

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

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THE ALL-VOLUNTEER FORCE AT A CROSSROADS:
THE MILITARY FAMILY AND VETERAN CONNECTION

Washington, D.C.

Thursday, December 8, 2016

PARTICIPANTS:

Introduction:

KATHY ROTH-DOUQUET
Chief Executive Officer
Blue Star Families

Featured Speaker:

ERIC K. FANNING
Secretary of the U.S. Army

Panel:

ELAINE KAMARCK, Moderator
Senior Fellow and Founding Director,
Center for Effective Public Management
The Brookings Institution

ROSALINDA MAURY
Director, Applied Research and Analytics
Syracuse University's Institute for Veterans
and Military Families

MICHAEL O'HANLON
Senior Fellow and Co-Director,
Center on 21st Century Security and Intelligence
The Brookings Institution

CRISTIN ORR SHIFFER
Senior Advisor for Policy and Survey
Blue Star Families

TODD WEILER
Assistant Secretary of Defense, Manpower and Reserve Affairs
U.S. Department of Defense

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PROCEEDINGS

MS. ROTH-DOUQUET: Good morning. And welcome to our Blue Star Families' Annual Military Family Lifestyle Survey Panel Discussion. We are very excited to have you with us here today to learn more about the temporary issues and unique challenges facing our All-Volunteer Force.

It's impossible to thank everyone who made the survey possible. It's a true group effort of many organizations and institutions across the country, we do it every year, and that allows us to dig deeper in, and it gives us a real snapshot of what's going on in today's military.

There are a few people I'd like to recognize: Sally Lengyel, the Senior Spouse to the Chief of the National Guard; General Joseph Lengyel. We've had great support from the senior spouses and the Chiefs of Staff of the Services; that makes an enormous difference to us. Ronald Keohane, the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Military Community and Family Policy; and Rosemary Williams, Assistant Secretary in the Office of Public Affairs at Veteran Affairs. That means a great deal to us to have this support. You'll see more folks from the leadership on our panel, and we appreciate that. And also, Colonel Will XXXsic meant William?XXX Johnson, Executive Director of Joining Forces. Joining Forces has been a great ally.

Now, please turn your attention to the screen, we'll see a brief video encapsulating our results. Thank you.

(Video shown)

VIDEO: Military families are important assets to national defense and their local communities; each family plays a significant role on the health and capability of the all-volunteer force. The 2016 Blue Star Families' Military Family Lifestyle Survey is a yearly snapshot into the state of military families and the largest nongovernmental survey of its kind. Military families continue to experience deployments and a very high

operational tempo. Service members and their families possess a strong desire to serve, yet extended separations, frequent moves and outdated expectations about family roles, reduce the quality of life, and attractiveness of service.

The survey shows a military community at a point of inflexion, meeting our nation's security needs, means modernizing our military thinking, but also modernizing the way the military understands families. America is changing, but our military does not always change with it, when it comes to families, Chris is proud to be a military spouse and parent, serving alongside Jamie who is currently deployed. Frequent moves and Jamie's unpredictable work schedule makes it difficult for Chris to find and keep a job.

Chris often feels depressed about not being able to work, and stressed by having to rely on just one income. The family recently moved, and their son has attended three different schools, since kindergarten. Chris and Jamie worry that the frequent moves mean their son is not receiving a consistent and quality education. Meanwhile, Jamie deployed for nine months, not long after the move, and Chris is assuming 100 percent of the parenting and family management.

With training and deployments, Jamie has been away from the family for more than four years since 9/11, and is nervous about changes to pay and benefits as seem to happen each year. Jamie loves serving the country and is considering reenlisting, but worries about the impact military service is having on the family.

More predictable deployment periods and better family support enable families to plan and cope with Service member absences in healthy ways. With public and private support initiatives, and better integration into civilian communities, military spouses can find and maintain meaningful work, improving wellness and the families' financial stability. More flexible relocation policies also provide military children with the consistency required for their development.

Improved family stability increases military family support for continued

service, and makes them more likely to recommend military service to others. Local communities, national leaders, and the Department of Defense have tremendous opportunities to strengthen the all-volunteer force by incorporating military families into current thinking and future planning. Let's work together for a smarter modern military, and a secure future, because supporting military families isn't just the right thing to do, it's also a smart thing.

MS. ROTH-DOUQUET: Thank you. It's now my honor to introduce Secretary Eric Fanning. He is the First Service Secretary to have a seat at the table in a senior leadership capacity in three branches. The Navy, where he's Deputy Under Secretary and Deputy Chief of Management; the Air Force, where he was Acting Secretary, and the Army where he has been Secretary since May 2016.

Secretary Fanning directed the creation of the Army Rapid Capabilities Offices, providing soldiers with equipment and technology where needed, and just last month, he announced an initiative called Hack the Army, in partnership with HackerOne, working to bring hacker community in to help in the U.S. Military. It's this kind of innovative public-private partnership that we are interested in expanding to improve the area of family support; we are very honored to have him with us here today. Secretary Fanning? (Applause)

SECRETARY FANNING: It's the first time I've not actually heard my introduction so I have no idea what Kathy said, but thank you. It's good to see Todd Weiler here, one of my longest-tenured friends in Washington. Todd and I met in, it would have 1992, even before inauguration into the Clinton administration, both serving the Clinton Pentagon together. It's good to be back in the Obama Pentagon with you.

Thank you for having me here. I think I've got like 5 to 7 minutes of remarks, and then I'm going to take questions and answer as many as I can. I don't know how many I'll be able to answer, but will give it a shot. Thank you, Kathy, and to your organization, it's remarkable what you've accomplished in such a short period of

time.

Todd and I like to think we can say it about ourselves, but it's nothing like what you've been able to do. And I was looking through the report, and what we learned from the report, and I think for me, it validates a lot of things that we've been thinking, and that we've been seeing, and if I had one way to wrap it up in the larger context that applies to a lot of things that have been a part of my tenure in this administration, it's that we are -- there are generational shifts in a number of things, and not just families.

There are generational shifts in social issues. We've done a lot of things in the last years, made a lot of changes in the Pentagon to open up service to those who were denied opportunities before, or had to serve secretly. And each time one of these comes along, and it's: Don't Ask, Don't Tell, transgender service, women in combat, religious accommodations for all religions, I'm sort of surrounded by people who are concerned about how it will change the fabric of the Service, the fabric of the Army in my case.

I take a step back, and I talk to some of the officers in my office who will say, oh, we can make that work. And then I'm out in the field talking to younger officers or younger soldiers, who look at me like I'm crazy for even asking. Like, why is that even an issue? We know we can't make it work, we are already making it work, and I realize a lot of the changes that we are trying to embed in policy, are actually just us catching up with what's already happening out in the field, and out in the Force, naturally.

And that's certainly true with families, with what a military family is. Now, the vast majority of those in uniform are married, which is very different than it was when we started the all-volunteer force 40-plus years ago. The majority of them are dual career, which sets a whole new set of challenges, and those facts, those things we already know, that we continue to validate, run up against what I see all the time.

When I'm talking with senior generals about senior general officer management, it is not unusual for a conversation to end about a general officer, a flag

officer, pros and cons, backgrounds, career paths, deployments, for the conversation to ultimately get around at the end to, and he or she, usually he, has a great Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps spouse. That is this expectation that to succeed as an officer, particularly as you go up through the ranks, that you need to be a twofer, you need to have a spouse with you who is dedicated to the job, that that is that spouse's job, and I'm specifically not using gender pronouns, but they really are.

