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THE ROLE OF MILITARY FAMILIES IN 21st CENTURY DEFENSE

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## P R O C E E D I N G S

(Video shown)

MR. O'HANLON: Good morning, everyone. As we wait for the lights to come on let me welcome you to Brookings. I'm Michael O'Hanlon and we're delighted here at Brookings to be partnering with Blue Star Families in this important discussion based on their survey and ranging across a wide number of issues for military families and veterans about the stresses and strains and challenges of military service in today's world. It's an honor, as I say, for us to be involved in this.

The way we're going to proceed, having seen this excellent video, is I just want to give this brief word of welcome and introduce very briefly my good friend Kathy Roth-Douquet who is the CEO of Blue Star Families and then she will offer some thoughts and some comments and then we'll convene the panel including with the acting undersecretary of defense for personnel matters as well as some other experts from Blue Star Families and from Syracuse on these same sets of subjects.

A brief word about Kathy, I've known her for more than 20 years. She and I were graduate students together at Princeton. She's a military spouse. She wrote partly as a result of her experience as a military spouse one of the most important books of modern civil military relations in the United States, and since it's November and Christmas is coming (laughter) for those of you who haven't yet read this, "AWOL: The Unexcused Absence of America's Upper Classes From Military Service -- and How it Hurts our Country," a book she wrote with Frank Schaeffer, remains a very, very powerful voice and important activist on this set of issues. So, let me please ask all of you to join in welcoming Blue Star Families, and specifically Kathy, to Brookings. (Applause)

MS. ROTH-DOUQUET: Mike O'Hanlon, proving that he is indeed a very good friend, thank you.

Thank you so much for joining me here today. I want to thank our sponsors and

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our friends and partners who made this possible. USAA, Mike Kelly is here with us today; Lockheed Martin, Maryann Downs; Facebook who sat with us today; Northrup Grumman, I'm not sure if Karen is with us; and many others. And in addition, you saw on that last screen our partners. Those are the people who help us put this survey out. They help us suggest topics and questions we might want to ask and push out to their constituencies and their members, the people they touch, so that we can have the widest possible girt. People are here from our partner organizations now, would you raise your hands so we can recognize you? Raise them higher. Thank you. (Applause)

We are a village. We need each other in the government and the nonprofit space and the foundations and corporations and the think tanks. What we are doing here I hope we can model for the country.

I love our survey. It was the very first thing Blue Star Families did when we decided to become an organization. A group of military family members, myself and others, wanted to keep doing the job of defending and supporting our country through being part of a military family as a service member or as a spouse, as a family, but it was hard and we have the responsibility not only to the job of our country but to the job of taking care of our family. We felt that that job could be easier but it wasn't something anyone of us as an individual person could make easier by ourselves. It was something we needed to work together as a community so that we could articulate to the larger society what the challenges are and what we thought perhaps the solutions might be and work together with the different sectors, the government, nonprofits, communities, others, to get to a better place so we could keep doing this mission that we did love but we couldn't do at the expense of our families, just like any other American can't do something that hurts their families.

So, that's the premise of Blue Star Families, is for us to provide a platform for military families to articulate their solutions, to help solve them, to provide a fellowship that makes the job possible.

We knew we needed data. Everyone has an anecdote but we wanted to know

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that we were on the right track. So, we fielded a survey and that not only helped us tell the story but helped us understand where we wanted to focus our efforts. And it gives us surprising outcomes every year. This is the eighth time we've told the story. This is the eighth time we've distributed the survey.

We get to ask different things each year because we allow people to give open-ended responses. By giving open-ended responses we're not only forcing people to give the answers they want, which is something that had often frustrated me in surveys I'd taken in the past. Do you feel that deployment has helped your children or hurt your children? Well, both. The answer is both, but both wasn't a choice.

So, we let people tell us things that maybe we don't know to ask and based on that we asked new questions in subsequent years. I think a great example of that is our experience with our families and our experience with communities. I'm also very proud this year that we got a lot more data on the experience of women serving in uniform because I think that can be very helpful for us in creating the kind of force we want to have in the future.

For me, the survey is full of good news because it's full of pathways forward. It's full of ways that we can really create a 21st century military force for a 21st century family unit that lives in a 21st century society. The community issues are key. We do not live on bases anymore, we live in communities. But we're such a small number, and our lifestyle is so different from others, and we are moving so frequently often we don't know our neighbors. When we asked the question how many conversations did you have with people outside of the military in your community in the past month 30 percent of service members said zero. So, that gives us an opportunity. That's something we know we want to change because we also saw that when people were engaged in their communities, when they did feel they belonged, when they did have conversations, they actually felt better about their military service and they felt more likely to recommend it to others. So, there you go. It's a path forward.

I was very, very interested to see that the number one issue for service

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members, not just for spouses but for service members, their number one concern in their ability to continue doing their job was the time away from family. In the years that we've done this survey since 2009, and in fact in any survey I've ever seen whether it was done by the Triangle Institute for Security Studies or any of the other major studies, that has never been the number one concern for service members about their service. I also suspect it's never been offered as an option for people to answer because it's not what we think about when we think about a person in uniform and what makes their job hard.

But that's a really important insight. Why? Well, one of the things I mentioned last night is the unintended consequences of some of the policies and outcomes that we have in place drive families apart more than they used to.

Mike O'Hanlon did a great job with a book that came out last year talking about some of those issues, moving back our forward deployed bases. It used to be when the army deployed overseas the families went with them. Increasingly they're going without their families because we closed those bases. That might have been a good decision or not, but the unintended consequence is more separation. Sequestration means very short notice on moves, on trainings, on deployments often, that causes greater separation. Sometimes the families can't move as much. The needs of a 21st century lifestyle and the need to field two incomes. Increasingly families are just choosing to live apart to keep that second income going so they can stay afloat as a family. 25 percent of our families say that they choose to live apart. That's a concern for anyone who wants to have their families thrive.

So, we have outcomes that no one wanted but they are putting pressure on top of the fact that our forces millennials, and millennials have a higher concern and expectation about their family lives. And our forces are more female. For them the cost of being away from their families, what they report back to us are rates even higher.

So, we encourage you to dive into the survey. There are so many nuggets like this to help us understand the challenges and to understand the opportunities forward. The

overall message is really very similar to what it's always been: we need to tell this story. Blue Star Families mission is to tell the story and create community and solutions through communities around the country. So, it's a call to action for us but I think it's a call to action for everyone in this room. I so appreciate Brookings giving us the platform to dive a little bit deeper into the survey, and I welcome all of you to ask questions and engage with our folks.

