

**UNDERSTANDING THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND
FAMILIES ESPECIALLY DURING TIMES OF MILI-
TARY DEPLOYMENT**

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION,

LABOR, AND PENSIONS

UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

ON

EXAMINING HOW EFFECTIVE THE ARMY HAS BEEN IN MAKING IT
EASIER FOR MILITARY FAMILIES RAISING CHILDREN AND TO DETER-
MINE WHAT ADDITIONAL CHANGES CAN BE MADE TO FURTHER AS-
SIST MILITARY FAMILIES

JUNE 2, 2003 (FT. CAMPBELL, TN)

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MONDAY, JUNE 2, 2003

U.S. SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES,
OF THE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND
PENSIONS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee was convened, pursuant to notice, at 1 p.m., at the Eagles Conference Room, Building 2607, Tennessee Ave., Ft. Campbell, TN, the Senator Alexander, (Chairman of the Subcommittee), presiding.

Present: Senator Alexander.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR ALEXANDER

Senator ALEXANDER. Welcome. I'm Lamar Alexander and this is a hearing of the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Children and Families. I'm delighted to be at Fort Campbell today and I want to thank the witnesses who are here today. I want to thank Colonel Ruggley particularly. He has been Garrison Commander for 3 hours.

So we've come on a very busy day for him and I'm delighted that he's here. And we've had a chance to have lunch together with Colonel Summers and I thank you very much for that.

The way we will proceed is we have two panels of witnesses. And what I would like to do is to make a brief opening statement, which won't take long, and then I'd like to just go right down the list. We will start with Colonel Summers. Colonel Summers and Mrs. Summers have a 9-hour drive to Fort Leavenworth, which they're to begin as soon as he finishes testifying today.

When he finishes, I may ask him two or three questions and then excuse him so he can get started on that long drive. And then I'll ask the four of you to give just your testimonies, and when you're finished, I'll listen to all four, and then after that will give us some time for back and forth. I think that will make for the best discussion.

And we will end the first panel by 2:00 and then we will go to the second panel at 3:00, and we will finish the entire hearing at least by 4:00 if that fits everyone's schedule.

I'd like to introduce a couple of people who are here with me. Margarite Sallee is the staff director for the Children and Families Subcommittee and she is right here. Kristin Bannerman is a legis-

lative assistant on my Senate Staff specializing in education. I'm going to make my opening statement now, and then we will proceed to Colonel Summers.

The United States Army is today more of a married Army. Over half our active duty service members are married, and nearly half of the men and women in the military today are parents raising children. Three-quarters of married families have dependent children living at home.

So what I guess we could say about today's Army is that there are more missions, there are fewer soldiers, there are more women, there are more spouses working away from home, and there are more children. And we're here today to talk about that, about military parents raising children.

Military men and women choose their profession, they choose to marry, but as Colonel Summers said to us a little earlier today at lunch, this is a matter of readiness. Family readiness has everything to do with military readiness. In order to continue to attract and retain the most talented men and women in our volunteer Army and all of our Armed Services, we need to do whatever we can to make it easier for military parents raising children. And all of society benefits when children grow up in a strong, nurturing, and attentive family.

We're holding the hearing here at Fort Campbell to see how well the Army has done in making it easier for military families raising children and to see what can be done better. And I want to compliment each of you for your very honest and direct testimony. You're very proud of what has been done and you have some suggestions about what can be done better.

We will be talking about schooling, housing, child care, health care, pay, taxes, frequent moves, deployment, reintegration, that is when men and women come back from lengthy tours, and how they integrate with their families and in the communities. All of these issues impact on our services' readiness, as well as just the individual family.

We have to remember that when we're talking about just under a half million men and women in the active duty Army, 1.2 million family members are affected by every policy and every decision. Today we will hear from several members of this family. We will hear from Colonel Kim Summers who was Garrison Commander at Fort Campbell until today. We will hear from those involved in child care and education.

I had an opportunity this morning to visit the child care center which is a superb center, obviously quality child care, and to visit the Family Assistant Center. We will have family members of those who are currently overseas. Holly Petraeus, who is the wife of the Commander of 101st Airborne and I might add has a significant background in her own right, will testify. It's important to come here to hear from those who are living the military life and to hear from those who are working to provide for military families.

Let me say a word about our larger mission here. The Children and Families Subcommittee intends over the next couple of years to take a broad look at how Federal policies, laws, and regulations affect all Americans raising children, because we're all served better if families are strong and parents are healthy. Too many Fed-

eral policies from taxation to work life have made it harder for parents raising children and not easier. We're starting with military families raising children first because the military usually does things better than the rest of American society, and second, because it's a big integrated unit that's been in the news over the last several months and we want to focus on military families as a unit.

We have four United States Senators who are doing what I'm doing. Senator Saxby Chambliss who is chairman of the Personnel Subcommittee of the Armed Services Committee is at Warner Robins Air Force Base in Georgia today having this similar hearing.

Then our two subcommittees, the Personnel Committee and our Children and Families Subcommittees will join together on June 19th in Washington DC. to compare what we have found and to further advance the discussion. The ranking Democrats on those two committees, Senator Dodd of Connecticut and Senator Nelson of Nebraska are also going to be holding hearings between now and June 19th.

So we will have four United States Senators holding hearings in their home states on the issues that affect parents raising children, then bringing all that to Washington DC. on June 19th to see what we can put the spotlight on and what we can do to improve things.

Senator ALEXANDER. I want to thank you for having me on the post here today and for the courtesy that you've already shown, and now I want to call on Colonel Summers. I suggested, by the way, and I hope this is all right with all the witnesses, I have your statements, I've read them all, I've commented on them. I would suggest that you spend about five to 7 minutes on your statement, and that will leave us some time for questions back and forth. We will put your full statement in the record, but if you could summarize it in five or 7 minutes, that would be a big help.

Colonel Summers has served on multiple bases, both here in the United States, as well as in Korea. He's been to Fort Leavenworth before, where he is going today. How many places did you say you had served?

Colonel SUMMERS. This will be our 22nd move.

Senator ALEXANDER. 22nd move in how many years?

Colonel SUMMERS. In 25 years, sir.

Senator ALEXANDER. 22nd move in 25 years. So compliments to Mrs. Summers. In addition to his studies at the University of Nebraska and Colorado, he attended the Army War College, served in Desert Storm and Shield, he's Commander of the U.S. Army Garrison at Fort Campbell, or has been until today, and he has served as a Master Army Aviator and Parachutist. Colonel Summers, thank you for your hospitality. I look forward to your comments.

STATEMENTS OF COLONEL KIM SUMMERS, U.S. ARMY, GARRISON COMMANDER, FORT CAMPBELL, TN; HOLLY PETRAEUS, SPOUSE OF COMMANDER, 101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION, FORT CAMPBELL, TN; MAJOR JOSIE FEES, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, CHILD AND YOUTH SERVICES, FORT CAMPBELL, TN; WILLA GARRETT, YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES, FT. CAMPBELL, TN; AND ROBERT VAIL, DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES BUSINESS CENTER, FORT CAMPBELL, TN

Colonel SUMMERS. Thank you, sir. Senator Alexander, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you for allowing me to speak to these critical issues. As the Garrison Commander of Fort Campbell for the past 2 years, I have observed many facets of these questions and hope to provide an informative perspective.