We are talking about a male officer with a trailing wife, who is in charge of getting kids into school, opening the house, unpacking the house, getting kids out of school, getting them into new school, unpacking the house, and doing all the volunteer activities that are required, have traditionally been required of spouses in order to support families; which is another thing we need to change.

We plan for those support activities on the backs of these spouses that aren't working, and we can't continue to do that going forward. In fact, I mean, I've seen career officers who are widows or widowers, who are subconsciously at a minimum penalized or they don't have a spouse to do the jobs. I've seen four stars analyzed, whose spouses are ill or, again, are widows or widowers saying, maybe better Combatant Commander than a Chief, because a Chief needs to have that spouse.

I even had a Colonel in one job working for me, who was promoted to Brigadier General just as he and his wife separated, and he was concerned about how he could stand in front of his formation as a General Officer and not be married. And so we've got to get away from that for a number of reasons, (a) how all this is evolving, and (b) how it's impacting how junior officers and junior enlisted imagine their career paths, and imagine their futures in the military.

It's always been anecdotal for me, but now we are seeing it in actual data, that those coming into the Force thinking about whether or not they should make a career for themselves. I was hearing these stories all the time: My wife is a doctor, she doesn't want -- this doesn't work for us, the type of career -- the type of life required for

me to build a career in the military doesn't work for us as a couple.

And then you add on top of that, the realization of what it has done to children for years, and now families and those in the military prioritizing that in a way that they didn't in the past. And having to balance these dual commitments to their career and to their family, in a way they weren't trying to juggle before. And we shouldn't make those commitments mutually exclusive. In many ways we should celebrate them.

And so, we need to do -- We need to look for creative solutions. I mean, first of all we need to do more of what we know works. We need to work on employment opportunities for spouses that aren't in the military. We need to do more to make career paths for dual military families workable. All too often it works for a little while, and then one of the two has got to make a decision to get out, to support the other one.

But we need to make daycare more available. All these things we learn in the Force of the Future, for example. And frankly Todd was involved in this. It's great that we've extended maternity leave, but I had a number of parents say to me; that's a start, but what are you going to do -- you know, once I come from back from maternity or paternity leave, what's available for me?

And so we've made a lot of changes but there's a lot more to go. But we have to get more creative too, as we think about how we fight in the future, how we use technology. Do we need to -- you know, if we've got fast-rising officers, do we need to PCS them every single year? What does that do to the family? What does that do the spouse? What does that do to the officer?

And also, finally, one thing I want to talk about, just let's talk about the Army, because I know a big part of the study comes out, the OPTEMPO and the deployment schedule. We need to get realistic and honest about that, and what it's doing and what we can do to change on that, and that's a place where we need to get creative as well. We need to think differently about career paths in the military. We have these poll years, and you've got to hit a year every single year; in fact, in many of the services

to really excel you've got to hit that year early.

There's no reason we can't, for example, stretch things out a little bit more to give people more time to do other things, for development and opportunities, and to make decisions for the family that doesn't take them off of the track to get them to General Officer. So, there are some great recommendations in this report. I encourage people to think even more creatively, we are going through a transition now and we need to think honestly about the size of the Force we have, how it's resourced, and what it's being asked to do.

The Army is on a glide path -- or was on a glide path to get to a 450,000 active component at the end of next year, but that path was envisioned before Russia got as provocative and as expansive as it is now, before China was getting as provocative as it is now, before ISIL existed in form it did now, and that was built on a pivot, a rebalance to the Pacific. The army has increased by 50 percent, the number of soldiers and civilians dedicated to the Pacific, as we increase requirements and these other things. And so we need to get honest with ourselves, what we are asking the military to do, how we are shaping it, and how we are resourcing it as we go forward.

And I'll close with just sort of one anecdote that distilled it all for me, from my time in the Department of the Air Force. Where, I think this was a diversity conversation we were having with a group of female fighter pilots, and they called themselves, I don't necessarily say love this name, but they called themselves the Fighter Chicks. And they did an analysis and one of them were saying, look, our -- and going back to how I started this conversation, and what you all know. She goes, our family policies are based on a 1950s family, and families have evolved radically.

I specifically use the word spouse, but I still go a lot of places today, where they keep saying, wife, wife, wife, wife; we have a lot of husbands with husbands, we have wives with wives, and families are looking different now, as we open up opportunities; which is only strengthening the Force, I believe that strongly.

So I applaud (a) that your report comes with solutions. A lot of them just come with problems. I'm glad you're putting actual data and fact behind what we knew anecdotally, but this gives us a lot more force to go forward as we work on these issues. And I'm happy, in the time I have left, to take any questions you have. And thank you, to Brookings, for hosting this, it's been -- I live in the neighborhood and it's been a while since I've been in the building.

CAPTAIN GAGE: Mr. Secretary, I'm Captain Geoff Gage, the United States Navy, a Fellow here at Brookings Institution. Thanks for your time. And the survey is super interesting. Theory versus reality, the reality is there's an insatiable appetite for our forces; Navy, Marine Corps, our Army around the world, and there seems to be a structural disconnect in that the service chiefs train and equip our forces, and then provide them to the combatant commanders who have, arguably, an insatiable appetite for those forces.

So, is there a structural modification that can be made, for example, creating an operational general staff that actually deploys those forces that would somehow sort of connect the theory and the reality of factoring family into operational decisions? Thanks.

SECRETARY FANNING: Well, I don't know -- Yes, I think there's always that -- create a tension between those that are in the fight today, and those that are trying to make sure that we have a ready force in the future. I don't think a general staff is the answer to that, because I think there are some imbalances inside the Pentagon as it is, and I think that would add to them in other ways.

I actually think, you know, when we set up Joint Forces Command, which then we stood down, we moved a lot of the unassigned forces to that out of the services. I would move some of the unassigned forces back to the services. You create a little more balance between the Military Department's chiefs and secretaries and the combatant commanders. I think, too -- I mean, I think based on where we are just talking

from the Army's perspective, that the Force is little too small, and more importantly this is a caution, the Force we have today isn't fully resourced for what we are doing with the Force today, and making sure that it's ready tomorrow, and the NDAA has capped the Army at a floor -- given as a floor that frankly, we are going to go below it because, you know, it takes a while to change vectors when you are growing or shrinking your Force.

And the incoming administration has been talking about a much larger Force than that. And I just want to make sure that we are adequately resourcing the Force we have because we could cause some of these problems to become even more imbalanced. I think -- you know -- I've spent my eight years working in -- in the Pentagon the last eight years as resource is decreasing, which is creating an interesting environment for someone like me, because it really makes it easier to come up with innovative solutions and to push towards change.

When you are growing your resource, and having more -- and getting more dollars, that's you use to fix problems, and so I want to sort of be careful that we don't cause more of a problem as we grow the Force, which it looks we are going to do, although no one has explained to me where the money is going to come from; because we can throw some of these things out of balance.

But I think that sort of closing in on your question, the shrinking of the Force with the growing of the requirements, has really caused the combatant commanders the chiefs to work together a lot more closely. I think the combatant commanders have an appreciation for the fact that there are limits to what they get in the way that they didn't eight years ago, so that's healthy.

But the Army in particular, I think, has really been pulled into the day, day after day after day after day. The Army has just cut everything, pushed a lot of bills into the future, even to the point of, in some ways, and it's doing a lot of creative work now in this area, so when a general officer, (inaudible), listening to me now, I'm not talking about you. But for a while just kind of taking its eyes away from looking at the future, the

intellectual work of looking at the future, so we've got to get back at that.