I do want to say hello to our Blue Star Family members around the country who are watching on Facebook Live. As Secretary Kurta and I were discussing, the transparency that these new tools give us to include our community and the work that we do is really spectacular. So, I want you to know that we are joined by thousands, if not tens of thousands, this morning. Thank you for your time and attention. Thank you, Mike, and thank you Syracuse for making this survey possible, and also Cristin Orr Shiffer, our survey director. Thank you. (Applause)

MR. O'HANLON: Well, thank you, Kathy. That was fascinating and I agree, the survey is very rich. In fact, as we've been doing these events together the last few years I've come to appreciate just how much myself as a defense policy analyst I need to understand these issues because they do affect the way one thinks everything from the size of the force, to op tempo, to where we base people, to how we base people, how often we ask them to move. So many issues that are really central to defense policy can be informed in many important ways by this survey.

Now, we have a panel to help us dive in a bit more. Let me please briefly introduce them and then we'll go right at it. Our intention is to spend about a half-hour up here with initial thoughts and then go to you for your concerns and your questions.

So, immediately to my left we have Tony Kurta, who is carrying out the duties of the undersecretary of defense for policy. He's a retired rear admiral from the U.S. Navy, hails from the great state of Montana. A graduate of Annapolis but also the Air Command and Staff College and also Georgetown, I believe. He has been now in the senior executive service for

about three years starting in the second Obama term and now continuing in the Trump administration working on military personnel issues.

To his left, we have our good friend Cristin Orr Shiffer with Blue Star Families. She is the director of research and policy outreach for Blue Star Families. She has been on this panel with us in many previous years and we look forward to begin with her in just a moment.

To her left is Rosalinda Vasquez Maury, who is with Syracuse's Institute on Veterans and Military Families, from the great empire state that I also hail from, but she is originally from Texas and studied at San Antonio. She has been doing this job at Syracuse now for a number of years but previously had also worked on various jobs and associations with both the coast guard and the air force, so has a wide array of experiences as well. She'll probably hone in initially on veterans' questions. So, we're going to definitely get at both military families from the active and Reserve forces today as well as veterans issues as well.

So, without further ado, Cristin, we'll begin with a couple of just general thoughts from you, please, on whatever else you want to say to reinforce or add to what Kathy has already presented. The most important survey results. I like the way Kathy raised both concerns but also the good news, and what are both problems and weaknesses we've got to try to repair in the broader military community but also some of the enduring strengths that you see in the survey.

MS. ORR SHIFFER: Sure. She did set us up well, and I'll introduce three thoughts, first two, problems and then one solution in the same vein.

The first thought, as we worked through the data, operational tempo, deployment, these things are getting harder for folks to choose to continue to serve given high operational tempo. We had that 72 percent indicate -- which is the same statistic we had last year -- of military families, service members and their spouses who are saying that the tempo is too high. They're not getting enough dwell time, they're not getting enough advanced notice. Also, the ability to know where one is moving, so PCSs, short-notice PCSs comes under that

same idea. If you're only given a few months before you're able to PCS being able to make that jump to that next location is increasingly challenging.

The second area that really came up is the need for diverse support for a modern military. If we have a diverse need now for all sorts of different skills within the military and to ensure the defense we also need to think that modern families are just as diverse as those needs. So, we can't forget that there are single parents that are service members, that there are professional spouses who choose to work, who increasingly families need a second income. We're 23 percent lower if you look at the average rate of married families who field two incomes. The American public is around 60 percent, the active duty military is around 45 percent. So, if you look at the difference there we're not there yet. We're always a little bit lower than where we need to be. So, we need to think about diverse and new modern ways to provide support to military families. This is not your grandpa's military anymore. It's a different military. We need to think about that.

The third, the solution, the kind of happier thought is we really did see opportunities for community engagement. DOD can't fix these problems alone, military families can't fix these problems alone, but when we're able to wrap in the community we find that this is a solution that's a great opportunity. As I mentioned, those PCSs are stressful and one of the reasons that they're stressful is that everyone needs to rebuild all those support mechanisms from finding new schools to finding new jobs, to figuring out where the grocery store is, to figuring out who is going to be the person on your child's emergency form. When you move to a new area -- this happens to me every time I move, I don't know anyone. So, when you say in case of emergency who is going to pick up your child? I hope that my neighbor looks trustworthy, right? (Laughter) So, these opportunities to really bring the community in is a terrific opportunity.

So, again, op tempo deployment makes it very difficult to continue to choose, diverse support is something that we can do to start thinking about that, new understandings of



military families and how we support them, and three, bringing that community in, bringing the civilians in and wrapping them around and using coordinated opportunities for support between military families and local communities as a solution to many of these issues.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. I've got a couple of quick follow-ups, if I could, and some of them are fairly broad so they may not be ones you can easily answer from the survey, we may wind up talking about them all morning. One thing that occurs to me when we hear about the difficulty of a spouse keeping a job or finding a job, do people consider this to be sort of inherent to the nature of the military enterprise? And I guess that also relates to the sense of belonging in a community, right? They don't feel always that they're really fully integrated or welcomed. Do you sense that military families believe that there are things we could do differently that would really solve these problems or is this inherent to the nature of being in the service and just sort of the cost of doing business people are willing to tolerate it for a certain period of time for themselves, a lot of them don't want it for their kids which is one more thing your survey found that so many military families don't really wish this life upon their kids even though they're proud to have done it themselves. But in other words, is this just inherent to the military enterprise or do people have a sense that there really are policy changes we could make that would really alleviate some of these stresses?

MS. ORR SHIFFER: I'll go back to my point about this not being your grandfather's military anymore. It's a different military and the people serving in the military, the expectations for family support from service members, for the time to be home, to cook dinner, to coach soccer, it's a different modern time and what we're finding out is that spouse employment is part of that. If you want bright people to join your military bright people tend to marry other bright people and those people really prefer not always to give up a career for 20 years or more.

So, one of the challenges that we find is addressing the income challenge to say how do we solve that gap? We ended up seeing that 51 percent of spouses who even were

employed were earning under \$20,000 a year. So, it's not just about employing them, it's also about giving them jobs that are opportunities to earn. I think that's a big challenge.

I would also just say in terms of where we are with spouse employment is it is an expectation now. It's not always an expectation. We understand, the data really shows, that there are periods -- just with civilians as well -- there are seasons where it's more likely that one would be able to work. There are some seasons when you are not as able, if you're choosing to raise children or there are other challenges in the home. But just like civilian communities military spouses and military couples have those same desires now.

The interesting part about our unemployment rate this year which increased to 28 percent for military spouses is I don't see that as being military spouses' unemployment getting worse. What we saw is a decrease in the number of spouses who were opting out of the workforce overall. So, there's an increasing expectation for employment. It's the opposite. It's not that there's an expectation that one can't work, rather there is an increasing expectation now of employment.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you.

