selections.

With an increased focus on Airman Resiliency, our Airman and Family Services staff maximized the impact of the Department of Defense-established Military Family Life Consultant

program. These consultants augment existing military support services and provide non-medical, short-term, situational, and problem-solving counseling services. Our 95 adult consultants, along with our 98 child and youth behavioral counselors, address issues that occur across the military lifestyle; they help Service members and their families cope with the normal reactions to stressful and adverse situations. In addition, 28 consultants provide support to on- and off-base schools serving Air Force children, 20 help with summer camp programming, and three provide personal financial counseling. We remain ready to meet the Military Family Life Consultant needs of our Reserve and Guard components through on-demand assignments to support pre-deployment, deployment, and reintegration events for Service members and their families. Although the year-long series of events has come to a close, Air Force leaders and agencies have come away with a much greater understanding about our successful Air Force family practices and the necessary requirements for supporting Airmen and their families in the future.

## **AIRMAN & FAMILY READINESS**

Our Airman & Family Readiness Centers provide consultation services to help commanders enhance individual, family, and community readiness, quality of life, and motivation to serve. We continued our partnership with the Air Force Aid Society to enhance deployment support programs for the community, including “give parents a break,” respite child care and “car care because we care.”

We also standardized our Air Force Key Spouse Program to enhance the official communication network between unit leadership and families at all of our installations. The program promotes readiness and a sense of community, serving as a link between unit leadership and families on a consistent basis and particularly during emergencies, separations and deployments. As of December 2010, 98 percent of our organizational units had at least one trained Key Spouse; we remain focused to reach the remaining units this year. We developed Airman & Family Readiness services to help spouses meet the challenges in training for and finding suitable employment opportunities and, as they relocate, continuing and progressing in their chosen career fields. Our discovery resource centers continued to provide families with a gateway to community-specific information and referrals for transition assistance resources.

The Air Force has maintained a strong partnership with the Military Child Education Coalition for over 10 years. This past year, we conducted a variety of parent and school personnel awareness training sessions that help school personnel understand the challenges of the military lifestyle. Subjects included the effect of parental deployment, working with military children when a parent has been disabled or killed, and the specific challenges faced by mobile military-connected students with special needs. Air Force directed centralized funding will begin this year for 53 civilian school liaison officer positions at all bases that did not already have a position in place. This additional key manpower will enhance our ability to advocate for our Air Force children and youth.

We have also focused additional attention this year on increasing support to those Airmen with exceptional family members. An Airman & Family Readiness center staff member has been designated at each installation to support special needs families and \$100,000 in print media resources was purchased.

Our Personal and Family Readiness programs assisted over 130,000 members with sustainment and reintegration services. As our economy began the slow process of recovery, we provided 3,200 financial education courses and individual consultations to over 24,000 Airmen, bolstering our families' ability to cope with the financial pressures affecting their fiscal readiness. During Military Saves Week, 5,500 Airmen took the "Saver's Pledge" setting the foundation for increased financial stability.

## **CHILD AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS**

Thanks to your continued support and the assistance of the Department of Defense we remain focused on providing readily available, quality and affordable child-care and youth programs as a workforce solution to the issue of mission readiness. The funding authority provided through the temporary legislation for child care construction, combined with seven military construction projects, provided an additional 2,960 Air Force child care spaces. Additionally, the stimulus package funding for 2009 included eight child development centers, further increasing our child-care capacity by 836 spaces. We have made similar investments in our child-care personnel and equipment and are on track to reduce our known shortfall of child care to zero once all construction is complete.

Our child and youth programs take care of over 118,000 children, providing everything from hourly care to extended child-care for children six weeks to 18 years old. Our Air Force Returning Home Care supports Airmen returning from deployment by providing 16 hours of free child-care. The Air Force Family Child Care Subsidy Program provided an average subsidy of \$143 per month per child for over 2,000 military members when a space in the child development center or school age program is either unavailable or does not meet their needs.