But I think there's an understanding for this pressure, and I think part of it is, the formations that we build in the military, and in the Army we are trying to build train, advise and assist brigades, so we are not ripping apart our brigades, and hopefully that will help with the OPTEMPO in some way. And there are some other things we are looking at to do that.

MR. KUPERSMITH: I'm Joel Kupersmith. I'm the Director of Veterans Initiatives at Georgetown University. I want to make a point about veterans. Virtually all we know about veterans' health is from the VA, and since the VA doesn't take care of families, we know almost nothing about the health of veterans' families. And I think that's a very large gap.

SECRETARY FANNING: I would agree. I think if I were Secretary of the Army next year, one of things I was going to be working on is that transition from DoD to Veterans Affairs. A lot of great work has been done -- I see Rosemary here -- but in some ways that's a low bar, because we had a lot of work to do. And I think there are a few things that we can work on. First of all, we recognize the impact it has on families. Behavioral health, for example, we are trying to push behavioral health out into operational units, but in the schools, including elementary schools too, with a recognition of what this impact is on the totality of the family.

But I think a couple of things. I think one, when you are in the Department of Defense, when you are in uniform, your health issues are different, generally, than what Veterans Affairs is looking at across the totality of its population. And so there might be some creative way while people are transitioning, even after they transition, to keep them in the DoD military medical system a little bit longer, because we are focused on more immediate issues that come from service than maybe issues that span the course of your life as a veteran.

And on behavioral health, I was impressed to see what the Army has

done in terms of trying to understand the issue better, trying to tailor health to individuals, and trying to get healthy out there more to get at the stigma, so you don't have to walk across the installation, go to a corner, into a back room and raise your right hand in a very visible way. But I think we need to completely change the paradigm of behavioral health.

It's not; we are going to make it easier for you to access if you want it. It's, we are asking you to do things over and over and over again, that are against how your body is biologically wired from generations and generations and generations of evolution, we should expect, you should expect you are going to need it, and so you are going to have it, and you are going to go through it when you come back. Special Operations Command has done a lot on that issue, and I think we need to move it across the Force as a whole.

We are at the point where we pretty much accept that anybody who serves and goes into combat, everybody, 100 percent, is going to come back with PTS, and some people find their way out of it on their own, some people don't, and we shouldn't wait until symptoms manifest themselves, we should be preemptive on it.

MS. AIKMAN: My name is Michelle Aikman, and I'm an active -- well my husband is active duty, and I'm a spouse, and I really appreciate you saying what you have said about the role of spouses, and how it's traditionally expected to be involved in the spouse career, the Service member career. I would love to hear your vision or some models that are being considered with how to overcome that and move forward with the spouse having the career and not necessarily providing through volunteerism to support the military families.

SECRETARY FANNING: One thing is, these things are literally generational. I'm going to use a really bad example. I went to a school that had been -- a college that had been all-male; and I don't think any of my male classmates would have gone there if it were still all-male. But as we go, we show up, and there's still this kind of

weird atmosphere around the school, and it dawns on me after a period of time, it's because the majority of the alumni body is still all male.

And I realize it takes time when you make changes for these things to filter and grow. Women in service, for example, we knew this was going to kind of go off to a slow start in the army because we specifically wanted to build the leadership cadre first before we brought people in, in any large numbers into training. And it takes a little time for that to grow the momentum to build, and so the first thing I would say, is it's generational.

But I think, you know, we have this thing called the Career Intermission Program, that Congress has allowed 20 spots per service for enlisted soldiers, and I don't think any of the services that filled those spots yet, and I can take a year to three years off, and then reset my poll year, and I can do it for any number of reasons in my personal life, and then just come back in and have my year be three years younger, two years younger, one year younger.

Nobody believes that that's actually going to work for them, and I'm not even sure that's the right way of looking at it. That the amount of time, that we give someone to become a general officer, to be first looked at for a general officer, were set quite a while ago. People are living longer, people are staying in careers longer, there's no reason -- This is my view, and one of the things that we haven't really talked about much, but in thinking about the force of the future initiatives in these career development opportunities, you know, we are providing more opportunities for someone to go in industry for a year, for someone to go into academic for a year, for someone to get a graduate degree that maybe isn't a direct impact on their career.

But it can be -- you know this -- it can be very hard to take a year out of that plan that you had, that 20, 22-year plan to get to, you know, B07 for the first time. Well, let me stretch that out a little bit more, so that we are not having to move people as much, so that when you are Captain or a Major in particular at various points in that time,

you can make a career decision that adds a year or changes something in the interest of the totality of your family and what your spouse needs to do for his or her career.

So, you know, we don't have the time, it's now December, I don't have the time to look at it in this administration, but I think that's one of the more interesting things to look at, is to sort of stretch out that path a little bit. Because if you -- you know, if you want to be the Chief of Staff of the Army, first of all you've got to go into one of a small number of MOSs, you've got to be at the tip of the spear; Inventory, Army, Artillery, or something like that, and you've got to hit that mark, year after year after year after year.

All those opportunities, development opportunities focused on your career specifically to get you to a certain point in life that doesn't take into account what your spouse wants to do with his or her career, and what your family needs are.

SPEAKER: Hi. Thank you, again, and thanks to Brookings for holding this. I, too, am a recently-retired military spouse, and just pushing back a little bit, I think all of us that have been, and I'm curious how many military spouses are in the room today. To just get a sense of many are here.

I think we all go to change of commands, or retirement ceremonies, and always the spouse is recognized as the real force behind, usually the man, but sometimes the woman, but mostly the man, but there's very little specific that is being done for those of us that have chosen to try to balance a professional career with following a spouse, where you have to move every two to three years. In my case it was from one coast to the other. I'd like more quantifiable specifics that you think that DoD can do even in a Trump administration, to be more supportive the spouse that wants to both support her partner as well as pursue her own career.

SECRETARY FANNING: I think; and I have three aunts that were career military spouses. And so I grew up around that. And you say every two to three years, I go to a lot of retirement ceremonies of our four stars, where it's more moves than

years, when they are on that track.

So here are some things I would do. The first thing is, I really do think there is room to spread out in the number of years the career path for those that are serving in uniform. To allow some breathing space in there, to make decisions that aren't just based on that career path but based on the totality of the family. I think we need to invest more in paying for programs for family support, so we are not relying on the backs of those spouses who aren't working, because more and more are.

We need to do more to provide employment opportunities and make sure they are accessible for those that are moving, and are trailing spouses, but want to work for whatever reason. And we need to keep adjusting the programs that we have. At the start of this administration, we came in, I've totally forgotten the name of the program, I'm sure most of you do; I think it was \$2,500 designed to help spouses -- I'm sorry -- What's it called?

SPEAKER: CAA.

SECRETARY FANNING: CAA? CAA, to get degrees or certificates in things that are needed everywhere, social work, you name it, that type of thing, to try and increase the odds that a spouse could find work wherever that spouse moved, and what we are finding, we found one four-star spouse, who was using those funds, as her husband had pre-retirement paper in. We found lots of things right outside the gates, lots of programs that said, you know, certificate, 2,499, computer included.

But we need to keep having those types of things and making sure we improve on them, and get them better and to target the right people. And a lot of it is resource, unfortunately. To me, it's time and resource, so time, the first path, you know, sort of spreading out and giving more breathing room within those ranks that people have to make those decisions. Then resourced to support these programs, to support paying for the family programs instead of having them built on volunteers, and then provided more services for families, and we've done that, but there's more to do.