MS. VASQUEZ MAURY: Can I add something? So, I think that there is definitely some impact during service but there is actually impact after service. I mean, what people don't realize is these disadvantages have long-term consequences on a military spouse's career. So, there might be cycles of it but these cycles continue as a veteran spouse. Unemployment and underemployment -- in the same survey we had 41 percent reporting incomes of less than \$20,000. I mean, that puts the veteran spouse at a huge disadvantage compared to their counterparts.

Another aspect of this that I do want to highlight or emphasize is that military spouse employment eases transition. So, when you have a military spouse fully employed there is a more positive transition experience compared to when you don't have one. So, it's not just the spouse and the nature and the job, it's part of the service and the military as well.

MR. O'HANLON: So, Rosalinda, let me move over to you now and ask for any broad reactions you have to the survey. The specific question that I really wanted to pose to you as well, you could maybe weave it into your opening thoughts, is were you surprised that so many military families who are currently serving don't feel all that integrated into their community? Because we know how much our country, I think it's fair to say, admires the military. This is not like a Vietnam era, we don't have -- Kathy's book told us all that we have is civil military division or separation, but we have very strong appreciation I think for the armed forces. So, do you attribute that problem to the frequency of moves, and then when people become veterans and they settle down perhaps in one place a little longer than they do tend to feel more integrated and more appreciated for their service of prior years? Or do you see a deeper problem going on?

MS. VASQUEZ MAURY: Adjustment, readjustment to civilian life is difficult for veterans and I think that when during active duty they become more integrated it could possibly ease the readjustments afterwards. So, I see a potential solution hopefully by the integration that the long-term impacts can make an easier adjustment for veterans.

But, yes, I think when one settles down, you get integrated with the community, I do think veterans are part of that military-civilian divide or the active duty military-civilian divide. They're part of that solution as well. I don't know if you wanted to follow up anything, Cristin.

MR. O'HANLON: One more question, Rosalinda, before we go to Secretary Kurta for his thoughts. I just think it would be good to get your take on how veterans collectively feel like they're doing. I realize the survey doesn't emphasize the veterans community quite as much, but as you look out at the broad range of issues that face veterans today, everything from second careers to finances, military pension, military healthcare, veterans' healthcare, PTS-related issues, what sort of is most on your mind and did the survey help you -- this year's survey in particular -- help you identify any other key issues that you had previously?

MS. VASQUEZ MAURY: I think that for me at least the biggest insight is really

that service members and families are not really well-prepared for the transition. It's a financial preparedness, it's an emotional, a mental being unprepared.

So, for example, approximately 15 percent of the sample is planning to exit within the next two years. Of that 15 percent the ones that are separating within one year 54 percent have less than \$5,000 in savings and available in case of emergencies. So, one would think, okay, \$4,000 to \$5,000, not bad. However, when we look at the veteran population 17 percent it took over a year to find a job. So, then that \$4,000 to \$5,000 is that sufficient enough for that year while you wait?

When we talk about transition GPS and how well it prepared you -- and we asked a number of questions. It was TAP, it was transition GPS, we looked at it within the ones that separated this past year, two years. So, we've looked at it in many ways but it was really consistent. It was almost 50/50. Half of them felt prepared, half of them didn't. So, there is definitely an unpreparedness. You're getting some but you're not getting others.

One thing that we asked differently this year is how would you like those services for you available after transition? And a good quarter of them actually wanted the TAP services, that TRAP training available two or three years after they had already separated. Because at the time that you're separating you may not be thinking, you may not be mentally prepared, you may not be all there, but you have to make some decisions, you have to do that now. But again, having those resources available afterwards would be a huge help.

MR. O'HANLON: And then one just clarifying question then I'll go to Secretary Kurta unless Cristin wants to comment as well. Just to make sure we're all -- I realize people in this room are not confused about what a military veteran is and who that could be, but just to be clear, most of these people in the survey who are either recently retired or about to transition out most of them probably haven't done 20 years, some of them have, but many of them are going into a civilian workforce with not only just \$5,000 in their pocket but no pension from the military and they're quite often going to be people in their late 20s or 30s as opposed to people nearing

the end of their career. Is that sort of a fair way to characterize?

MS. VASQUEZ MAURY: Yes, absolutely. Very few people make the military that one career. A lot of people will exit earlier in their 20s, early 30s, have another job and obviously aren't financially prepared for that transition.

MR. O'HANLON: Right. Cristin, any further thoughts on the veterans' issues before we go to Secretary Kurta?

MS. ORR SHIFFER: Actually, I will note that one bridge, one opportunity to bridge, to build on what Rosie was saying, the fact that we did see a very strong relationship between those people who had engaged with civilians in their local communities and their willingness to recommend service overall. We can talk about those. But we did see that one real opportunity is if you're engaged with your civilian community, if you're talking to your civilian neighbors more frequently, that was strongly associated with likelihood to recommend service. So, I think veterans are a definite opportunity there to help bridge that with active duty.

MS. VASQUEZ MAURY: Absolutely.

MS. ORR SHIFFER: It's a great opportunity.

MR. O'HANLON: Secretary Kurta, I'm sure you've got a lot of thoughts already, but I guess the way I would put a question to you is it really strikes me as a mixed bag, doesn't it, that we've got an amazing force, we've got incredibly dedicated people, excellent people. The survey says that 95 percent of them are proud of their service and happy they've done it and yet many of them don't want their kids to go through this same life, many of them wonder what they're asking their families to go through, their spouses to go through. So, it strikes me as just a fundamentally mixed bag. I wondered if you agreed with that. Then the other big broad question is how much of this is inherent to the nature of military service and how much of it can we possibly change through policy?

MR. KURTA: Thank you for that, and thank you for hosting. Just one disclaimer: not Secretary, Tony Kurta, I don't want to get in trouble with senators or anybody else.

(Laughter) You know, I'm just performing the duties here.

MR. O'HANLON: Well, I think you are deputy assistant secretary.

MR. KURTA: Yes, yes. But I also want to thank Kathy and Blue Star Families for what you do and for being here and for hosting this and inviting the Department to participate. All of you that support Blue Star Families and everybody here. It gives me great hope knowing that as we try to sustain the all-volunteer force we're not alone. We have an entire community here, academia, nonprofits, the government sector, corporations. It makes me very hopeful for the future.

And, you know, it's not like this everywhere. You travel around and meet our allies and partners around the world and our all-volunteer force and the support that we get from our citizenry is unique. I think Mike talked about it, but there's a lot of thanking people for their service. It wasn't always that way. I think our Vietnam veterans would say they might have had a different experience than our veterans today. But we're getting a lot better at it. A lot of that is how we sustain our all-volunteer force.