We are piloting our newest initiative, the Supplemental Care Program, at three installations. This program responds to the needs of “emergency responder” parents required to work 12-hour shifts outside of regular duty hours. It augments a member’s existing child-care arrangement by providing care at no cost to the member during duty that falls outside of traditional child-care hours. Additionally, we have maintained our partnership with the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, which helps the Air Force provide outreach child care support to our families unable to access on-base military child-care. The Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood and Operation Military Child Care programs provided our active duty, Guard and Reservist families with an alternative quality child care placement and fee assistance to offset the cost of care in the community.

Our Air Force Youth Programs remained steadfast in their commitment to offer innovative, community-responsive youth development opportunities for Air Force children from elementary school through high school. We continued our focus to support geographically separated youth, and took full advantage of our ongoing national partnerships to reach additional families living both in civilian communities and on Air Force installations. Last June, we recognized our Air Force Youth of the Year in collaboration with the Boys & Girls Clubs of America. Fifty-two installation level Youth of the Year winners attended the ceremony in Washington DC and participated in teen leadership activities.

Funding continued in support of the *Mission: Youth Outreach* program that provided a one-year free membership in a local Boys & Girls Club to active duty, Guard and Reserve families who do not live near a military installation. Our continued partnership with the USDA 4-H has provided increased access to a variety of resources and educational youth programs.

Our Air Force Youth Programs offered a vast array of residential, specialty, and other base-specific summer camp opportunities to nearly 25,000 youth again last year, to include support specifically targeted for children of our deployed members and Guard and Reserve

families. Camping opportunities included our Air Force Space Camp, Aviation Camp, 4-H adventure camps, youth performing arts camps and a host of other camps focused on topics such as literacy, bowling, leadership, cooking, and dance. This year, we partnered with “Destination Imagination,” a creative team-based problem-solving program that will provide our Air Force youth with opportunities to compete at local, regional and global events.

## **STRATEGIC INITIATIVES**

Air Force Services is focused on transforming our operations to ensure that we meet the needs of Airmen and families now and in the future. To meet the needs of tomorrow's Airmen and family members, we have focused on being a model of innovation, efficiency and resource stewardship.

We recently completed the second generation of our Caring for People Survey. This survey measures quality of life satisfaction levels of the Air Force community to include Airmen, spouses, Air Force civilians, and retirees; across multiple domains including medical care, housing, and support for families. The 2010 survey was more extensive in scope and included questions related to customer satisfaction with all Services programs and activities. The research will provide us with a clear understanding of how our programs contribute to readiness and retention, enabling us to focus our resources where they matter most. We expect the findings from the study to be available by late spring.

## **FOOD TRANSFORMATION**

The initial Caring for People Survey highlighted the need to improve our method for providing base-level food service. We discovered our dining facilities and clubs are collectively under-utilized, inefficient, and have not adjusted to meet the changing demands of today's Airmen and families.

In response, we adopted the Food Transformation Initiative to serve our Airmen and families better. The Food Transformation Initiative is developing an entirely new model for feeding our Air Force community patterned after concepts seen in university and corporate campuses. This new model offers improved food quality, availability, and variety in a more efficient manner. It includes efforts to bring food outlets to where Airmen need them the most, allowing us to consolidate unnecessary infrastructure and align operations to where our Airmen

live and work. The expanded market is also contributing to a greater sense of community through increased utilization from the base populace.

The Air Force contracted with ARAMARK to pilot this program at six installations: Little Rock AFB, Arkansas; Fairchild AFB, Washington; MacDill AFB, Florida; Patrick AFB, Florida; Elmendorf AFB, Alaska; and Travis AFB, California. These phase 1 bases were implemented on 1 Oct 2010. Hours of operation in our main dining facilities increased from an average of 58 hours to 112 hours each week. Improvements in food service quality and availability led to a 22% increase in customer counts during the first three months of operation. Junior enlisted members on a meal card are taking increased advantage of their meal card benefit, with meal counts increasing 24%. The independent CFI Group recently confirmed that customer satisfaction at the six food transformation bases is running significantly higher than the Air Force average and substantially ahead of the levels at these bases two years ago. The Government Accountability Office review required by HR111-491 is ongoing, with site visits to pilot bases currently underway. We will continue to work with our Major Commands and their pilot bases to enhance the Food Transformation Initiative to insure we provide a quality food service program that meets mission requirements while maintaining our existing funding profile. The next installations being considered for the test phase are Cannon AFB, New Mexico, Davis-Monthan AFB, Arizona, F.E. Warren AFB, Wyoming, Moody AFB, Georgia, Offutt AFB, Nebraska, Tinker AFB, Oklahoma and Vandenberg AFB, California.