Fort Campbell is the home to some 24,916 soldiers and supports 14,700 Reservists and National Guardsmen, 46,177 family members, and over 124,000 retirees. The Installation encompasses a little over 105,000 acres and borders two states and four counties. Our association and relationship with the local communities is top notch. In my 25 years of service, I have seen none better. As a result of the extraordinary relationship and these communities' genuine care for soldiers, our community support structure is second to none. An example is the joint commitment of both the Christian County and Montgomery County school systems who teamed up with our own on-post schools in adopting the Secondary Education Transition Study Program more than a year ago. This program has made it much simpler and smoother for high school students of military families to transfer between duty stations and duty assignments and associated schools without disadvantaging the student academically.

The Chain of Command. That Chain of Command, better known as the Rear Detachment, is staffed with dedicated leaders at every level. The Rear Detachment structure and its high quality soldiers illustrate the steadfast dedication to excellence our deployed commanders place on insuring our families are properly cared for.

But with all the successes and magnificent support from Congress, our communities, the Army, the Post systems, we do have areas that need attention, specifically, respite care availability and facilities. Due to deployments, families become single-parent households instantly. Even though our systems and facilities are in place to support the family, we lack enough capability to handle short-term child care on a recurring basis. Before the deployment, both parents would work the schedule. During deployments, that flexibility is gone. The problem is magnified with special needs children. We have one parent doing the job of two is the bottom line. If we could enhance the availability of respite care resources, it would qualitatively and quantitatively improve our family support.

The second area is that of resources to facilitate improvement in our family support system. Dedicated facilities on Fort Campbell are at a premium, but dedicated family support facilities are necessary in order to provide a place for the myriad of family readiness/family support tasks to be accomplished. From FRG flyers to producing event calendars, having meeting space and providing child care are all requirements for successful programs. The Instal-

lation provides for these needs, but not to the level we would expect for such an important part of soldier readiness.

Unit areas are restrictive and often not available. Even though the Installation provides space for our Family Readiness Groups, the competition to support units and other priorities is so intense that it makes sense to consider a new facility for family support.

Sir, in conclusion, our support structure is critical in maintaining soldier readiness. I personally and professionally am very proud of what Fort Campbell does in that effort. Our surrounding communities have embraced our soldiers and families like none other. This teamwork and mutual support is proof we are progressing in this effort. Fort Campbell is a wonderful place to live, work, and play. When our soldiers are called to duty in a distant land, with the continued help from all, Fort Campbell will rise to the occasion and insure our family readiness will be every bit as high as the readiness of our soldiers. Thank you

[The prepared statement of Colonel Summers may be found in additional material.]

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Colonel. If I may ask a couple of questions. You partly answered this and let me give you a chance to talk a little bit more about it. You've been here now a couple of years.

Colonel SUMMERS. Yes, sir.

Senator ALEXANDER. You've seen the needs here of a very active post. If you had to wave a magic wand and do one thing, would it be the resources that you've talked about in your statement, would it have to do with the Family Resource Center, and explain what you have in mind why that would be needed.

Colonel SUMMERS. Yes, sir. To answer the first part of your question, absolutely. The Family Readiness Center is solely devoted to the Family Readiness Groups and their multi tasks and their missions, as well as resources available to them provided by our Army would be one area where I think it would have a tremendous benefit to not only family readiness, but obviously the soldier readiness.

Family Readiness is a tremendous program, and a facility dedicated to that would help with the efficiency of execution of that program insuring that we do provide all the services in a manner in which the Family Readiness Group, as well as the soldiers, would meet and use in the future.

Senator ALEXANDER. Talk a little bit, if you will, about the need for what you call respite care. That's for parents who need a break, need a little time off. It may be—an hour, or a half day, or a day; is that my understanding of it?

Colonel SUMMERS. Yes, sir. And that's right on target. Respite care is a program in which a family member, as I said in the testimony, where they become instant single-parent families, where it becomes necessary for them to have some sort of an outlet for whatever reason to include appointments, those kind of taskings.

So respite care is absolutely critical for providing not only the time, but also the capability to be able to handle and continue with their family functions as a single parent.

Senator ALEXANDER. In respite care, who pays for the respite care?

Colonel SUMMERS. Currently we provide it free of charge.

Senator ALEXANDER. As you've looked over the last 10 years, let's say from the previous Gulf War, Desert Storm, to today, have you seen changes in the Army's attitude toward family support efforts?

Colonel SUMMERS. Sir, I think it's been a continual evolution of that support structure. From that, we took some very significant lessons learned very early on, especially from the first Gulf War, and applied those across our Army. The Army itself obviously takes family support and family readiness very, very seriously, and as a portion of our soldier readiness.

The programs that they have instituted over time have everything from the Family Assistance Center, which is in fact part of our deployment process, to Family Readiness Centers that devote themselves solely to the support of Family Readiness Groups. I think it's proof positive of how serious and supportive that our Army really is in those kinds of programs.

Senator ALEXANDER. You said yourself—others might say, if you join the Army, you choose to do that, it's a volunteer Army, and if you choose to marry, that's volunteer, you would expect that there would be perhaps long deployment, separation from a family. What do you say in response to those who might say that we're putting too much emphasis on the issue of family readiness, long deployments, and the effect of other aspects that surface in the Army on parents raising children?

Colonel SUMMERS. Sir, I would say the first portion of that is that I don't think we can put too much emphasis on the family readiness in and of itself because of its criticality to our overall soldier and unit readiness. I think it's a constant effort in order to make sure that we're basically getting at those needs of our soldiers and our families.

As far as the Army and its deployments, I think that it's a wonderful place to work, it's a wonderful place to live. The Army truly does take care of its own and we will continue to make improvements over time as to—obviously with meetings like this and hearings like this, but continue to make improvements over time to continue our evolution on supporting our families. It is critical and it is something that we need to continue on with.

Senator ALEXANDER. Colonel Summers, thank you very much for your testimony. We will make your whole statement part of the record and your answers and suggestions have been very helpful. And I know that in your new post command at Fort Leavenworth, that you'll continue this interest. I look forward to hearing from you if you have further suggestions about what we should be doing.

Colonel SUMMERS. Thank you very much, sir.

Senator ALEXANDER. Drive safely.

Colonel SUMMERS. I appreciate that very much.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you.

We will move your chair out and I'll go to Ms. Petraeus. I'll ask Holly Petraeus to say in her own words how many places she has lived when she begins her testimony. But there's been a lot of places and I've been impressed how each of those places she has taken on a leadership role at her station.

She has been awarded the Department of Army's Outstanding Civilian Service Medal, she's the wife of the Commanding General of this post, who's being honored for his service in Iraq, and last

I heard, still there. I saw her a few weeks ago at a luncheon here in honor of volunteers who helped with family support.

So Ms. Holly Petraeus, thank you for being here, and particularly because of your background and the number of posts that you've seen, I look forward to your testimony,

Could you tell us how many different places that you have lived in the Army.