I think what we're seeing is the success in the future of that all-volunteer force is not guaranteed. And we talk about the military-civilian divide, we talk about 1 percent of our population serves, all of that is true. We talk about that it's increasingly a family affair. You only serve if somebody you know in your family has likely served. So, any data that says that train is going down is particularly troubling.

But, Mike, to go back to your question about whether a lot of what we see is inherent in the service, I would say a couple of things. One is we know our families are changing. It's not your grandpa's military, the family structure that we have today is not the same as it was 40 or 50 years ago. Obviously we have to adapt to that.

But I'll also say we have to adapt to the nature of the threat as well. The threat is not the same today as it was 20 years ago, right? 9/11 fundamentally changed what we do, how we do it. The all-volunteer force, as was designed in the '70s, was not designed to keep us

now in our, what, 17th continual year of conflict with really no end in sight. The fact that it has prospered, been successful, and is still vibrant and strong I think kudos go to those that designed it and our entire citizenry for being able to sustain it.

There are some warning signs. This survey every year points us to those areas that we have to work at to ensure that 20 years from now we can still field an all-volunteer force. But the nature is changing. We kind of talk about the time away from the family. We hear in the news about sailors in the western Pacific working 100-hour workweeks. There is no time with your family at 100-hour workweeks.

Part of this is the challenge that we're under. I talked about the world events. The force that we have generally is getting smaller and the demands are rising. At the same time we have budget caps, sequestration, continuing resolutions; the people caught in the middle are our forces who keep getting asked to do more and more so obviously they're going to be under strain. I don't think any of us should be surprised at that and the fact that as years go on we take care of things like the retirement system, we take care of things relatively like compensation. Those things slowly go down the list.

What we have the hardest time and we need everybody for is the fact that people are just being asked to do more with their time in their service and therefore we're seeing this is the issue. Why am I spending so much time away from home? Because that's what my country is asking me to do. We're not sending people with their families to Europe anymore. When the army goes over there they're going to remote or temporary fields. We're all over Africa, we're in Afghanistan and Iraq. The nature of how we use the force that we have including our Reserve and Guard members is completely different than it was 20 years ago.

So, I acknowledge all of the issues that we're going to talk about today. They deserve every ounce of energy we can put into it. As always, let's keep in mind why our families are under strain; because their country is asking them to do these things. I'm heartened that people are still signing up every year. 250,000 young Americans join every year and we're still

able to field this incredible all-volunteer force and that's wonderful. But we have to pay attention to the warning signs and that's why I think it's so valuable that we have forums like this so we can get ahead of the problem and not just react to it.

MR. O'HANLON: So, as we go to a second round of thoughts and then to you, let me add my thanks as a civilian to military families and veterans. Vice President Pence did a nice job on Veterans' Day reminding us all to say thank you. I just want to do that myself and put in the word of admiration for what this small group of not just men and women in uniform but their families do for our country.

I also want to comment on a couple of specific points in the survey and then just offer a couple of policy provocations and see if folks want to chime in, add to any of those, and critique any of those thoughts.

I think among the many kernels of wisdom in this survey there are two that really stood out for me. One is certainly that 40 percent of all families had someone in uniform in their family deploy for at least 6 months out of the last 18. It raises some questions in my mind. The first question is why, although I also would like to know how many of those families were sort of in the 9 month and up category because 6 of 18 is a lot but it's sort of what some people think they're signing up for. 9, 10, 12, or 15 out of 18 is not what people can realistically or reasonably be asked to do. So, I'm struck by the op tempo but I'm also curious as to how many families are doing a lot more than 6 months. That's certainly one set of findings that I find very important.

But secondly this compensation question. To me, I have to acknowledge it's changed the way I think about military compensation, to think about the spouse and the difficulty of the spouse finding a job and finding a good paying job. It's really changed the way I think about this because since the Reagan years military compensation in this country by some definitions has been pretty good. I say that with some trepidation sitting in front of an audience like this. (Laughter) But if you look statistically and you compare to different age cohorts and



education cohorts, military compensation even before you factor in retirement for those who do 20 years is statistically pretty good. But it doesn't factor in these second-order effects, these second-order considerations.

So, I have to admit, I've been fundamentally affected by this set of facts. And it makes me ask what can we do about it? Everybody up here has said it's a problem, we're all struggling for solutions.

So, let me just put a couple of ideas on the table and then see how people want to respond to these or other thoughts about what we should be doing to address some of the real challenges here. One thought I have is to the extent that operational tempo in the military is still high, I think we have to get out of the expectation some may have that we're going to build a much larger military to address that. I think the military should be a little bit larger, but even if the \$700 billion budget goes through, and I'm dubious that it will when all is said and done at the end of this year, we're not going to have a whole heck of a lot of money to grow the force very fast and in large numbers.

So, I think the services have to view this issue partly as their own challenge. Instead of -- maybe the grandfather's military image has changed for military families, I'm not sure it's always changed for military leadership. I think there is still a machismo that deployment is good, and even doing exercises away from base, maybe sometimes people do a few more of those than they really need to do, maybe more exercises and training can be done at home base. I just want to ask that question.

To pick on a couple of services, I wonder if our friends in the army can think about asking civilian leadership if maybe we could have the brigade in Poland be permanently stationed there with families and the same thing in Korea. Korea is a developed country these days. Yes, it's a dangerous place but we have 200,000 civilian Americans living in Korea. I don't think military families are so shy of being in a dicey geostrategic theater that we can't consider that. Because right now the army likes to say, well, we are rotating forces through and

that's a way to spread the burden and so forth, but the army also complains that it only has three brigades ready out of 58 which is another debate. And also we know that army families are some of the families responding to this survey saying that they feel over-deployed.

So, if separation is the problem maybe we can reunite families with service members in more of the locations abroad where they typically serve. I'm not suggesting we can do that in Afghanistan or Iraq but I do think there are places where we can consider it.

Can the navy think a little bit differently about the way it maintains forward deployments? Again, maybe we have too much of a machismo that says we've got to have a certain number of ships deployed. Maybe more irregular deployments of different links can sometimes be just as effective in certain theaters. There may be places where you literally need a ship within 30 miles of a potential enemy all the time, I don't deny that. But there may be other places where a more unpredictable set of deployments and at a somewhat lower pace could actually achieve many of the same strategic affects. And I wonder if the navy can also think more about dual crewing for given ships. We do this with minesweepers, with submarines. The navy has never wanted to have surface combatants share crews where a crew would train on one ship in home waters and then fly to relieve a crew on a deployed ship overseas. You save the two months of ocean transit going and coming with that approach. I know there are a lot of logistical complications and my navy friends have explained them to me at length. I'm just not convinced that it really has to be just one crew for one ship all the time.