Increasing the hours at daycare centers, providing more on-installation rather than requiring people to find it off-installation if we've reached the -- maxed the capability -- capacity, sorry. Whoever has the mic gets to ask the question.

SPEAKER: And this will be the last question for Secretary Fanning.

SPEAKER: Thank you, Secretary. I'm a former military spouse, and just to piggyback on the previous question, I guess more of a recommendation. From my personal experience, you know, I already came as a military spouse with a college degree, and it was okay because, you know, I lived in New York City, we came to D.C., but then we had to go to Norfolk and, you know, I didn't even know where Norfolk was, and somebody had to explain to me.

SECRETARY FANNING: What kind of degree did you get?

SPEAKER: (Laughter) Because in my mind, you know, I just didn't even realize what -- you know, what that would mean for. And so going to Office of Career Services, the way that they dealt with me was very much tied to my husband's rank. Right? He was enlisted, so to deal with somebody that already had a college degree was very challenging for them to, you know, tell me, well, you've got to go to a résumé writing workshop. I'm like, I've spent three years working on Wall Street, you know. So, I think, you know, just having more individualized assistance for spouses can be greater.

SECRETARY FANNING: I agree. For everyone, I think, I hear a couple of things about our transition assistance over and over. One is, it wasn't exactly what I needed, and two is, it came too late. And the second part is a hard one to get because you want to -- I hear this a lot from enlisted soldiers: God, I wish I were doing this when I started. But when I started I wouldn't have been paying any attention if you made me go through it.

But I think we have to tailor this over the totality of the first tour, let's say. Some things to think about as you are coming in, some things to think about in the middle of this, and some things to think about as your transition on the way out. So, I get your --

I mean, this is another thing just about our enlisted Force in general. You know, most of the enlisted soldieries that I meet have more education than I do, a lot of them have Master's, and I run into PhDs all the time in all of the services. And so we do have a long way to go on that.

And since that was the last question, I'm going to let the smart guy up in the front here ask, actually, one more question before we go. But I want to tie it to the first question here which is -- and I've said this publicly before, so I'm not going to get into any trouble, I think, saying it again.

We need to be careful as we go into a period where we look over and grow the Force. And when I say we need to resource it fully, we are not resourcing today the Force we have, and if we grow it, and we grow it on the backs of the budget we have, all these things we are talking about are going to be at greater risk. And to the question about tangible things we can do. One is time, two is money. I have a sense that we are going to see the Force get larger, but we are going to have even more stress on resource. And so your work is as important now as it has ever been. So, thank you.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you, Mr. Secretary. And we are all grateful you are here and for what you've done for the army the army and the military in general. And most of what I was going to ask has been covered, but a specific question on that spouse and the employment. All the ideas you mentioned are excellent, and they are all promising, and they are all probably going to make, if we do them, some difference. But it's going to be hard to solve the problem, obviously.

So, should we do things like change the way we measure military compensation -- adjust, in some sense, the way we evaluate the adequacy of military compensation compared with civilian cohorts? Because as you know right now, statistically, military compensation is pretty good compared to civilian cohort, but what is really the right civilian cohort, what's the right standard for comparison? Civilian jobs really aren't the same. So, when we do those quadrennial reviews of military

compensation, do we need to do the calculations the way we have been, but then at the end do an adjustment that acknowledges that the spouse often won't be working despite our best efforts?

SECRETARY FANNING: I'll answer that first, and then your question raised a thought in my mind. Yes, I don't think we can compare compensation in the military and outside the military, and your survey is bearing that out. As we see over time, compensation issues -- family issues arising now above compensation issues. And so, we say compensation and benefits, and we need to think about what is required for someone to serve and for that person's family to be care of (a), and (b) that family unit to include the persons serving is being taken care of.

And being able to grow and stay whole as we think it should and they want it to. And one way to do this, I talk about generational too, we have to be vigilant and work hard at diversity, in all of its forms. And the way I'm going to talk about now, is who we make leaders in uniform. Who are the leaders with the stars on their shoulders who come from broader backgrounds? And therefore have, you know, readiness of the forces, number one of course, but this is directly linked to readiness of the Force.

And so making sure that our leaders, there's a diversity in what they value, because right now we have a lot of amazing leaders with lots of stars on their shoulders, but have gone up the more traditional track, and have seen that work, and have made that commitment, and can have an expectation, conscious, unconscious, that that should be what other people do as well, and yet we have some other amazingly successful leaders who've done it in different ways.

And so making sure we keep pulling them into leadership positions so that we have a diversity of perspective about how you can do this, appreciate families, increase that focus on families, and yet still have a ready and incredibly lethal force, I think is an important component.

So, thank you for having me this morning. Thank you for all the work you

are doing, and I look forward to continuing to work on this with you, Todd and I, when we come back without ties on. Thank you. (Laughter) (Applause)

MS. KAMARCK: Well, that was a great opening, to our morning, and thank you for hosting this. I'm Elaine Kamarck, I'm a Senior Fellow here at the Brookings Institution, and I am a Blue Star mother, and a Blue Star mother-in-law. And in fact I met Kathy, many years ago it seems, when my daughter was first married to an Army Officer, and the Blue Star Families was a very small volunteer organization. I think my daughter, Chloe, was the first paid staffer.

And as I remember she wasn't paid very much, no criticism of you guys, it's just it was a very small organization. And in a remarkably short amount of time, Kathy has grown this to an organization with 34 staffers and all sorts of professional endeavors, and I think it's really amazing; it's been wonderful to watch this. (Applause)

So, let's go right into the panel today, because we have some really fascinating people here to follow up on the Secretary's talk. To my right is Cristin Orr Shiffer, she is the Senior Policy Advisor and Survey Leader at Blue Star Families. And she's the one responsible for getting out this survey, putting it together, et cetera. It is the biggest survey of its kind, and well respected and referred to frequently, both in the Pentagon and outside of it.

Next to her is Rosalinda, who prefers to be called Rosie -- because probably Rosalinda reminds her of her mother yelling at her -- Maury. Rosie is the Director for Applied Research and Analytics, and she manages the Institute for Veterans and Military Families at Syracuse University. This is a standalone research institute devoted to the topic at hand, and throughout her career she has provided support to senior scientists, in projects in both the public and the private sectors. So, we are so happy to have her.

Next to Rosie is Todd Weiler, he is the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs. In this capacity he serves as the Principal Advisor to

the Secretary of Defense, and the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, on all matters related to Civilian and Military Policies. He is also a veteran and an attack helicopter pilot. My son was a Navy pilot, my son-in-law was a Kiowa pilot in --

ASST. SECY. WEILER: I was very happy to see that they used the Cobra on that.

MS. KAMARCK: That's exactly right. And last but certainly not least, is my colleague, Michael O'Hanlon, who is a Senior Fellow here at Brookings, Director of Research, and for the Foreign Policy. And he has written, as you know, many, many books, on the military, on the military budget. He is an incredible national resource, and you can see that by all the generals he hangs around with, and to know him, and who read his work, and pay attention to what he says.

So, without further ado, let's get into the topic of the day, and I want to turn this to Cristin -- turn it over to Cristin first. And note that the findings of the survey have been structured differently this year. Can you tell us a little bit about what's new, why the change and then, what you find most surprising about these results?

MS. SHIFFER: Sure. Thank you, Elaine. Thanks to Brookings. When we were going through the data this year, one of the things that really stood out to us was that operational tempo was high, people were feeling stressed about it, 72 percent had indicated that operational tempo was unhealthy for their family, 42 percent had indicated that their family member, or they as a service member had been away at least six months and the last 18 before that; so, at least a third of the time away.

