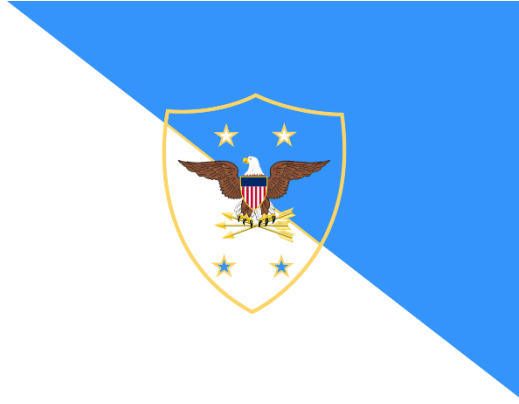


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**STATEMENT OF  
SENIOR ENLISTED ADVISOR TO THE  
CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF  
TROY E. BLACK, USMC  
BEFORE THE  
QUALITY OF LIFE PANEL  
OF THE  
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
JANUARY 31, 2024**

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## Quality of Life Panel Capstone Hearing

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### INTRODUCTION

Chairman Bacon, Ranking Member Houlahan, and distinguished members of the panel, thank you for the opportunity to address you today. As the Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (SEAC), I am honored to appear before you, representing the men and women who serve in our Armed Services. In my previous role as the Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, I had the privilege of representing the Marine Corps enlisted force in front of this committee. In this new role, I represent the entirety of the joint force, including active duty, reserve, guard, retiree, veterans, civilian work force, and military families.

Joining me here are the Service Senior Enlisted Advisors, teammates who share the same deep commitment to enhancing the quality of life for our service members and their families. Together, we represent the collective voice of your enlisted force. We are proud to be part of this team and look forward to collaborating with you to ensure the continued strength of the most formidable military force the world has ever known.

Today's discussion centers around the critical pillars of quality of life – healthcare, family support networks, housing, spousal programs, and pay and compensation – and serves to reinforce our unwavering dedication to our service members who selflessly sacrifice for our Nation's security. These pillars serve as the bedrock of an all-volunteer force, sustaining its ability to uphold American values and freedom.

In accordance with the National Defense Strategy, the People's Republic of China is our pacing challenge. While today's focus centers on quality-of-life matters, we must never lose

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sight of our ultimate objective: warfighting and, more importantly, war-winning. The quality of life of our service members and their families is intertwined with our ability to effectively engage in conflict and maintain an unparalleled strategic advantage over any adversary.

As I have said before in previous testimony, the Joint Force is ready to fight. Through all the challenges we've faced, we've remained ready. We will always remain ready to fight and win, and we'll never give that up. Those who may seek to agitate us, our Allies and partners, or the global rule of law, need to understand what this Congress already knows to be true: your military is strong, smart, trusted, and lethal.

The strength of your military lies not only in our advanced technology and superior training but also in the well-being and morale of our service members. A Soldier, Sailor, Airman, Guardian, or Marine who knows that their family is taken care of, their health needs are met, and their financial stability is secured can focus entirely on their mission. This level of focus allows them to maximize their warfighting capabilities, giving us the edge necessary to be victorious on any battlefield, and is one of the fundamental elements of the continued success of the all-volunteer force.

In a moment, you will hear from each Service Senior Enlisted Advisor about their specific equities and the factors impacting the men and women of their formations. Before this happens, I want to set the stage with a strategic overview of critical challenges.

**PAY AND COMPENSATION**

First, the prospect of equitable income is a foundation of the all-volunteer force and has impacts to both recruiting and retention. I am proud to report that military compensation across the Force is healthy and that pay and benefits compare well against private-sector counterparts. In reference to the Executive Memo just released regarding the Fourteenth Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation. We owe our service members our support and gratitude, and we recognize the sacrifices they make every day in support of our Nation. Further, our service members deserve a 21st century military compensation system that recognizes and rewards their contributions, reflects the values of our Nation, and incentivizes the next generation of men and women to serve. We must ensure military compensation continues to keep pace. Military service has always been and continues to be a desirable pathway to greater opportunities for our service members and their families.

**HEALTHCARE**

Next, adequate, consistent, available, and timely healthcare for our service members is the minimum standard and vital to the all-volunteer force. Healthcare plays a crucial role in an all-volunteer force by attracting and retaining talent, ensuring force readiness and capability, providing for military families, and positively influencing recruitment and public perception. Prioritizing healthcare for the force is an essential investment.

**FAMILY SUPPORT NETWORKS**

High-quality family support networks are vital for the readiness and retention of military families in an all-volunteer force. It ensures service members can focus on their duties, enhances

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their confidence and peace of mind, increases retention rates by meeting family needs, promotes work-life balance, and serves as a recruitment advantage for prospective members with families. Prioritizing high-quality family support programs such as childcare is essential to military readiness, which promotes the well-being of military families and contributes to a strong and effective force.

### **HOUSING**

We are committed to ensuring that the housing on our installations, whether government-owned or privatized, meets, and exceeds life, health, and safety requirements. Doing so provides a positive living experience for service members and their families ultimately safeguarding the physical and mental health of our military families. This positive experience contributes to the retention of our personnel and enhances their satisfaction with military life. When service members and their families have positive housing experiences, it reflects positively on our organization and fosters trust and support from the public.

### **STRATEGY**

Understanding that I serve in a different capacity than my teammates, I want to provide insight into my role to help address the challenges we are here to discuss. While serving as the SEAC, I am focused on three main lines of effort.

First is Holistic Human Performance. This is an initiative to interlace the Total Force Fitness program with interdepartmental solutions to aid in increasing the qualified pool of

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eligible accession candidates, connecting resources across the U.S. Government (USG), and encouraging the career longevity of military service members and their families.

Next is Call to Service. Similarly aligned with Holistic Human Performance, our Services need to capture those who are eligible to serve and have the propensity to serve. As a Force, we must engage with the media, National Leadership, sports and entertainment industries, and public education institutions to generate positive support.

Finally, Family Support Network. We will work to engage with the myriad of “Family Support” resources to increase partnerships with the aim of creating a more effective network of support resources and programs available to military families.

### **CLOSING**

Chairman Bacon, Ranking Member Houlihan, and distinguished members of the panel, thank you again for this opportunity to represent our Nation’s finest. I am grateful for your time and the attention you are providing to the quality of life of our service members and their families. Thank you for your unwavering support.