I could go on but you've probably heard enough of these kinds of thoughts. I'm really just trying to provoke a conversation. The last thing I'll say and then I'll really just turn to the panelists for their thoughts on these or any other policy options we might have before us, I think the services have tried to give people a little more predictability in where they're based in the United States with some of the mega bases, for better or worse. And we know our marines are often in North Carolina and California, and a lot of our soldiers are in Texas and a couple other states where there are concentrations of bases and other services have done the same.

I wonder if that process could and should go further so that people have an even greater likelihood of staying in one place for two or three tours if they so choose and if they want that, or maybe it's just not realistic. And if it's not realistic to have people stay longer then how are we really going to affect the spousal employment challenge? I don't really know what else we can do and maybe we have to just accept that we're going to have a high spouse unemployment rate and therefore this is an additional argument in favor of military compensation increasing a little bit even though on paper it looks pretty good already.

So, these are some of the ideas I just want to put before the jury, so to speak, but you can ignore them and offer any other suggestions. I just want to have one round of thoughts on solutions or ways we can remediate some of these problems we're seeing in the military community today. Why don't we start with you, Rosalinda, and just work down.

MS. VASQUEZ MAURY: I'll comment on the military spouse issue. Just like the army is changing, just like the military is changing, I think employment landscape is changing. It's not the same employment situation or the landscape doesn't look the same 20 years ago. Technology is a huge component of it. Because of that we're able to work remotely, we're able to be flexible, adaptable, and do much more with it. For employers wanting to work with military spouses, offering career portability is one opportunity instead of increasing the pay of military but having these opportunities available for military spouses.

I would definitely have employers -- and I work in both the military families and the veteran space and all with good intentions I do see a lot of initiatives, and we tend to lump veterans and military families together. But they're not the same population. They have unique challenges, different challenges. So, I would encourage employers to specifically look at the unique aspects of military spouses and what potential opportunities does your employment offer. So, that's all I have to say.

MR. O'HANLON: That's great, thank you. Cristin?

MS. ORR SHIFFER: I would add to that that our survey data does bear out that

it's not employment readiness or even the ability to find a job. Oftentimes the greater challenges have to do with aligning with schedules or the moves. You're right on the moves. The moves are a challenge which could potentially be addressed by some of the portability or the virtual work.

But the other one is just schedules, more predictability in scheduling. Many military families in their qualitative responses -- we ask open-ended questions sometimes and one of the trends that we see is it's the fact that I don't know what time my spouse is going to be home tonight. I don't even know if he's flying a plane at 5:00 p.m., the next day maybe I'll find out if he's going to be flying in the morning or the afternoon. Those are the things of things. I can't commit to a schedule even that addresses that heightened workload that the service member is having because there is so little predictably even when the service member is at home. And a lot of that may have to do with budget caps right now, an inability to fund at levels that are needed by the services. But I would say that increasing the predictability at home, not when they're deployed but just when they're at home, does go a long way to increasing the ability of spouses to work.

I would also say in terms of the op tempo, burnout is the top reason that people leave jobs in the civilian world. Over half of the turnover every year, half the people who leave because of burnout. We know that military families or service members aren't different than their civilian counterparts in that burnout is one of these issues.

Burnout is too much time, it's also family reasons. We asked people who were intending to exit what was the top reason that you're intending to exit in the next two years. The top two reasons both had to do with family. One was the concern of the impact of service on children and on their families, and number two was just time away. It was just too much time away, to feel that they were missing out on too many opportunities, their life was not complete.

So, I will say that those are really the two areas that I think are really opportunities. Looking at more predictability at home, which is directly linked to some of the

funding challenges that we're having right now, hopefully those may improve. And then also this idea of addressing family time while they are home, giving them more predictability and then giving them the ability to do things like coach soccer for their children or be there to relieve the time so their spouses are able to go to work. Those are two opportunities that are close to some of the policy suggestions that you have.

MR. O'HANLON: Please, come up and grab the microphone so we can hear you.

MS. ROTH-DOUQUET: Just to take the prerogative. I think there's so many solutions and a lot of them don't require government work because we have an economy that really needs talented workers and we have a lot of underemployed or unemployed talented workers. Blue Star Families has 34 employees. We're mostly military spouses. We've been growing at a rate of 20 percent a year, year over year, even while our folks deploy and move on short notice. Cristin moved on two months' notice to Italy, she didn't lose her job. All of us do. And we can keep the enterprise going.

We need help from DOD in articulating to the larger country that this is a patriotic duty and an economic opportunity for people to bring on talented personnel but we need them to have jobs that can be done remotely or have career portability. They need to have flexibility of hours, they need career progression if someone wants progression or the opportunity for quality gig work, if people want that. We have a military spouse employment program which does great work but they can't do it alone, organizations like ours, others, corporations, and a message that this is what our military needs to be able to field the missions it has. It can't be that this is the package because if the package that 40 percent recommending services is going to become 30 percent then 20 percent.

The solution is everybody wins. The military gets the second employment, the second income, the employers get the good quality. We need innovative ways to make that easier to identify people. I'm very positive about the solutions. I just wanted to jump in and add

that.

MR. O'HANLON: That's great. Mr. Kurta, I know you've not only got an important job at the Pentagon today, you've been an admiral in the navy so you've seen this from multiple vantage points. There is a lot on the table and I just wondered if you'd want to comment.

MR. KURTA: Well, there is so much in this survey and so much to keep us all busy. But the one item in it that to me is the darkest cloud on the horizon potentially because one of the things that seizes me the most is what's the state of the all-volunteer force in 20 years? Are we still able to recruit and retain and train and maintain the force that we have today? And as I said, it's not guaranteed. Without a lot of hard work and the entire country behind us we won't succeed.

Since we have a relatively small all-volunteer force, since it is 1 percent of our population or less, since it is a family business, all of the strain that we talk about here is leading those currently in service at declining amounts to recommend to their children -- not only to their children but to everybody they know, for those coming behind them to put on the uniform and serve their country.

Of course, it's not just those in service today that recommend country, it's the influencers out in society. So, this goes back to where we need everybody's help. It's our teachers, it's our coaches, it's our high school counselors, it's our pastors. All of those people are recommending military service at declining rates.

Now, part of that is 16 years of war and in society everybody appreciates the military, yes, but there is kind of an increasing view of what our veteran looks like. Those people that transition from society are either ill, have problems transitioning back into civilian society, they're injured or personally disabled in some manner. We have the data, that's just an increasing perception among society. Part of that is all DOD's fault because we don't combat that perception enough. But we need everybody's help in talking about the power of our military

spouses, the power of our veterans, how much they contribute to society, how much they can and do contribute to society, and influencers which is everybody in this room in highlighting the positive aspects of military service.