Ms. PETRAEUS. Well, since I've married, I've moved about 16 times in 29 years, but I was also an Army daughter growing up, so I think the total is somewhere around 25 or 26 moves total.

Senator ALEXANDER. Does anyone keep up with the records?

Ms. PETRAEUS. The only time we have to remember is when my husband does his security clearances. We have to go look up all those old addresses.

Senator ALEXANDER. Oh, that's right. Well, thank you very much for being here. I look forward to hearing your testimony.

Ms. PETRAEUS. Thank you, Senator Alexander. I am here today to speak to you as an Army wife of almost 29 years. You've asked, "How has the Army taken care of its soldiers' families during this deployment?" My experience here at Fort Campbell has been a very positive one. The key element has been good communication between the deploying units, the military and civilian staff remaining here at Fort Campbell, and the volunteer Family Readiness Group or FRG leaders.

Among the military remaining here on post, the Installation commander has conducted bi-weekly information meetings with senior spouses and key FRG leaders. These have been a great venue for bringing up issues that concern us, and for hearing what the Installation is doing to address those issues.

Also, the post hospital has been very responsive to family concerns. The five chaplains who remain here have done a wonderful job offering deployment-related counseling and also running a very successful charitable effort, Operation Helping Hand, which is used to help family members where Army Emergency Relief cannot.

On the DOD civilian side, the people in Army Community Services have been super. They run our Family Assistance Center, a one-stop shopping for family members who need assistance while the soldiers are deployed. They also coordinate deployment-related training, such as Army Family Team Building.

Morale, Welfare, and Recreation has worked with local charities and sponsors to provide some very well-attended free family functions, such as monthly family fun fairs. Our Fort Campbell schools have not only addressed deployment-related issues with their own students, but have provided the local off-post school systems with training.

I have to mention also the invaluable service of our volunteer FRG leaders. They are the command's link to the families, and although they are dealing at home with the same deployment issues as everyone else, they dedicate a substantial portion of their free time to reaching out to help others.

Now, as to the question of what could be done better: I do feel that the Army is asking a great deal of our FRG leaders. They have no official status, but they bear a lot of responsibility.

When Secretary of the Army White was here in April, he suggested that some of the key FRG positions should be salaried. These volunteers dedicate their time, and often their own money, too, keeping in communication with family members over a far-flung area, and they should have the status and protection of being official DOD employees.

I'd also like to see more money available for child care during deployments. The young soldiers' spouses will not come out for meetings and social functions if they cannot bring their children. And if we are to reach them with the information they need, we must ensure that free child care is available on site.

As deployments go on, respite care is also important. We are stretching our dollars and using charitable donations, as well, but more funding in this area would be great.

Another thing I think the Army and all the services can improve on is casualty notification for seriously and very serious injured. This has caused a lot of heartburn for us here during this deployment, because of the lack of timely information coming from overseas. Sometimes the first notice the family has received has been a call directly from a military hospital overseas, although there has been no information about the casualty sent to the division casualty office. On one occasion, a soldier who had been sent home for convalescent leave called from the Nashville Airport looking for a ride—and that was our first indication that he had returned to the United States.

The problem has been particularly bad with soldiers treated in the Navy system. It has been almost impossible to get information on their status or their whereabouts. As you can imagine, this has been very upsetting for the families. In this automated age, we should be able to do better of tracking who is where and letting the family members know in a timely manner.

On a larger scale, I'd like to address what Congress can do for us. No. 1 in the minds of many here is that we need more soldiers on active duty, particularly in certain key specialties. In recent years, the Army has downsized while adding on more and more overseas missions. The obvious result of this is that many of our soldiers have been deployed repeatedly over the last few years. In this group, for example, my husband has been deployed 16 of the last 24 months, and Gricell Medley's has been deployed 15 of the last 17 months.

Many families in our Chinook helicopter battalion, our Military Police Battalion, our logistics and special operations units can tell the same story. This unrelenting pace of deployment is a retention issue. Families will not be willing to go it alone forever with little relief in sight.

I would also ask Congress to let us keep our on-post schools. They provide a high quality and consistent education for our children who move from State to State, where the quality of education varies and where the local school districts are underfunded in the area of impact aid. A number of our schools here at Fort Campbell have achieved Blue Ribbon status, and they are valued accordingly by the families.

In closing, I'd like to thank Senator Alexander for coming here today. I'm proud of the way our military, our families, and our local

communities have worked together during this deployment, and I would like that to be the main message that you take away today. Thank you.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you very much, Ms. Petraeus, and I appreciate very much your being with us.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Petraeus may be found in additional material.]

Senator ALEXANDER. Josie Fees is our next witness, daughter of retired Army veteran. Her husband is currently out of the country while she's a mother working with Child Youth Services; is that right and has for the last 15 years.

What we will do is, if we may proceed right down the line, and then when the testimony is finished, I'll ask questions of all four of you. Welcome.

Major FEES. Good afternoon. I'm Josie Fees, Programs Operation Specialist, and I am here today to speak to you on behalf of Fort Campbell's Child and Youth Services Program.

I am pleased to say that I am a military family member and have been for over 33 years and with Child and Youth Services for 15. I have been with Fort Campbell's Child and Youth Services for 3 years, and I speak to you with a tremendous sense of pride. I first noticed Child and Youth Services' commitment to quality and high standards for families because the Child and Youth Services' programs obtained national accreditation to include Family Child Care homes. I then witnessed the overwhelming kindness on 9/11 when the U.S. was under attack and the Installation immediately went into action to protect soldiers, the families, and the civilian workforce.

It was very difficult that day to get on and off the Installation. And without hesitation, the Child and Youth Services' staff volunteered to stay and do whatever was necessary to ensure that all the children were safe and their needs were met until their parents could pick them up. Child and Youth Services' staff stayed past midnight and arrived back at 5:00 in the morning to receive the children. The staff never once complained. There is a saying that "the Army takes care of its own." Fort Campbell has proven that to me time and time again.

Now, with the division deployed, how has Child and Youth Services supported deployed families? Beginning with the mobilization phase, a parent notified the Child and Youth Services that they had a need for extended child care due to mobilization requirements. Extended care for evening, weekends, and holidays at no cost to the parent was immediately implemented the same day so that the soldiers could focus on the mission.

Since the deployment, Child and Youth Services continues to provide contingency services so that soldiers and family members are at ease knowing their child care needs are met. Child and Youth Services provides on-site child care for Family Readiness Group meetings, we offer respite care to family members due to deployment issues.

The Family Assistance Center offers child care and it's being provided by the staff of Child and Youth Services. The Family Child Care Program provides emergency care for military families due to

deployment. Emergency care providers are available 24 hours a day.

Child and Youth Services provides many family services, "Pamper the Parents" day so that the parents can get a break, participate in Fort Campbell's Family Fun Fairs, America's Kids Run, and there was an essay contest titled, "I am a Military Child." The winners were invited to read their essays at the Volunteer-of-the-Month ceremony.

The staff of the child care centers is helping the children put together scrapbooks so the parents will have pictures of the events that they missed out on while they were deployed. The teen program takes an active lead on mentoring the young children and volunteering in the community in support of deployed families.