These findings were counter to a lot of what I think understands as to what was happening with the military. We were coming back from the wars, we were downsizing, forced reductions. And so we knew this anecdotally, we were seeing it in the data, and then also if you listened to what Secretary Fanning said, this really reinforced what we were starting to see, which was that DoD and Congress, and probably the

government all around, need to start thinking a little bit -- get a little bit smarter about incorporating military families into their thinking.

Their strategic planning and how, and he was suggesting with a large amount of unpaid volunteer work that has traditionally been required, also in terms of care for children, and the kind of new culture where parenting is shared by both parents, a lot more. So what we saw was, yes, that DoD probably needed to think a little bit more about how to incorporate military families into the strategic thinking. So, one of the ways that we thought we could that was, instead of presenting our data, typically we do it topically, so we talk about family, financial stability, we talk about top issues, we talk about spouse employment, transition for veterans. Instead we thought, let's structure it in terms of defense priorities that we know might be able to then have a conversation more clearly with those defense leaders.

So, if you look this year our report is structured into a recruitment, a readiness, and then a retention and a reintegration framework. And so by making more explicit, the relationships between our findings and these defense priorities, our hope is that it's more useful and that it helps us have a conversation with an audience that's broader than just our traditional military family audience.

MS. KAMARCK: Thank you, Rosie XXXmeant Cristin?XXX. Todd, and Michael, let's drill down a little bit on this issue of operational tempo; okay? Obviously here, what it does to families, but also, what do you think is going to happen in the future about this? And is there a way -- I think Secretary Fanning kind of alluded to this. Is there a way to deal with this in a more family-friendly way?

ASST. SECY. WEILER: Who knows what the future will hold. I do think there -- and Secretary Fanning alluded a little bit to this. I do think that there's a different way of doing business that we'll start to see more of. And I'm taking the approach in how we address the pilot shortage which we are experiencing in the Air Force and the Navy. How we are going to address the cyber community needs, and perhaps even medical,

and the way that we are looking at this, is a different way of engaging our reserve components.

So, we have had a system that has existed for decades, of one week in a month drill, two weeks in the summer, anyone that's ever been in the Reserve component knows that it's not just that. But what we are suggesting is that a model incorporation with corporate America, for example, to address the pilot shortage, or the cyber requirements, might look something like 15 hours a week, two weeks on two weeks off, different models which, oh, by the way, are being used by many of our allied countries.

This gives the ability to meet the needs of the commercial community, and at the same time meet the needs of the department, and provide that balance for the Service member and the family. You know, one of the issues that we haven't really touched on here, is the work-life balance issue, which is something that's real in today's society. I mean there is a return to a desire to have a work-life balance, so I think by getting out of the box and being a little bit more creative in the way that we address how we use our forces and how we structure for future missions, will have a huge impact on this.

MR. O'HANLON: Thanks, Elaine. First I want to say it's a real pleasure to be part of this with my good friend, Kathy Roth-Douquet, and everybody else. And I also want to, again, commend Kathy for her book of 15 years ago or more now at this point, AWOL, which was for me, one of the most important books I've read that sensitized me to a lot of the issues we are talking about today. It's a real, real pleasure to be up here, and including also with Secretary Weiler, and Secretary Fanning before, and others.

I guess a couple of things that I would say, one is, to let's take a step back, at least I will, and say, the state of the Force today, I think, is very good, and we've heard political rhetoric that had said it's a disgrace. That's incorrect, to put it mildly.

Today's military is extraordinarily ready and capable, however it's tired, and it's slightly too small.

So, I think it's important to get these things straight in terms of how we talk about them. Admittedly what I just said is not objective fact that you can find written in some stone in the Middle East, but I think it's pretty well backed up by the data. I think that we have to say, today's military is excellent, but it's smallish for what's being asked of it, and it's tired, after 15 years of heavy use.

So, that's I think, for me, a foundational starting point. I do think the Force needs to grow a little bit. I don't think the deployments are going to scale back; if anything they may go a little bit in the other direction. And I think, however, that there is one more piece to bring into this discussion, and I know that Todd and others have been working hard on this, it's a very difficult balance to strike, which is that the services need to think harder about how to use their forces efficiently.

What I mean, specifically by that, is there are times we deploy people, where we could do the same task without as much deployment. So we pulled, not in this administration, but in the last two, we pulled a lot of forces out of Europe, we went slightly too far with that. Now the additional forces that we are putting into Eastern Europe are all done by rotations, which are deployments. They don't have to necessarily all be rotations.

Now it's a sensitive matter how many forces you want to put in Latvia tomorrow, and build American schools, and so forth, I'm not suggesting this is entirely an easy call strategically, but we may want to think about putting another brigade of army forces, for example, back in Europe. We've probably cut too far going down just to two in the last 20 years.

Another example would be Korea. We all know that Korea is very dangerous, I think President Obama was correct to tell President Elect Trump, keep your eye on this problem, it's getting worse, there's still a chance of conflict. However, I also

think we can consider putting -- making the brigade in Korea a permanently-stationed brigade.

I think Korea is safe enough, that American military families can live there with their men and women in uniform, and not have these tours all be unescorted as they have been historically. Whether you like those two ideas or not, the broader point remains, I think, which is that we have to consider how we can do certain things, with less, tearing people away from their families.

And one last point, and I see my Navy and Marine Corps friends here, and they may not like it, including my good friend Gregg Douquet, but I still think that the Navy can look for creative ways, in particular to have a few more ships either homeported abroad, or remain abroad longer and have crews rotate by airplane.

Now, the Navy considers this idea for the most part, anathema. There are some classes of ships that they will consider it for, but for the most part they want to have one crew, one ship. I think we can be a little more clever than that in how we -- and then you don't have to spend the month sailing back and forth quite as often, which means you waste less time on deployments that could be made more efficient.

I think this whole category of ideas which, again, this administration has thought about to an extent, but there's a lot more room for discussion, because I don't think even with Mr. Trump's buildup -- first of all I'm not sure we really should go as far as he wants to go for the reason Secretary Fanning mentioned earlier, it's going to cost a lot, and we are already headed for another trillion dollar a year deficit by decade's end. That's a national security concern itself as Admiral Mullen used to tell us.

So, on top of that fact, I think we are just not necessarily in a world of Paul Ryan and others, who are going to see the full Trump buildup happen. So the efficiency issue is going to be paramount, or should be paramount in our thinking as well.

MS. KAMARCK: Do you know, I have one -- Listening to both Todd and Michael, reminds me of some years ago my daughter-in-law who was an Annapolis

graduate, then a ship driver, had been trained in the most, sophisticated at that time, weapon system, and then she left the Navy, and got pregnant and had the baby, and got called by the Reserves saying, look, your skill is needed, and if this thing and this thing happens we want you in Bahrain.

And I literally had discussions with her about moving to Bahrain to take care of the new born baby while she was -- I mean, this was like -- the baby was, he's now 9 years old, but at that point he was a couple months' old. I really had visions of myself sitting in Bahrain for a couple of years, taking care of this newborn, because that's what the Reserves -- the Reserves may have needed her. Now, things happened that they didn't, but this is really, it poses so many problems for families, not to mention for women in their childbearing years.

So, Rosie, we haven't heard from you yet. And one of the things that we noticed in the research was that active duty Service members and their spouses were willing to recommend service to young people, more than to their own children. Now, what's that about? Okay, do you have any idea of why there's that, you know, discrepancy?