When we see when people get out of the service what do they miss the most, what is the protective factor that they lose that actually raises their risks for suicide when they leave the service? It's that comradery, it's that sense of mission, it's that being a part of something that's bigger than yourself, a mission that's bigger than yourself. And yet we don't do a very good job of highlighting that to our young men and women in the ages of 17 to 24 to come into the service.

Yes, we talk about the pay package. Yes, we talk about all of the benefits, the GI Bill, all those things. All those things are great. You know, what job you can train in and how it may give you a skill for life, all those are very important. And everything appeals differently to people. You've got to do everything to get 250,000 young qualified interested people every year.

But we need to highlight that sense of mission and what people get out of contributing to the country, the value of public service. There are many ways to serve our country, uniform is one of them; that happens to be the business that we're in.

But there are many ways to do it. So, we need everybody's help here in talking up the value of public service to our young people. There's a responsibility that comes with citizenship. Again, many things you can do, uniform is one of them. We'd like to see a certain number of them choose that path. But it's the role of influencers in society talking to young people to say, hey, take a look at it. When you see the message, when somebody talks to you about service, be open to it because these are the great things about serving your country in uniform. That's where we need everybody's help. And that's why I so much appreciate Blue Star and their survey asking this question because that's a trend that absolutely cannot continue if we need and want a volunteer force in 20 years.

MR. O'HANLON: Fantastic. By the way, let me say as we go to your questions and your thoughts that this will live on not only on the Facebook page of Blue Star Families but also their website [bluestarfam.org](http://bluestarfam.org), and the [brookings.edu](http://brookings.edu) website. We look forward to now including many of your thoughts and questions as well. Why don't we take two or three at a time? I'll start with -- I can't resist, the woman with a baby. (Laughter) And then we'll also take two questions up here before we go to the panel.

QUESTIONER: My name is Amanda Lefler, and I am from After the Long Walk which is a peer-to-peer support network for explosive ordinance disposal technicians and their families. Our goal is to reduce suicides by offering peer-to-peer support through hotline and also Facebook page. It's working really well, though we don't have numbers because we don't have a survey. But as we've been talking today one of the things I've been wondering is why don't we break this down by MOS so that way you can see what the challenges are by MOS. Because what you're talking about -- our community experience is to the extreme. 100 percent of our techs have traumatic brain injuries and also injuries to the rest of their bodies from the percussive force injury. So, you think if you're experiencing repeated explosions that's doing a lot to your entire body, not just your brain.

So, brining that stress home, our family members are experiencing high stress all the time because they're stressed when they're away, like my husband is gone right now for an entire year over in Afghanistan, you mentioned that. But there is also the stress when they come home because they don't leave that on the battlefield. It comes home with them and it's at home with them all the time.

So, maybe also talking about branch-specific or MOS-specific since we're all four branches, how do we go ahead and help folks where they're at in that niche? Because our needs in our community are very different from like a flyer's needs or service warfare or anybody else, really.

MR. O'HANLON: Thanks very much for your question. Come up here now to

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the fourth row and then to the fifth.

QUESTIONER: Hello, my name is Patty Darren, I'm with the Association of the United States Army. I wanted to kind of piggyback on what you said, Mr. O'Hanlon, and that was about the services and maybe looking at some of the specific things that they can do.

Three things came to mind while you were talking and they are things I've been seeing an awful lot of. A lot of military spouses are entrepreneurs. They're starting their own businesses and that's one way that they're seeing that they can manage the employment or unemployment piece in their lives. And they're doing pretty good. As a matter of fact, at AUSA when I contract out, when I have consultants, I hire only military spouses to help me with some of the things I need.

But what we heard was when they go from installation to installation, the installation policies for being able to have your own business on an installation are very archaic and they need to be updated. So, that's something that the services can look at, update those policies so that it's easier for a spouse to have their own business on an installation.

The second thing that I wanted to mention, and it's in the survey, is childcare. We need to make childcare more available for those that have part-time employment or need it only for specific reasons. I have a spouse that I talked to the other day who has her own business, she's moving from Colorado Springs to Ft. Irwin, California, and she can't even sign up for childcare because she has to attend a course that the childcare center is offering before she can then apply for her child to be in that center. Now, that is ridiculous because she has all the paperwork, she could send it, she could fax it, do whatever, but until she's physically there to attend that course she can't sign her child up for childcare. So, I think we need to look at that.

Then the third thing I want to talk about -- it just left me so when it comes back I'll let you know.

MR. O'HANLON: Let's do one more and then we'll come back to the panel. The

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woman in the red shirt behind or was it you? There were two in a row here.

QUESTIONER: Sandy Apgar, CSIS. First, would opening bases in the manner that we had before pre-9/11 help to foster community engagement? During my term in office we used to measure installation commanders on their effectiveness in the local community engagement and of all of their services.

And secondly, if you were to have commissioned this survey in the 1990s housing would have been first on the list, or among the top two, but I note that it's not on the list anymore. Does that suggest that the poor condition of military housing and related services has been largely addressed by the DOD, public-private partnerships and other initiatives? What else could be done using the same vehicle since it has been proven to be effective?

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Would you like to begin, Mr. Secretary, or should we start at the other end and work towards you?

MR. KURTA: I'm happy to talk. First, I want to say thank you very much for any peer-to-peer support network. That's certainly an emerging area of help and comfort to all of our service members. Through Military OneSource we offer a lot of non-medical counseling, military and family life counseling to all of our service members 24-7 in many different ways. But an emerging subset of that in partnership with the VA is peer-to-peer support. When we talk about family resiliency, you're right, it's not all the same because people not only by MOS but by service, by geography, are facing different situations. So, particularly in the peer-to-peer support world it tends to be a little bit more focused whether it's on service or MOS.

So, I applaud you for helping with that. I acknowledge all of the particular challenges, particularly those in the Special Operations world are experiencing over the last 16 years and in particular clearly have the highest op tempo across the board. So, while I know the Special Operations community is doing a lot of their own medical research and as well in the peer-to-peer support there is clearly a lot to be done in that world.

When we talk about childcare and the nature of the families, dual employment,

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obviously childcare continues to be at the top of the list. I think we've made some very good progress. We're basically the largest private childcare deliverer in the country and we offer accredited services at a much, much higher rate than you will find out in the civilian world.

One of the things that we've tried to do, specifically to the point that you talk about, is allow people earlier access to understand what the childcare resources are in the area that they're going to and being able to sign up and get on the list before you arrive there and you're already a day behind in need. So, [militarychildcare.com](http://militarychildcare.com) is supposed to get at exactly what you stated so people can get on a waiting list and know what's in the area available to them long before they get there and sign up and find out what resource is best for them. Doesn't mean we've got the problem solved or anything like that, but it has attention and we're making some progress. Clearly much more to do in that world.