The Sports and Fitness program depends largely on volunteer coaches, and since many of them are soldiers, spouses, along with some staff, have stepped up to ensure that the program isn't interrupted and provide service for the children.

These are just a few of many examples of the partnerships with Child and Youth Services and other Community Activity Based Centers strong sense of commitment and dedication to our military families during deployment.

Child and Youth Services is a large employer of family members. We recognize that the support internally, as well as externally, is very important during deployment and I have to say Fort Campbell does a fantastic job. We provide training for the staff so they can recognize and understand the effects deployment has on children, we provide stress training since many of our staff are family members facing the same deployment issues themselves.

What type of support does Child and Youth Services need in order to meet the needs of deployed families? Well, we certainly appreciate the support Congress has provided to the Child and Youth Services Program and we will continue to maintain our "model for the nation" status with your support. We continue to be able to provide a safe, healthy, and nurturing program for young children and offer our youth a safe and fun place to go instead of being home alone.

In closing, I'd like to say as a very proud Fort Campbell family member and a representative of Child and Youth Services, thank you for allowing us the opportunity to tell you about our fantastic installation and some of the things we do to show that families come first. As well as what we need to do to improve the quality of life for military families during deployment, the genuine concern that Congress has shown for our military community means more than I can express.

[The prepared statement of Major Fees may be found in additional material.]

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Ms. Fees. Willa Garrett taught elementary school for 10 years at home and abroad and is married to a 101st Airborne retiree. As an Army civilian, she has been involved with many children, Youth and Family Services. Welcome, and we look forward to your testimony.

Ms. GARRETT. Thank you, Senator Alexander.

I have been a part of the Fort Campbell Child and Youth Services for the past 13-and-a-half years, and am certainly honored to

address you today, sir, on the support services that were offered to families during this deployment.

As the school liaison officer, I enjoy the privilege of serving as a vehicle for information for parents, schools, and students, as well as collaborating with local schools and installation organizations to facilitate the education transition for our children.

Currently, the majority of our school age population is educated mainly by three school districts; one, our own host school district, the Fort Campbell Department of Defense Domestic Dependent Elementary Secondary Schools, sometimes called DDESS schools, serve about 4,200 children that reside on the Installation.

Clarksville-Montgomery County School System of Tennessee educates approximately 5,600 of our students that reside in the city of Clarksville, TN. Christian County Public Schools of Kentucky educates about 1,100 of our students each year who reside in Hopkinsville and Oak Grove, KY.

Continuity of education when family is transferred to and from the Fort Campbell area has improved greatly over the past 3 years. Through the positive relations and continuous communication, the local school districts have developed a greater understanding and sensitivity about the challenges that our children incur as a result of transitioning from one school district to another.

Fort Campbell schools is a part of the original nine school systems involved in the study commissioned by the Army and conducted by the Military Child Education Coalition Secondary Education Transition Study, mainly the SETS study.

Since the initial study, the School Liaison Officer and the Fort Campbell schools have been working closely with the local school districts of Clarksville and Christian County to develop a local action plan that makes the transition for all our mobile students a more seamless venture for students and their families.

Each one of these school districts consistently worked to ensure children who move have the same advantages and opportunities as those students who remain in one location for their entire school career. Efforts are being made to help families move with greater ease and remain in the area when it seemed that the move is harmful to children.

In support of a recent deployment, the Fort Campbell schools did an excellent job of providing training for their counselors and the neighboring school districts. The School Liaison Officer partnered with the post hospital's chief of psychology and the psychologist for the Soldier/Family Health Readiness Program to offer training to counselors, teachers, and administrators to off-post schools. These half-day training sessions included a presentation on "Deployment, Stress, Families and School" that addressed identifying stress in adults and children, as well as ways to assist children in dealing with such frustrations.

Other information provided to school during these training sessions included information on the Family Assistance Centers, current child care opportunities, and youth activities sponsored by Child and Youth Services, along with many other support services on the Installation. Suggestions for dealing with the reunion cycle of the deployment, as well as what to expect during this phase, was also presented.

Fort Campbell, Clarksville and Christian County schools offer periodic parent sessions and family involvement opportunities throughout the school year, such as Parent/Teacher Organization, as well as site-based council meetings to assist in making meaningful decisions about how their schools are run.

Child and Youth Services' staff coordinate briefings for parents on child development and stress management. Parent advisory groups for full day and preschool enrolled children have quarterly meetings to look at the program improvements and share information. Training opportunities and family-oriented activities are frequently communicated to each school district.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to speak on behalf of our children in schools. Fort Campbell continues to provide excellent support services to families of our deployed soldiers. Each of our school districts continue to be extremely positive and welcome as much information as possible on what is needed to fully support our children and their school districts.

The team work displayed by each one of our schools and other installation support agencies is definitely commendable and is what I consider to be a true demonstration of dedication and commitment.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Garrett may be found in additional material.]

Senator ALEXANDER. I spent much of the morning with our next witness, Bob Vail, who has had a distinguished career, he is currently the Director of the Community Activities Business Center at Fort Campbell. Among other things, he has also been a past distinguished lieutenant governor in the Kiwanis Club, graduate of Leadership Clarksville, and currently active with Big Brothers, Big Sisters.

Mr. Vail, thank you for the tour this morning and the time you spent with us today. We look forward to your testimony.

Mr. VAIL. Thank you, sir, for giving me this opportunity to talk about the support we provide to our Army families.

I'm extremely proud of the support the families and children receive from the organizations on Fort Campbell that are chartered to provide that service. I am also proud to be a part of the surrounding communities that support Fort Campbell so well.

One of the main benefits of providing superior support to the families is keeping them in the area where we can better help them in the event of need. We can keep them informed of what is really going on and not have them rely on media and rumor for their information.

Sir, you saw the Family Assistance Center that we set up to provide a one-stop shop for virtually all services that are provided. That center has proven to be extremely beneficial and effective in helping families. That they can go to one site and get everything from emergency food supplies, financial aid, legal assistance, medical insurance information, and so on has filled a critical need.

Our family Readiness Center has also proven to be extremely valuable. In terms of facilities, it provides classrooms, mail boxes for over 200 Family Readiness Groups, public access to computers, training materials, and the like. It is a resource center for the

Army Team Building Program and the Operation Ready Program. It is also the focal point for our installation volunteer program. All these services tie together to support the Family Readiness Groups and individual family members and better prepare family members for deployments.

The Child and Youth Services programs have proven why they are recognized as a model for the Nation. The exceptional services they provide have been invaluable in support of the family. We expanded our operating hours as needed, we provided many sessions of child care in support of the Family Readiness Group meetings, and emergency child care as needed. And the child care facility at the Family Assistance Center have all been provided without charge to the soldier or family. In addition, we have strived to provide special entertainment and recreation events on post free of charge to the families.

As I mentioned, the community has embraced the family and their outpouring of support has been incredible. Some groups have focused on raising money and provided financial support where the official channels cannot. Others have wanted to adopt a family, donate products, and so on. This support has been truly heartwarming and has done a lot to improve the morale of the family members.