MS. SHIFFER: So, Rosie has nominated me to talk about that.

MS. MAURY: I'll talk a bit following that.

MS. SHIFFER: So she's kicking me under the table. So, Rosie works primarily on veteran and transition issues, so she's going to be the lead on that stuff, but I'll take the family stuff on. So my feeling is that, you know, we did see, and Secretary Fanning mentioned it, that quality of life issues are rising, you know, in relation to paying benefits issues. I think we've gotten over those concerns. Last year when we were sitting here, there were still a lot of concern about the new retirement system, whether or not everyone was going to be grandfathered in, involuntary separation.

Interestingly this year -- last year in the top, I believe it was number three for Service members, was veteran employment, which was a new thing for us last year,

you could see there was a lot of nervousness going on. This year that issue has plummeted, I think 13 percent of Service members identify that as an issue. So there are some things that going really well in terms of confidence about services' benefits.

I think we can say we are fairly comfortable, but what we are seeing is exactly what Mike was saying, it's a weary Force, and we are seeing new deployments at the same that we are seeing Force reductions. So, what's happening is we are seeing a combined weariness with, frankly, a generational shift, like Secretary Fanning was talking about where we all tend to be a little bit more focused on sharing work-life balances, sharing household responsibilities, in an expectation that spouses are going to work.

And so that recommending service number, and it's 66 percent would recommend service to someone else's child, but only 43 percent would recommend it to their own child. And do you know, I think it's not all bad news folks. I really don't. I think what it says is that people still want to serve, and we saw this in qualitative responses throughout the survey. People still want to serve, they are proud to serve, they are dedicated to serve, but because of those things that I just talked about, they are worried about, you know, their own child doing it right now.

They would do it, but maybe they wouldn't -- they'd want something quite a little bit different for their own child. So I think we have some work to do in getting that number back up, but I don't think it's all bad.

MS. MAURY: I do want to add one thing to that. Veterans were more likely to recommend service to young persons and their children more so than active-duty families. But it really depends who you are asking, and I think that one of the more interesting findings in this year -- in this survey in particular was transition, and is topically here quite often. And the more difficult the transition the less likely you are going to recommend service. So that is actually an important, I don't want to call it an event, it's a process that has to be handled, and so I think that that also leads to the future of the Force.

MS. KAMARCK: Did you want to add to that, Todd?

ASST. SECY. WEILER: I will. A couple of items; let me start with transition. Transition at our level has now moved -- transitioned over to my office, there is a couple of big reasons for that, one that I'll allude to now, is we have done a good job in improving transition services over the years with regard to employment. Where we have not done as good a job, and where we can see improvement that needs to be made is reminding those folks that, say, leave active service that there are opportunities in the Reserve component as they leave active component service.

What has happened in the past is we lose these folks and then it's hard to find them again. And it also creates a very large bill for our Reserve component and Guard folks to go out and find these folks and re-recruit them. So, that's one of the reasons that we've moved that organization under MNRA is so that we can address that particular piece.

I think one other item that you alluded to here is -- that we have to address, is the fact that in many ways we've lost our brand. We've lost our brand to various non-profits that deal with wounded warriors; that seems to be a lot of what is covered the media, is covered in commercials and so forth, and we need to recapture that brand and we are doing that now. A lot of the work that we've been doing over the past few months has to do with getting back into what I call the business of talking to influencers, moms, dads, school counselors, and so forth.

Because the research shows that this population that is growing up now, that will be eligible for Military Service, is very proposed to service, and they believe they can make a difference in the world, and they want to do things, and they want to watch out for each other. So, I think that there's a great opportunity. It will be a different brand than what we did in the '70s and the '80s, because it's a different population, and I think this gets to what Eric was talking to earlier

MS. KAMARCK: So, I think for anyone here on the panel, one of the

things that we've seen in the last couple years is this dramatic change. I mean, Kathy and I first met in the Clinton administration and we can still remember the days in the military, you know, the ho-ha back in 1993. And of course now to realize how quickly, right, all of that has changed.

But we do now see that with that, all these changes in personnel, particularly the changes in the role of women in the military, we now see a little bit of a backlash to that with some of the people in the Trump administration saying that, you know, they don't want women in combat, and various challenges to what has happened. How do you see that going forward? And will we, in fact, continue to have military spouses who are husbands and not wives?

MR. O'HANLON: Yes. I'll begin on that issue. I guess General Kelly has been recently cited as a person who is skeptical. I think General Kelly's skepticism was well advised for what he was saying specifically. It's pretty important to listen carefully to General Kelly, who I think is an outstanding choice for this job at DHS, in general, but he expressed the concern that if you open up all combat positions, including infantry, to women, that's fine in one sense except you are not going to get very many who qualify, according to the established standards.

Now, there may be cases where the established standards are a little too old-fashioned, the (inaudible), you know, carries 200 pounds. But do you know what? Carrying 200 pounds when you are a Marine infantry officer, or an enlisted person is actually sometimes needed, or at least 150 pounds. Somebody has got to carry that mortar.

So, these are not usually capricious standards, and General Kelly was saying, yes, there are some super athletes out there and, yes, women are incredibly impressive in terms of endurance, in terms of many other emotional and mental attributes, but the raw ability to carry that much weight, is manifested by a fewer number of them, and it's probably inherent to the body.

And I'm sorry to go on, but it gets to the point I think you were alluding to, Elaine, and I think it has to be just stated, that General Kelly was not making some kind of a comment about wanting to go back to an old-fashioned military where women didn't have a huge role. He was making a very specific point about these certain categories where, in fact, old-fashioned brute strength, much more than I have, by the way, as an aging White man, is needed to do these kinds of jobs.

And so, I think there's not really a general concern with people like, in my opinion, with more specifically General Mattis likely to be the Secretary of Defense. I don't see any likelihood of reversion on this or other issues, for the reasons that you mentioned. Now they are going to have to prove that they have the sensitivity to this issue, that this administration has shown, and so I hope they will. But I'm not going to express too much skepticism just based on this one debate we've had over the last five years.

ASST. SECY. WEILER: This is an issue that I deal with every single day. This is the primary issue that I deal with. And I say all the time, we have to be a military that is reflective of the society that we serve, and that is what we are doing. Big kudos to this Secretary for bringing personnel issues to the forefront. And I was in the Don't Ask, Don't Tell period, unfortunately that was one of the first things I had to do as -- the first political in the army and the Clinton years was to enact that.

Now, my husband and I, have no problem going out and enjoying events with our military family. I think that those areas where the military has done a great job in moving forward to reflect our society, and I, in fact, wrote an op-ed not too long ago about sometimes we lead, sometimes we follow, and that's okay. We don't always have to lead society. I think in the case of transgender, we've done an excellent job in leading the way, and how this should be done. In the case of Don't Ask, Don't Tell, we followed what industry and what society did. And that's okay. We don't always have to lead everything.

MS. KAMARCK: Rosie, the thing that keeps popping up, the thing that

seems to be, you know, constant throughout these discussions is the issue of military employment. Can you talk a little bit -- for spouses -- Can you speak a little bit about what you see in this survey that might be different from the research that you do?

MS. SHIFFER: Okay. I'm going to take this one too.

MS. MAURY: She keeps doing it.

MS. SHIFFER: So the question is spouse employment?

MS. KAMARCK: Mm-hmm.

MS. SHIFFER: And what else?

MS. KAMARCK: Just spouse employment.