Then just the last question on open bases, we would love to have the situation on our bases that we had probably in the early to mid-90s. Unfortunately, events like the Washington Navy Yard, Ft. Hood, I mean, you take any number of those and you have to be kind of a little bit cognizant of the time that we live in and the threat that we face. So, as much as it would address a lot of the problems that we have it would also open up avenues to others that I'm not sure -- when you balance that risk I'm not sure any time soon we're going to see easier access to our bases. Doesn't mean we can't have smarter access and work on identity management a lot better. I mean, there are a whole lot of things that we can do and do better in there so that we know who we're letting on to our bases. But I doubt if that environment is going to change any time soon.

MR. O'HANLON: Cristin?

MS. ORR SHIFFER: Sure. So, in terms of peer-to-peer we found this year substantially higher rates of depression and anxiety among all subgroups except for active duty. So, we had the rate for depression -- to be clear, what we were asking was have you been diagnosed, medically diagnosed, with depression or anxiety? And we had 24 percent of active

duty military spouses indicate that they had been diagnosed with depression and 30 percent with anxiety. It's a tough job out there. Veterans and veteran spouses, the rates were worse.

So, peer-to-peer counseling is one opportunity that I think is really something we need to keep moving on because we are just starting to talk about some of the emotional strains that over time have really come to the forefront. As we've been able to talk about suicide in veterans I think we're starting to open up other mental health opportunities also for active duty, as the news has been covering lately, and also for military spouses as well because it's a largely unexplored issue but it's kind of an open secret within the military spouse community.

In terms of what Patty was talking about, updating business practices to me is a really important opportunity, and it's an illustration of the need for an updated model, for DOD to think a little bit more about what the modern service member and their family looks like. So, I really think you hit the nail on the head. This is one that's an easy change but there is that traditional model. So, they're getting there but that's certainly one that we're working on changing.

And then three, with the housing. 60 percent of service members now live off base. So, I think, one, housing has gotten better. It's not at the same level in our survey but one of the things that we are watching that is of perineal concern is the issues with BAH, the reductions over time every year; it's dropping by 1, 2 percent with the goal of hitting 95 percent of BAH being covered instead of 100 percent in a few years. So, that's an issue that's very concerning for our community.

In terms of open bases, yes, I think our organization experienced some challenges with that initially too, trying to provide services support on bases. But also it ties back into the community opportunity. I think we have many opportunities to also have off-base events that are still recognized and communicated on-base. And that may be an easier way to kind of square the circle with that one, at least until we get into an environment that's a little bit more secure.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Rosalinda?

MS. VASQUEZ MAURY: I'll only add a few things. I like the MOS. I definitely think we should be including that, there you go. The wheels are spinning for sure because it is exactly -- I mean, there is diversity in the military. Not all branches are equal. Just like that there is diversity in the occupations that they're in. So, there's not a lot of data. Veteran suicide, active duty suicide, military spouse suicide and depression and all of it, so absolutely, adding the MOS allows us to zone in.

MR. O'HANLON: Could you define the acronym and BAH, so we'll make sure we're an acronym free zone.

MS. VASQUEZ MAURY: Military Occupation Specialty, yes.

MR. O'HANLON: And then BAH.

MS. ORR SHIFFER: Basic allowance for housing. A stipend that offsets the cost in certain areas where you're living for housing.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Back to you, Rosalinda.

MS. VASQUEZ MAURY: So, definitely something to include for next year.

I'm glad that you mentioned military spouse entrepreneurship as a pathway for military spouses. When you're dissatisfied with the civilian sector and the opportunities go create your own business and go for it. I don't want to say just hire a military spouse, it's good for business, no. There is actually a business case to hire a military spouse. The same reasons that they PCS'd they moved around, well that made them adaptable. There are a lot of skills, skills that are valuable for an employer. So, again, those same skills could be applied toward entrepreneurship. And definitely for those that are dissatisfied to look into entrepreneurship because you can create your own opportunities. There you go.

MR. O'HANLON: Great. Let's go to another round. Might have to be the last one. This time I think I'll take it more in the spirit of a lot of views and we're not going to oblige the panel to respond to each and every concern, but especially in this forum I like to make sure

people get a chance to express their concern so I'm going to take about six questions and then we're just going to have one quick round wrapping up.

We'll begin here in the fourth row, please.

QUESTIONER: I'm Christy Hamm, I'm from Military Families for High Standards and I'm on the Board of United Through Reading. You listed 7,891 surveys were received. Can you break those down by your three categories, how many were military spouses, how many were active duty, and how many were veteran?

MR. O'HANLON: Okay, there was a hand over here. Yes, please? And then we'll go back three rows.

QUESTIONER: Good morning, Colonel Eries Mentzer. I'm a military fellow at the Woodrow Wilson Center. Just a question about if you look across the services assignment notification policy varies between 6 months and 18 months ahead of being relocated by service. And then if you look at policies for how assignments are applied you'll see that some services have greater transparency, greater member input, and greater consideration of the military spouse who is not an active duty member.

What are we doing from an internal department perspective as we look at evolving our talent management practices for today's all-volunteer force to allow for more member input, more assignment notification, and more transparency in our policies?

MR. O'HANLON: Great. And then we'll go three rows back if we could, please.

QUESTIONER: Good morning. Just to dovetail on what the lady ahead of me said. An update on the Force of the Future initiatives. She was mentioning the flexibility with assignments and things of that nature that would get a lot of the great ideas that everybody on this stage has mentioned. We've been talking about these things for years and the issue has been actually implementing them.

So, one, it would be wonderful to hear an update on the Force of the Future, which I believe Secretary Carter was on to something really good with things like transparent

assignments, giving people a say in their assignments, and when they do feel heard they're more loyal to their organization and likely to stay even if they don't necessarily get their way.

So, one issue is Force of the Future and the second is what are we doing or looking at as far as who is in the manpower systems, who will implement these policies? Right now we have a blend in all the services of active duty as well as civilians but as we know many of the people that are civilians are former active duty and that's not necessarily a bad thing because of their experience in understanding the system. But sometimes that creates somewhat of a myopic view or paradigm to where we can't possibly implement something new, that would break the system, or that would cost money.

So, we're talking about it's not our grandparents' military and yet we still have some people who are even pre all-volunteer force working in the manpower system and can't get their heads around some of these wonderful ideas, and it creates an institutional inertia by people who are institutionalized who therefore will ultimately will hurt the institution in the long run.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. We're going to do one here and then maybe one in the back and then we'll come to the panel for the final set of remarks.

QUESTIONER: Hi, my name is Andrew Everett and I'm currently an engineering PhD student, so excuse me if my question gets a bit technical. And this is primarily to Admiral Kurta and Dr. O'Hanlon.