Overall, I feel the support to the families and children has been outstanding and considerably better than during our last major deployment during Desert Storm. Still, there is room for improvement. The most important is to cover the incredible need for child care by the parent left as the sole provider during a deployment. Some of this is so the parent can do critical things such as doctor's appointments, house repairs, and so on. Other times, they just need a break.

This is especially true of families with special needs children. Care of a special needs child can become overwhelming for the remaining parent. While we have been providing some free respite care, it has been on a fairly limited basis partly due to the cost, partly due to the capacity to provide this care.

In conclusion, I am extremely proud of the role that community activities has played in providing support to the families of the soldiers that defend our freedom. Many of the employees that provide these services are family members themselves and can really relate to the problems that their customers bring to them.

Thank you again for this opportunity and I stand ready to answer any questions that you might have.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Mr. Vail. Thanks to the witnesses for being here. I think we have some time for questions or for you to make further comments.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Vail may be found in additional material.]

Senator ALEXANDER. Now, let me ask of each of you the question I asked of Colonel Summers. I'll just start with Mr. Vail and move down the table this way, if I may. If you had a magic wand and could wave it for one item that would improve family readiness at Fort Campbell, what would it be?

Mr. VAIL. Sir, I think I would have to echo Colonel Summers and indicate the need for a Family Readiness Center that is more capa-

ble of meeting the needs of the Family Readiness Groups and the family members. The one we have is good, but it really needs to have on-site child care, for example, as was mentioned earlier. It's very difficult to get people out, especially for evening classes, and that's oftentimes the only time available to the family members to come to classes. They typically won't come unless child care is available. So a more comprehensive Family Readiness Center would be my answer, sir.

Senator ALEXANDER. Ms. Fees?

Major FEES. Well, since the Army is more of a family organization, in order to provide quality child care to the family members so they can focus on their mission, the Army has a great need for more facilities, child care centers.

In Fort Campbell, we have a large need for two stand-alone school age programs there. And as of right now, out of the five elementary schools, which are located all over the post, it is very difficult to provide the type of facility that these children deserve. It's at the cafeterias or the gyms, and so it's a set-up and take-down everyday procedure for the staff. And that also causes more physical labor on the staff, and they have to do that before the children arrive after school. So facilities would be requested.

Senator ALEXANDER. Ms. Petraeus?

Ms. PETRAEUS. I would like to see more money for the child care programs. Obviously the facilities are needed, as well, but I know that we have over 220 Family Readiness Groups on this post and a number of them end up obliged to do a serious amount of their fund-raising just to cover child care costs for their social functions.

There is some child care for them free of cost, but that's only at their informational meeting. So if they want to get folks to come out and bond in a social setting, then they're having to find the money to pay for that child care. So that's what I'd like to see. If I had the choice, I'd love to see more money addressed to that area.

Senator ALEXANDER. Ms. Garrett?

Ms. GARRETT. If I had a magic wand, I'd like to see money made available to our off-post school districts to provide a transition lab in each one of the high schools and middle schools that would allow for an easier transition for students who are coming in. Maybe they are just about to complete a particular course from the losing school, maybe the school that they're coming to is on a different schedule.

A teacher in a transition lab would be able to help them get through that particular course, maybe finish the one they were just in at the previous school.

Senator ALEXANDER. This would be in, like, Montgomery County School District and Christian County School District?

Ms. GARRETT. Yes, sir.

Senator ALEXANDER. Since you brought up schools, let's go back the other way on schools. There has been some discussion in the Congress about on-post schools; schools on the post and bases around the country. I was hoping to come down last Friday when Mrs. Bush came to be at the graduation here, but the votes were close in the Senate, so the vice president and I and all the other senators stayed to vote.

What advice would you have for members of the Congress about the usefulness of on-post schools?

Ms. GARRETT. Sir, we value all of our local education activities on post and off post, and I have to say because of that, we don't compare them at the moment. We've never done that because they're excellent educational institutions and we just have not compared them.

Senator ALEXANDER. Ms. Petraeus, do you want to make any comment about the schools?

Ms. PETRAEUS. Well, yes. As a parent, I'm willing to say that we do value our on-post schools very much. As I mentioned in my statement, that is a little bit of stability for us when we move. It's definitely a drawing point that attracts people to live on post, the opportunity to go to an on-post school.

I know that impact aid is a question. Often the local communities are not given the kind of money they need to support our school children. And to me, if you got rid of on-post schools, that would just compound that problem, make it worse. So I think they are very valuable to us, and I would be very dismayed to see them go away.

Senator ALEXANDER. May any family stationed here send their child to the on-post school or do they have to be living on-post.

Ms. PETRAEUS. They have to be living on post, or within a certain number of days of living on post.

Senator ALEXANDER. And if they live on post, may they send their child to an off-post school?

Ms. PETRAEUS. To a private school, if they chose to.

Ms. GARRETT. Private schools. One off-post school in particular I know will not except them because they have to reside in their county.

Senator ALEXANDER. I see.

Ms. Fees, what about the schools?

Major FEES. As a parent myself, my children attended the Fort Campbell schools for 2 years, and currently we're off-post in Montgomery County. And during this deployment time, it has been as you can see the big difference of Fort Campbell understanding the deployment issues of these children and the teachers being family members themselves. It provides that sense of security for the children because they have behavior issues or they have days where they're down and they're not sure.

And I think the teachers here are so much more understanding than the ones that are off post. As a parent, it's very valuable.

Senator ALEXANDER. Mr. Vail, any comment?

Mr. VAIL. Sir, I would tell you my perception is from having children in the off-post schools that the on-post schools are superior. I think that at least part of that is because of their funding stream. It is typically more reliable. It's not as reliant on the tax base or property taxes in the area and may be a little less subject to political variances in the local community.

So I think they are typically viewed as being superior and though that's an opinion—and I do know it's a pretty significant emotional event for the folks that do live on post.

Senator ALEXANDER. I'll ask one more question of this panel, so if you want to throw in something I haven't asked you, this is a good chance to do it.

I wanted to talk a little bit because this comes up in almost all of the comments, not in a critical way, but just as Colonel Summers said, Family Readiness is military readiness with more missions, and longer deployments. That's bound to be having an effect on families.

What would you say to the Congress and the American people about the effect of more missions and longer deployments on our ability to retain and keep talented people in the volunteer Army? Mr. Vail, let's start with you and then go back that way.

Mr. VAIL. I don't think there's any question that it is having impact. I think the continued separations for the families is causing retention problems. You certainly hear about it in just day-to-day conversations with folks that are impacted by that in the work force. A lot of the work force is family members and so you do hear it from that perspective. So I don't think there's any question that it is having a very significant impact on retention.

Senator ALEXANDER. Ms. Fees?

Major FEES. I think that what's important is if we continue to support the Family Readiness Programs and ensure that when the family member is a single parent, that there is options for them because they are located so far from the family members that we rely on one another for support.

If there are options for us to reach out and get that support, the deployments wouldn't be such a hardship.

Senator ALEXANDER. Ms. Petraeus?