MS. SHIFFER: Spouse employment, it's a big one. Do you know, this is the first year that we collected unemployment, right, on spouse -- spouse unemployment, spouse employment; typically before, we didn't forge into the world of BLS definitions of unemployment, which is, for anyone who spends a lot of time with that data, maybe just me, that it's four weeks that you have to be actively looking for work. And there are problems with that definition just to begin with, in counting military spouses in unemployment, because the reality of a PCS cycle is more than four weeks, so by definition if you have to -- if you lose your job, if you are fired, because you are moving, you are not even going to be captured in that data as being unemployed even if you are just PCS-ing to the next place, because you are probably not going to be looking in that four weeks because of all of that, partially unpaid labor that spouses tend to do, propping the house, getting the kids back in school, you know, packing, unpacking, right, we all know that stuff.

So there's a problem with the way spouse unemployment is measured generally, but playing by their definition, we did come up with a 21 percent unemployment rate for spouses. And we still found that over the half the spouses, who weren't working, wanted to work; 48 percent were employed, and this trend is getting better.

When we started this survey in 2009, 39 percent were working, so we

are seeing a positive trend line, which is encouraging, and then, you know, I would just point out that the reason that spouses aren't working still, number one is family commitments, number two is, Service members' requirements, tightened requirements. You know, there's a flight schedule, so I don't even know what my husband is going to be doing the next day, so how can count on him to pick up the kid from childcare every day?

And number three, the issue with childcare. So, number one and number three were very related. And so it just still goes to show that childcare is intimately tied to wellbeing, it's intimately -- we also found that spouses who were unemployed were more likely to be depressed and distressed. So, again, spouse -- childcare is very intimately tied to both spousal employment, but also financial stability and mental wellness.

MS. MAURY: I do want to add that spouse employment is also tied to transition, so a steady spouse employment will ease the transition as well.

MS. KAMARCK: Okay. Listen, we hear a lot about public-private collaboration, and non-profit collaboration in the military and in the veteran space. But a lot of people think these are a mile wide and an inch deep. And how do we deepen them? How do we take them more seriously? And how can they improve veteran and military family space? Rosie, do you want to start with that? And then anybody else can jump in.

MS. MAURY: Sure. I want to go back to it, like I mentioned before, transition is actually a very key and important aspect, and the unique thing about this survey is that we can look at this with other factors. So, you know, employment, heavily related, the smoother the transition the more likely they find the job that they want to find in a shorter amount of time. The smoother the transition the more likely they are less depressed, less stressed, and so forth and so on.

But, again, I want to emphasize that the importance of that transition partnership, I think that public-private partnerships are most helpful in spouse

employment, for example, working with employers that know the challenges that come with military families. You know, if a spouse has to move, they don't have to drop them or fire them, they can hopefully take that job with them. So I think that's an important aspect to include, and making sure that the private sector knows, in particular.

MS. KAMARCK: Anybody else?

ASST. SECY. WEILER: I would just add, too, I think that the work, I was briefed by OTO -- here she is (crosstalk), wonderful. I think that where we have opportunities to create public-private partnerships to fill the entire process of transition, that is success, and that's what I see that's happening. And you should actually take some credit and speak to that.

MS. MAURY: Absolutely! You know, transition isn't just DoD, right? It should be everybody. And that's part of what we are doing here at the -- or what we do at the institute is providing opportunities for transitioning Service members for veterans and both active-duty military spouses as well as transitioned spouses. You know, again, very important for many, not just the program, the resources that we have here, but for many other employers out there. I know there are several here that stand up and hopefully bridge that divide, if you will.

MS. SHIFFER: And just to speak on the spouse side of that, I think really one central opportunity for DoD and for the private sector is local engagement. We see over and over again that a lot of problems that come up and can be solved at the local level, but that bases can't do it alone, nor should they have to, so the opportunity for the private sector to engage and collaborate with the bases, you know, instead of there being inside the gate, outside the gate, and then the only thing that they, you know, frequently will collaborate on is, well: how do we make sure we don't get BRAC-ed? Right?

So instead of just looking at how do we not get BRAC-ed, it would be great to see chambers of commerce and other folks in the community actually engaging more with the military at that local level, and that's one of the things that Blue Star

Families have worked really hard to do.

MS. KAMARCK: Let's take a few questions from the audience. We've got some time left, and the microphone is coming around. So you can address your question to an individual member of the panel, or to anyone on the panel, in general. So, hands up? Right there.

SPEAKER: Hello. My name is Brooke Alberga. I'm from Military Officers Association of America. I guess my question is for Mr. Weiler and Mr. O'Hanlon. In some of this conversation about increasing numbers and in particular the conversation about increasing use of the Reserve component, we hear a lot about Reserve component members, National Guard and members of the Reserve, who have a very hard time straddling their civilian career responsibilities with their responsibilities in the Reserve component; especially because Reserve benefits do not look the same as active-duty benefits.

So when we are talking about the difference between compensating someone under Title 10, and someone under Title 32, and then expecting them to also bridge that gap in their civilian job, be promotable, be competitive, be a reliable employee. How are we going to make sure that the Service member's career can keep pace with what we are hoping will also provide an opportunity for military spouse to maintain their career?

I think we've got a big gap there to fill, and I'm curious about your thoughts about how we are going to implement changes going forward, that really support our Reserve component in being a professional Force.

MR. O'HANLON: I'll make a brief comment, and then hear more informed and important one subsequently. I guess one, I appreciate the point, and I think there's just a lot to digest. One question I have in my mind is whether some of these metrics that we've used to define an adequate or an acceptable level of deployment are really correct. I think they were an improvement. They were, you know, basically, one

out of every three years if you are in the active Force, one out of every six if you are in the Reserve component.

Those were improvements relative to how we were in the 2000s, in the peak of Iraq and then Afghanistan. So, in one sense they were good interim goals. They may still be too demanding for the long term, on both sides. And, you know, I can't imagine being deployed one out of every three years away from my family even if I'm in the active military.

Now we might have to ask that, because we can't foresee where the world is going, so if we are in a period of crisis or conflict, we might have to ask that for a while, maybe it's time to rethink those numbers. That doesn't fully satisfy or address your concern, but that's one partial answer, perhaps.

ASST. SECY. WEILER: Yes. There were a lot of questions in that one question. Let me hit the benefits piece first, working it. Okay? Working it hard, I think you are going to see something soon on this. We have recognized, and I'm sure everyone here has heard the story, the helicopter goes down, three different people on different orders, different benefits. That's a primary issue that we are addressing right now.

I think the answer to, how do you balance this period where the service member is trying to move up the ladder if they are an officer enlisted, we really see this at the Captain level in the Officer Corps, at the same time that they are trying to make VP in the corporate world. The first step in that is calling attention to it, and making sure that people understand that that is an issue you have got to continue to have advocacy around, not only around the city, but inside the building for the uniqueness of the Reserve components; so that's the first step, is calling attention to it.

The second step is creating the opportunities where that professional development study can be in some way compensated for. It's something that I firmly believe in. Whether that is in retirement points or whether it's in something else and,

again, we've got to start thinking differently than just in the mold of what was created 30 or 40 or 50 years ago. If we need to make something new that's fine, but we have to one, call to attention, and then two, create the environment by which they can make that military, because that is the part-time piece of their life, make that easier to accomplish.

And I also believe that there may be the opportunity to have more stability - and I think Secretary Fanning spoke a little bit about this -- to have more stability, inner rank structure and not having to meet these gates at certain periods as you move up. And that might include more stability at a single rank over a longer period of time. You know, not everybody wants to be a General, so I think that there's opportunities there, too.