BRAC analysis for various rounds of base closures have never accounted for metropolitan area sizes of community and thus the employability for a spouse or other. So, over the rounds of BRAC you had bases close in major metropolitan areas where there's a lot of potential employability and because that isn't factored in, like you have Bragg and Polk and all these places out in the middle of nowhere where service spouses can't get jobs, where other than like Louis and San Diego virtually none is in a major metropolitan area, so that.

But then how do you also deal with issues surrounding licensure? Like one of

my best friends who is a (inaudible) signal officer who was then accepted into Army Special Operations command, chose to get out because his wife who is an optometrist couldn't transition her license to North Carolina. So he chose to get out and he took a civilian job with the FBI instead.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. There was one here in the back. Yes?

QUESTIONER: Good morning. My name is Chris Pace, I'm the Health Director for the U.S. Army Soldier for Life Program. So, I would like to dovetail on the other statistics question up here.

Curious, out of the 8,000 respondents, nearly 8,000, what's the breakdown in enlisted versus officer, and the average age of the respondents is what I'm really curious of. And then secondly, of the veterans what definition was used for veteran? Is it the standard VA definition for veteran or was there another case definition in our study?

MR. O'HANLON: Cristin, do you want to start with that and any other questions you want to address?

MS. ORR SHIFFER: Sure. Because it's a veteran question I'll go ahead and defer to Rosie on that one.

MS. VASQUEZ MAURY: Yeah, we use the same question that the VA asks, as well as the American Community of Surveys. So, did you serve on active duty for at least 30 days in the past and so forth? And discharge status, exactly.

MS. ORR SHIFFER: Anywhere that we could use standard questions that are used in either the census or the ACS, we use the same ones so we can compare them.

I will say in terms of our breakdown, the majority of the respondents were military spouses. We had about 65 percent military spouses, 15 percent active duty, 20 percent veteran, give or take. That's off the top of my head so forgive me if it's not quite accurate.

But we also do analysis to identify different areas. So, we cut the data so we can look. We don't take it as a whole and then interpret it like that. So, we will look at just the active



duty perspective for some, we will look at active duty with the active duty spouse for some, and then sometimes we'll look at all of them overall. So, we look at different cuts of the data based on what we think is the most enlightening, where that question is most relevant, and what data set and what respondent set is most relevant to those questions.

MR. O'HANLON: Rosalinda, any other questions? Then we'll go to Secretary Kurta.

MS. VASQUEZ MAURY: No. I just want to add that it's probably the only survey that does take all these populations into one survey and we're not focused on one service branch. It's not just the army, it's across all armies. I don't have the numbers on the top of my head on me of enlisted versus officers, but I do think there was a representative -- there was both representation on both enlisted and officers.

MS. ORR SHIFFER: It's 60 percent enlisted so it was a little higher on officer. But in terms of branches we were within 1 percent of the breakdown for every branch of the population. So, we were pretty happy. This is our best representative sample that we've had.

MR. O'HANLON: I'll just say one quick thing and then leave whatever is left for you, Mr. Secretary. But the question that was posed to me and to you as well about the BRAC process which isn't going to solve most of our problems because we're not going to presumably reopen bases we've already shut to solve these problems. But going forward I think your question is actually very good because I think it's basically correct that even though BRAC legislation allows for other factors to be considered, DOD has used the BRAC process primarily to maximize its own internal efficiency. That's what it was asked to do, in fairness, but there are a lot of other considerations. Not just whether you're near a big city or not, but even within a city. I mean, I'm still confused as to why Walter Reed Washington got closed in a part of D.C. that needed the jobs after they just spent a billion dollars refurbishing the installation, and Bethesda where we don't need any more traffic or business got all the joy and all the added -- we love Walter Reed, but we also love Bethesda Navy and I'm not sure we really needed to

combine them. But the 2005 BRAC decided to promote jointness and that was part of why I think we saw that.

So, if we're going to do another BRAC I think issues like economic opportunities for individual military families, but also for that community writ large should be part of the equation and we need a broader definition of what BRAC is trying to achieve than simply internal DOD accounting efficiency. So, I second your general point.

With that, sir, over to you to wrap up for us today.

MR. KURTA: Thank you. I'm going to take a little bit of poetic license here and not try to answer every question that there was but there are a few things, at least two, that I want to just talk about. One is the panoply of ideas that was under the Force of the Future moniker. I just assure everybody that particularly those that dealt with the future of the all-volunteer force which was many of them directly we still continue to churn away at all of those ideas. Some of the things that you see today were directly as a result of that. The increased dollars and hours that went to our childcare centers, the expansion of family and adoption leave. All of those things were a part of that effort.

One of the good things about that effort was it was a lot of ideas that had bubbled up that had been in the minds of the personnel experts, if you will, for many years. We just needed some help getting things over the line, raising the awareness and the importance of those.

The last piece of those that continues mostly on the service level is their individual advancement of their talent management systems. It won't be a one-size-fits-all I don't think on that because the service cultures are so unique, they have different personnel systems. And those service cultures are a warfighting advantage. So, there are some times that you want to have a DOD solution to something, particularly if it's in a business line or something like that. But when it comes to warfighting cultures, and talent management is a warfighting culture, you want to take advantage of those service identities, those service

cultures. You want to enhance and maintain that such that they retain their fighting effectiveness. So, those talent management systems tend to be going on inside each one of the services and we could talk forever about how each service is doing that differently.

And then last, to the gentleman, when you talk about licensure, credentialing, and portability we talk about it, yes, in the context of our military spouses but also in the context of our active duty service members and our veterans. Sometimes you talk about the hard work of government. Dealing with states who control licensures and credentialing and portability, there has just been a ton of awfully hard slogging that has been done over the past number of years. We've engaged with a lot of the governors and then you find out that in many states the governors don't have the executive power, you've got to work with the state legislatures.

So, we are literally working with every state legislature to advance the cause of credentialing, portability, and licensure. Part of that is it's every state wants you to change and get a new credential, a new license, when you come into their state because it's money. It's money, right? So, when you say, well, I'm in Maryland and I will accept Idaho's licensure, well, if you don't get money for that the state has to figure out how to do that.

But I just want to assure everybody that some things aren't very visible, they're not necessarily very sexy, but there are a lot of dedicated people in and out of government that are working issues like that. It will pay off but it will pay off over time. But it's a very, very important issue.

MR. O'HANLON: Kathy, unless there's anything you want to add at this point I'll close now by thanking you and Blue Star Families and everyone here, military and veterans' families, for what you do for the country, for being here today. And please join me in thanking the panel. (Applause)

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## CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY PUBLIC

I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

Carleton J. Anderson, III

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