Ms. PETRAEUS. I have to agree with Mr. Vail that I think it is a very significant thing to retention. No matter how good your family programs are, if you have your spouse continually deployed and often in harm's way, eventually people are going to say, enough.

And, unfortunately, you know, it takes a long time to train a soldier, especially one in a specialized field, and it's not the ones who have been in a year or two that may decide to get out after their 3 years are up, but these are family members that have been in for some time. And when you lose them, you lose something very valuable.

But I don't think the families will be willing to just continually go it alone, do it by themselves with the prospect of more and more of the same in sight.

Senator ALEXANDER. Ms. Garrett?

Ms. GARRETT. Sir, I agree with everything that's been said by the other witnesses. Our family members certainly have demonstrated a lot of strength. Just since I've been here at Fort Campbell, I've seen families hold it together when I know that their sponsor has deployed several times and for long lengths of time.

We've also seen the negative effects of that on our children in schools just by some of the phones calls that I get from school administrators and some teachers and so forth. I have to also say that I agree that it's very difficult for some of them to stay in the Army and maintain their family connections. Sometimes it's very difficult for them to do.

Senator ALEXANDER. I said that was my last question, but I have 2 minutes left in this panel and I'm not going to let all this wisdom get away from me. Plus, this question is related to the last one.

We talked about longer deployments, more frequent deployments. But another aspect that can uproot a family is what Colonel Summers and Mrs. Summers are about to do, to drive nine hours to Fort Leavenworth. And he was talking about the large number of assignments he's had over the years, and that's been true with all of you who have been in the military.

I heard Secretary Rumsfeld talk recently about looking at ways to cut down on frequent moves by military personnel. Would you have any comment about that, any insight you'd like to offer about the wisdom of that or the effect that might have on, morale and the ability to retain talented people? Ms. Garrett, I'll start with you.

Ms. GARRETT. A few years ago, the Army implemented a new stabilization policy for soldiers that had juniors in high school or those who would be juniors, that if they wanted to stay at that particular post to allow their child to graduate with the current graduating class, they could do that.

And I know at Fort Campbell, we've had a number of requests and they've all been approved. And it has really, really done a lot for the family stability and the education of our children.

Senator ALEXANDER. Ms. Petraeus?

Ms. PETRAEUS. I know one house committee was looking at one way of stabilizing families would be to have unaccompanied unit rotations to Europe and Korea. And I want to say very strongly, I don't think that's the way to go. Again, to the family, that would be perceived as one more deployment, not to mention, this may not be the spot where they choose to be stabilized.

I know the Marines and the Navy—often the families do spend long periods of time in one particular area, but often those are major metropolitan areas that are on the coast. They offer a lot of employment opportunities.

Army bases tend to be where you have lots of land for training. They tend to be more rural areas with often less employment and less career opportunities. I don't know that it's necessarily a virtue to stabilize a family in that particular area, so I have some concerns about that. Yes, the frequent moves can be a challenge, but again, I don't think unaccompanied unit rotations are going to be a way to make that better.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you. Ms. Fees?

Major FEES. I'm facing the issue with my husband being in the Sinai, and he has orders to return to Fort Hood and has requested to delete them to stay at Fort Campbell for our children, and they have been approved.

It's so difficult for military children, and being one myself my entire life growing up, when you move as a soldier, you take your rank and you take your title and your status and you take it to the next installation. As a child, you could have been the All-Star on a soccer team or done really well on a baseball team, but you take nothing with you.

So it's very important, I feel that if family does request that they can stabilize in an area, that they can.

Senator ALEXANDER. Mr. Vail, you get the last word.

Mr. VAIL. Well, sir, you mentioned a few minutes ago that some things are perceived to perhaps come with the job or with the territory, and I don't think that the numbers of moves has probably dramatically changed over the years. I think it probably kind of comes with the job.

I don't think it has the same impact as does the frequent deployments, so I would—although it might be an issue and particularly there may be needs to have some provisions under special circumstances to do more stabilization. I think it's probably not as key as deployments.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you very much for your candor and for your help on this. Now, this is a continuing discussion. We will have another hearing on June the 19th, as I mentioned, and we're going to continue to look at this for the next couple of years.

So if you have additional comments, I want to set up an easy way for you to get in touch with me or with our staff and let us know your suggestions. They'll be welcome.

I'd like to invite the second panel to come forward, please.

Welcome. And we will try to follow the same procedure we did before. I was saying to commanding officers a little earlier, I cannot imagine an institution more different than the United States Military than the U.S. Senate.

The U.S. Senate is completely undisciplined. If I were to have asked four senators to speak for five or 6 minutes, the first one would barely be through coffee. And here we got through that testimony beautifully and had time to discuss. Thank you for that.

And if you could submit your full statement for the record and then it will be a part of our committee record for Congress. Please keep your remarks to five to 7 minutes, then that will leave us time to have the kind of discussion we did with the last panel.

Thank you very much for coming. I read your comments already and I'm impressed with their directness and I look forward to questioning you about some of them. And we will start with Major Joyce Dolinish. She began as Army ROTC at Western Michigan University. She's been stationed in the United States and Europe, now a Family Readiness advisor. Her husband, who began in the 101st Airborne, now is a colonel with the 101st Corps Support Group.

Major Dolinish, welcome. Thank you for being here.

STATEMENTS OF MAJOR JOYCE DOLINISH, U.S. ARMY (RET.), 101ST CORPS SUPPORT GROUP; GRICELL MEDLEY, FAMILY READINESS GROUP (FRG) VOLUNTEER, SPOUSE OF DEPLOYED SOLDIER, CLARKSVILLE, TN; MICHELLE TAYLOR, CARETAKER OF CHILDREN OF TWO DEPLOYED PARENTS, CLARKSVILLE, TN; AND FIRST SERGEANT HUGHES, NATIONAL GUARD REPRESENTATIVE, 776TH MAINTENANCE COMPANY, FORT CAMPBELL, TN

Major DOLINISH. Sir, I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to discuss the military family deployment with the committee today. I am able to discuss these issues from a rather unique perspective of 20 years of active duty, 19 years as an Army spouse, 12 as an Army mom, and 2 years as a retiree and a disabled veteran. I'm

the Family Readiness Group Advisor, as you stated, for the 101st Corps Support Group.

Deployment issues are a key topic to all military families. As part of a volunteer force, individuals choose the life of a soldier because they believe that they are part of an organization that can make a difference in the world and in them as individuals. Their career choice is not an easy one for the soldier or for the family.

The money is not great, the housing often substandard, the relocation is difficult, and the time away from their family increases yearly. Yet they remain on duty serving despite these hardships proving again and again that they are the best Army in the world.

While the families feel nothing but pride and support for all soldiers, they all at some point begin to question when the constant separation becomes too much to bear as a family. Within our Group, units redeployed from Afghanistan only to begin preparation for deployment to Iraq. As we made plans for welcoming home soldiers returning from Iraq, we're simultaneously planning the departure ceremonies for units redeploying to a nine-month tour of Afghanistan.

We continue to hear plans to further reduce the size of the Army and know that our soldiers will spend even less time with their family. We hear of efforts to change accompanied tours to Europe to a rotation which we believe is a friendly euphemism for another deployment.