MS. KAMARCK: Other questions? Yeah, way back there. Stand up, please, so we can see you. Thank you.

MR. GEORGE: I am standing. (Laughter) Jim George, Military Business Association. The Yellow Ribbon Program for reintegration, you sort of spoke around that. How effective do you think that is now? For example, I read an article recently where some of the employers, were given a ride on a Chinook helicopter to give them an appreciation for some of what their employees when they are gone and so forth. Are there other programs like that that would give the employers a better understanding of what their people do?

ASST. SECY. WEILER: Yes, there are. There are programs through the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve that familiarize employers with the unique aspects of service through their Reserve component employees, there are a variety of activities that occur, both locally, within the Guard and Reserve units, and then there's national efforts that we do as well. I'm biased on the Yellow Ribbon because I own it, but I think it's a very effective program. It was a step to not take our Reserve component folks through that one installation, and then ship them out to their homes which are across America and just have them return, you know, and everything is hunky-

dory.

This is actually going into their units when they return and working through all the various transition issues that need to be worked through. And that includes reconnecting with Department of Labor resources, understanding veterans' benefits, having companies and non-profits in. So, I think it's a great model. I actually believe it is such a good model that we can do more of this type of service at the active level as well.

MS. KAMARCK: All right. I think we've got time for one more question before I call Kathy up to conclude the program. Any other -- Yes, how about all the way in the back -- Oh, all right. You are acceding to the person, sort of in the back. Yes, got it.

MS. BLACKWELL: Hi. I'm Wendy Blackwell, from Baltimore.

MS. KAMARCK: Can you stand up, please?

MS. BLACKWELL: Yes. I'm Wendy Blackwell, from Baltimore. I represent a small company; we do training nationally for non-profits. We are seeing that a lot of the community service organizations that support families and children are reporting that military children are having a really hard time in school, struggling with trying -- I see you shaking your head -- What kinds of services are in place for the children that will support them through all the moves and what should we be looking for to support the children in our programs?

MS. KAMARCK: Can you take that?

MS. SHIFFER: All right. Sure. Frankly, I'm not going to be able to speak to all the programs that are available through the Department and then through local communities. It is a partnership for a lot of different ones, but what I can tell you is that this is a concern that's rising, not just -- you know, we traditionally see this mostly in spouses, but this year we saw it Service members, too, that it was the number for Chief of Service members was the impact of deployment on the children.

One of the things that the folks can do that's not a benefit, but it's something that I think that I think local schools in every community, it's an actionable item for everyone, it's, only a third of our respondents who were parents indicated that their school was doing a good job of implementing the interstate compact for military child education. And this is something that says, if I lived in Maryland, and I had to take Maryland history as a junior, if I have to move to California my senior year, I shouldn't be penalized by having to take another state history class, because that's the requirement of that new state.

That's just one example. There are a number of them. Making sure you recognize certain credits and keeping education on track. So one of the most actionable items that I could see out there for communities to support military children is through the schools, and recognizing that military children are out there, some schools do a really great job of doing that, but there are a number of -- you know, typically they are near military bases. But there are military children everywhere, and odds are, teachers don't know it, unless the parents speak up.

So, I would recommend that one of the best ways to help children that are military children, is working through the educational system making sure that it's easier for them to go from school to school to school. My little girl, by the time she was in third grade had been in seven schools. And she's doing great, she got straight A's this year, she's in all honors, I'm bragging little, but my point is, it's doable, and we've been a 15-year military family, and so it's not all doom and gloom, it's also good resilience for military children. You know, they get good at what they are doing. So we don't want to say that it's all bad, but I really would stress engagement through local communities and schools.

MS. KAMARCK: Thank you. Yes, you --

ASST. SECY. WEILER: Yes, if I can just jump on this for just a second?

This is a problem statement, I have no answer. But Kathy and I have discussed this, and

I would love to hear your thoughts on this as well. We go in pendulum swings, and I remember in the '90s when I was in the administration we were talking about, we've got to tear down the walls with our communities, we've got to get out in the communities.

Well, now we are out in the communities, and we have military families living in civilian communities where the neighbors don't really know what they do, why they have these situations. Why are they packing up and moving all the time? So, we don't have that, as I like to say, the big dinner table that we used to have at the installation, where you knew when somebody was leaving; either on TDY, or they were deployed. And everyone came together to take care of that family. You don't necessarily have that today, and it's not because people don't care, it's because they don't understand.

And so I think that we need to figure out a way of addressing this, and I don't know if it's -- obviously it's not a -- the right answer is, not pull everybody back on the installation, but it's how do we create that balance, and where can we create that balance, and where can we create those opportunities.

MS. KAMARCK: Great. Thank you very much. Why don't we have -- We are at the end of our time, but I know I want to have Kathy up for a few closing remarks.

MS. ROTH-DOUQUET: Thank you so much. And thank you so much to Mike and to Elaine, and to Brookings for hosting us here. It's so exciting for us to see the Center for 21st Century Security and Intelligence, and have military families have a seat at the table for that discussion. To us, that's a tremendous statement of accomplishment for what we set out to do. So, thank you for including us in this discussion.

Todd, I loved your closing comments because they lead into why we do this survey. We want to talk to our neighbors and tell them who we are and what we are doing; those neighbors, if they are in the highest levels of government, or if they are shaping opinions of the best think tanks; of if they are just the person next door. Because

we are -- Blue Star Families are currently serving military and their families, all ranks and services, Guard and Reserve, were less than 0.05 percent of the population, and if people don't know us, they can't help us.

The survey was the first thing we did after we formed, and I would mention that Elaine and I had a conversation in her house before I started Blue Star Families, about whether that was a good idea or not. And I appreciate you encouraging me. The survey was the first thing we do because we want to tell the story. This is so gratifying because it does let us tell the story, and we want to tell it not just at the highest levels of leadership, but also in the communities, because in the communities is where people live, and it's where we solve our problems.

When we tell our story people care, and then we can make those solutions. There's a lot more we can do to make the connections between the official government agencies that make us military families. We wouldn't be military families if it were not for DoD, but we are serving America. Right? So, we need to make that connection back home. A healthy nation shares in the responsibility for supporting military families. And that's what we want to tell with this survey. We couldn't be more grateful for you helping us tell that story.

We have so much more work to do. I will offer to those of you in the audience, if you have organizations or institutions and would like to invite us to come brief and help explain our community more to your members we would be delighted to do that. We have a Blue Star Neighbors Program to help members of the community who are our neighbors, engage more.

There's something that can be done at every level. Brookings is doing a great deal today by sharing this information, by incorporating this in our work. I will, because Mike was kind enough to plug my book, I'm going to plug his. Mike has a new book out now about a reason to -- Can you tell me the title? I don't remember?

MR. O'HANLON: The \$650 Billion Bargain.

MS. ROTH-DOUQUET: The \$650 Billion Bargain, and a modest proposal for right-sizing the military budget. So I commend that to you all. Elaine, IVMF, Todd, Mike, and of course Cristin, thank you so much.

And I just want to add one more thing. Cristin, we found out two weeks ago, is going to be leaving the U.S., her husband got orders for next month to go to Italy. She will not be leaving Blue Star Families. Nothing says a military spouse has to lose her job because her husband is serving her country.

Cristin, I'm very proud to say, will continue to run our surveys, she'll run it from Italy, she won't necessarily be sleeping normal hours. You'll see here again next year if I can convince Mike and Elaine to have us back again. And that's the kind of solution that's possible for all of us.

So thank you for your time. And thank you for caring. (Applause)

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Expires: November 30, 2020