## **NONAPPROPRIATED FUND TRANSFORMATION**

Nonappropriated Fund Transformation is a multi-year initiative to improve business practices by reengineering processes, leveraging technology, and creating an automated, integrated business enterprise. In June 2010, we completed phase one: a 5-year effort to centralize nonappropriated fund accounting and payroll services at the Air Force Services Agency Shared Service Center in San Antonio, Texas. The center creates significant efficiencies and service improvements that flow directly to our Air Force communities. The next phase delivers modern business solutions to our Force Support activities, which will allow them to operate more efficiently and improve customer service. Efforts are currently underway for an enterprise-wide golf management system as well as one to support Child and Youth Programs. These systems will provide the activities with modern point-of-sale systems that include

inventory management, online program registration, and reservation system for our customers. We will spiral on the capabilities of these systems to support recreation, bowling, fitness and libraries in the future.

### **EMPLOYEE RETIREMENT PLAN**

A recent improvement in the global economy directly affected the nonappropriated fund defined-benefit retirement plan, as well as the funds available in the Employee Retirement Plan Trust. The portfolio increased in market value by \$13.1 million from 30 September 2009 to \$262.9 million on 30 September 2010. The Employee Retirement Plan Trust was 92 percent funded as of 30 September 2010, up from 91 percent a year ago; it remains financially strong.

### **NONAPPROPRIATED FUND CONSTRUCTION**

In 2010, we completed six major Morale, Welfare and Recreation construction projects valued at \$29 million and three major lodging construction projects valued at over \$207 million. The construction projects include bowling center and youth center additions at Langley Air Force Base, Virginia, a new golf clubhouse at Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada, an auto hobby shop at Incirlik Air Base, Turkey, and visiting quarters at Kunsan Air Base, Republic of Korea and Hurlburt Air Force Base, Florida. During this year, we expect to open a new \$40 million visiting quarters facility at Langley Air Force Base, Virginia, and a new \$42 million combined visiting quarters and temporary lodging facility at Buckley Air Force Base, Colorado. Forty-five additional projects, valued at \$289 million, are currently approved for design. We funded five Morale, Welfare and Recreation construction projects totaling \$18.7 million for fiscal year 2011, including a bowling center at Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska. With continued support from Army and Air Force Exchange Service dividends and other sources, we are projecting an annual \$30-\$35 million nonappropriated fund program for fiscal years 2012 and 2013. In addition, we allocated \$5 million to the Major Commands in 2010 for small projects including a golf course snack bar renovation at Arnold Air Force Base, Tennessee, a FAMCAMP upgrade at Ellsworth Air Force Base, South Dakota, and a bowling snack bar renovation at Mountain Home Air Force Base, Montana. In 2011, we will increase funding for this program to approximately \$7.5 million.

Recognizing the changing demographics and lifestyles of today's Airmen and families, we are about to commence a comprehensive needs assessment of all Services programs. Our goal is to determine how best to provide MWR programs and services in a budget-constrained environment. For instance, we are looking at ways in which we can leverage the internet to bring our programs and services to our Airmen where they live. Also, we see tremendous opportunities for partnering with off-base businesses, non-profit organizations, and local governments to expand services and optimize resources. This Air Force-wide assessment will help us to leverage our resources and better meet the needs of the Airmen we serve.

## **CONCLUSION**

Mr. Chairman, I would like to conclude by thanking the men and women of our workforce. Our mission to provide combat support and community service remains largely unchanged, but we continue to explore new means of providing innovative, timely and relevant support to our Airmen that defend this nation. We contribute to a strong Air Force community by delivering mission-sustaining quality of life services that take care of our people. I realize that this would not be possible without the wonderful support from the Military Personnel Subcommittee. On behalf of the men and women of Air Force Services, I thank you for your support.