Most Americans think that a military mission is done when the press stops reporting it. Families know it takes years to complete the job and bring everyone home. Pride and loyalty hold the military family together, but at some point in the near future, soldiers may face ultimatums from their families as the amount of time together becomes less than the amount of time apart.

I'd like to address the issue of mothers facing deployment as been in the news. I believe it's being viewed from the wrong angle by most observers. The Army, as you have stated, is a volunteer career choice, and all single soldiers or dual military couples with children are at all times aware of their potential for deployment and they're required to provide extensive legal documentation of a valid family care plan. If they cannot provide this plan, they are relieved from active duty.

The parents and mothers who are currently deployed are very proud soldiers. They had plans in place and they executed those plans. The real problem is the number of soldiers whose care plans, when notified of deployment, suddenly were not valid. These soldiers knowingly, willingly lied to their commanders and provided false legal documentation. The units then deployed without these soldiers, perhaps compromising their mission.

Soldiers are informed adults who must make difficult decisions regarding their families. Life as a soldier is not an easy one, especially for single parents or dual military couples. If they decide to pursue it, they must be prepared for separations and have a valid care plan for their children. If they do not have someone they trust ready to assume the role of parent at any time, they must pursue another career.

Civilians make hard decisions based on the amount of time they'll be away from their families and make job decisions based

on that. Soldiers must make the same tough decisions. The Army life is not for everyone.

Contrary to popular belief, the return of a soldier from a long deployment is often more difficult than their departure. The redeployment briefings are normally offered at the Family Readiness Group meetings when rumors start that soldiers are coming home. FRG leaders hope that each family will attend at least one of those briefings, but we cannot enforce it.

FRG leaders, chaplains, and social workers from the hospital jointly present these briefings, but there is currently no standard format or books to use. The resources available on military installations are insufficient to provide the on-going support needed by many soldiers and their families.

On-post schools are one of the positive aspects of deployment and military life. Children are surrounded by peers going through the same thing they are. Teachers and counselors are experienced with deployments and are trained to watch children for signs of excessive stress. Teachers have constant access to the families and support from military units and the Installation. Exceptional discipline is maintained, in part because the military parent can be held accountable for their child's actions.

Fort Campbell is fortunate to have outstanding community support, but the off-post schools cannot compete with the on-post schools' ability to prepare children for the constant deployment and redeployment of soldiers. Funding continues to be reduced for on-post school systems at a time of increasing soldier deployments, when they can least afford to cut corners or reduce programs.

On-post schools are better prepared to ensure the continuity of education for each child as a military family transfers throughout their career. Department of Defense guidelines ensure that all schools on military installations have similar curriculums. Improvements have been made and agreements coordinated with many off-post schools near military bases to ease the transition of military students; however, gaps continue to occur. Constant moves are extremely difficult on children. Gaps in curriculums or the calculation of credits for graduation can make the move even more traumatic. On-post schools are something we would not want to lose.

The most positive aspect of this deployment has been the way the Installation, military rear detachments, families, and the local community have pulled together. Large-scale deployments are difficult on everyone. Communication and mutual support has been outstanding. Most military families are extremely self-sufficient, but they need to know what is going on. The relatively few families that need support receive the help they need quickly and from many sources.

The key negative areas of this deployment were casualty notification and the tracking of casualties in the medical system, as Ms. Petraeus has already stated. Embedded media provided real-time coverage of events. Families knew immediately that an accident or casualty had occurred, and by watching closely, could often narrow the event to a specific unit.

While no one argues that all casualty notification must be 100 percent accurate, the time from the incident until the time the De-

partment of the Army approves notification of next of kin is currently unacceptable given today's media and communication capabilities. Soldiers are calling back and notifying spouses of a casualty before the assistance officers can get to the homes to do a notification.

Injured soldiers are nearly impossible to track in the multiservice medical system. Today's military family depends and deserves a casualty notification system that recognizes the impact of instant media and communication.

Basically the military family doesn't want special treatment. They're very self-reliant and they're proud of what they do, but they do want uninterrupted support in critical areas, medical, schooling, an on-going post support. And together, we can all do that and do a very good job of it. I'd like to thank you for the opportunity for coming, sir.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you for your comments.

[The prepared statement of Major Dolinish may be found in additional material.]

Senator ALEXANDER. Ms. Gricell Medley has managed the Support Team Building and Readiness Groups for families at Fort Campbell as well as in Panama. Welcome. We're glad you're here and look forward to your testimony.

Ms. MEDLEY. Senator Alexander, good afternoon. Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to talk to you about our family's experience with the military.

My name, as you said, is Gricell Medley. My husband, Major Lee Medley, is the commander of the CH47 Chinook Helicopter Company in the 7th Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment.

We have been married 9 years and have been blessed with two young daughters, Lia and Emma. I met my husband during his service in Panama. We married in 1994. The challenges of being newlyweds from two different cultures created a special bond between my husband and I. The main reason we have stayed in the Army is because simply, my husband loves his job, and he loves the fact that he is serving our Nation.

Some of the other reasons we stay in the Army is because of the excellent medical care, career advancement, continued training, retirement benefits, on-post housing, DOD schools, and the great sense of community. My husband took command of his Company in 2001. As the commander's wife, I assumed the role as the unit's Family Readiness Group leader.

Since Desert Storm, the Army has continued to place emphasis and importance on the Army's FRG. I think this is one of the things the Army has done well in the business of taking care of soldiers and their families. Simply defined, the FRG consists of volunteers, usually, the spouses of the soldiers, working together to provide assistance and information to all families and single soldiers within the unit. It is important to remember that everyone is welcome to participate regardless of their rank.

Above the company level, we join with the FRG from our higher headquarters supporting the larger efforts and beneficial projects. Our FRG organizes informational briefings for the spouses, updates, and disseminates information about deployments, welcomes

new spouses, visits hospitalized family members and soldiers, plans Easter egg hunts and many other special events.

In my opinion, the most important role of the FRG remains information management. Without our dedicated volunteers, the FRG simply would not function. While the FRG is a great strength of the Army, we could do better by actually funding the FRG with paid personnel to continuity and stability for the unit.

One of the things the Army needs to take a closer look at is the price the op tempo takes on its soldiers and family members. The operational tempo of the Army has increased over the last decade, while the divisional strength of the Army has decreased; in other words, more missions, more deployments with fewer people, especially in certain fields like Chinook Helicopter Units.

I would like to take a moment to tell you how these increased deployments have affected my family. Our youngest daughter, Emma, is 17 months old. My husband has been deployed 15 of those months. He has been deployed to Korea, 2 JRTC rotations to Fort Polk, Afghanistan for 8 months, and finally Iraq since March of this year. He was only home for 21 days between Afghanistan and Iraq. The majority of that time was spent training and preparing his soldiers for redeployment.

While I am extremely proud of our soldiers and our families, this number of separations and deployments to stressful environments have taken an enormous toll on our Army families. I am afraid it's a retention issue for our young officers and enlisted personnel. Many of them get out of the Army because simply they do not like the repeated separations from their families.

As I mentioned before, my husband's company spent 8 months in Afghanistan. I would like to make sure that you know that the 7th Battalion of the 101st has maintained all of the Chinook personnel rotations in Afghanistan since January 2002.

C Company, currently in Afghanistan, was previously there for 4 months, home for two, and went back to Afghanistan in December of 2002. We do not know when they will return.

This unknown is one of the frustrations that soldiers and families face. We do not know when they will return or what their recovery time will be. In addition, I have read in the Army Times about the Army's plan to send fewer families to Europe and Korea and instead, rotate battalions for six-month deployments. To our family, this is one more deployment.

My family hopes that change never happens. We would much rather go as a family for two or 3 years. It is very important to us to keep our families together as much as possible.

Again, thank you for taking the time to listen to my comments today. I feel honored to have had the opportunity to express my thoughts to you and I deeply appreciate your interest in improving the quality of life of our Army families.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Medley may be found in additional material.]

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Ms. Medley. We have been talking some about there being more missions, fewer soldiers, longer deployments, more women in the service, more families with children, and also, more spouses working at those assignments. Michelle Taylor is one of those. She's a military spouse, a dedicated

volunteer, and she also is a sales director for Mary Kay Cosmetics. We welcome your presence and look forward to your testimony.

Ms. TAYLOR. Good afternoon. As you mentioned, my name is Michelle Taylor. My husband, Kirk, is a major in the division's plan section.

As an Army wife of 15 years and geographically a single parent for two of the last 3 years, I'm here to share my thoughts and observations concerning support for the families of deployed soldiers.

Overall, I have to commend the efforts of the Installation staff and leadership. I am convinced that they have put their best foot forward in attempting to handle the myriad of issues that arise when an entire Division deploys.

Army Community Service and the Family Assistance Center are both examples of the larger effort to take care of the families and communities left behind. In addition, the hospital has remained responsive, despite the deployment of many of its medical staff.

However, the lynchpin of support is provided through the Family Readiness Groups that exist to support families at the grassroots level. This is essentially a self-help resource in that the more a spouse attends and participates, the greater the benefits he or she will receive. Family Readiness Groups exist year-round and the familiarity it breeds amongst its members aids in the early identification of families who are in need. This early screening helps the more experienced group members steer others to resources before the situation becomes a crisis.

I have been frustrated at times by the seemingly lack of information flow down to the company level, but I suspect that the problem resides largely in the adage, we don't know what we don't know.

Another source of enormous support resides in our church communities. As you might expect, many of the post chaplains, including all of the Catholic chaplains, deployed in support of the troops. The foundation of community that resides uniquely in our church community, regardless of faith, has truly helped the family members who fall through the Family Readiness safety net.

Last, the local communities of Clarksville, Oak Grove, and Hopkinsville have responded in their always gracious manner. The knowledge that the community-at-large values the sacrifices of both the soldiers and their family members is reassuring and takes a little of the sting out of the series of separations we've recently experienced.

The most obvious response as to how you and your fellow Members of Congress can help is easily summed up in one word, money. More specifically, we need help in several areas to include improvement in the Tri-Care System and delivery of health care services. The long wait for nonthreatening, yet essential to quality-of-life care is unacceptable.

Changes to the maintenance and development of on-post housing is also needed. As an off-post family, the result of a 12-month plus waiting list upon arrival to Fort Campbell, gaining access to several of the available programs is problematic.

Funding for child care facilities is also needed. Spouses with young children are far less likely to attend a family support group meeting or other organizational meetings when they have to spend their meager disposable funds for child care.

While the Government has relieved soldiers in the Iraqi theater of war of the Federal tax burden, others are not so lucky. Many hardship or unaccompanied tours do not enjoy the same relief. A good example is our forces serving in Korea. Despite my husband's commitment to living a very Spartan lifestyle during his deployment there, the assignment was a financial hardship based solely on the need to maintain two households. This additional financial burden was managed on a Major's salary and my additional income, but this can't be said for all of our younger soldiers and families.

Last, I am tired. I would not trade the friends or experiences that our family has enjoyed as a result of my husband's service, but the pace of deployments has reached a point that personally I find unacceptable. I'm proud of Kirk's service to our Nation. He is my hero. But he is also a father and a husband.

The Army needs people like my husband to lead soldiers where it matters most, at the tactical unit level. I will accompany Kirk where the Army sees fit to assign him next, but I will not encourage another move to a tactical unit. I find this sad and a loss to the Army. However, the bottom line is that an assignment to a Divisional unit right now is a near guarantee of prolonged separation with little hope for change in the future.

Senator Alexander, thank you for joining us today and allowing us to give voice to our concerns. The Army is a close-knit family, and when possible, we take care of our own. Whatever help you and the Members of Congress can provide for us is greatly appreciated. Thank you.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Taylor may be found in additional material.]

Senator ALEXANDER. First Sergeant Thomas Hughes is from Carter County, Tennessee, and he is a representative of a phenomenon we're increasingly seeing, served in active duty, now he's been in the Tennessee National Guard since 1985 or 1986.

Sergeant HUGHES. Yes, sir.

Senator ALEXANDER. He was deployed in Desert Storm and still in the Guard. And we hear more and more that we're thinking of our Armed Services and our Guardsmen, and our Reservists as a single unit, but at Fort Campbell, we're very much aware of that. And we welcome you here to hear your perspective.

Sergeant HUGHES. Thank you.

Good afternoon. I'm First Sergeant Thomas Hughes of the 776th Maintenance Company stationed here at Fort Campbell. I feel privileged to be able to speak to Senator Alexander from my home State on issues that have affected my National Guard Unit.

Answering your first question, "What has the Army done well for our families?" Being from East Tennessee, many of our soldiers have seen an increase in their salary. This has resulted in a better lifestyle for their families. Some soldiers have struggled with bills and medical payments prior to mobilization.

The housing allowance and family separation allowance has benefited greatly to their base salaries. These additional allowances give the soldiers a chance at taking care of their bills and also any extra expenses that has occurred during mobilization. This allows

their families to receive proper medical care physicals and cover any emergencies that might arise. This is an important issue with the soldiers as long as they know their families are taken care of, they perform their duties and maintain a higher level of morale.

Our Family Support Group has worked hard to keep the families informed of their family members here at Fort Campbell, as well as any changes that may affect the members of the family at Home Station. We have developed a newsletter to mail to families due to the fact that some are unable to attend scheduled meetings. Family Support Groups play a critical role in mobilized units.

Second, "What can be done better for our families?" Having served on active duty for 4 years in an infantry company, also 18 years in the Tennessee Army National Guard, I have experienced many problems associated with the mobilization of troops. I've been mobilized three times during my career in the National Guard.

More emphasis needs to be placed on the initial briefing for Tri-Care Health Insurance. Many issues have arisen about benefits and providers. The soldiers do not understand how the system works. It's very complicated and it needs to be simplified. We need to utilize representatives from Tri-Care to do the briefings making sure families know whom to see for health care. We've had one soldier whose wife was dropped from Tri-Care since we've been here. This is unacceptable. The soldier is present at Fort Campbell and working in active-duty status.

I would like to add to that comment, that has been taken care of since this was written.

One entire day needs to be spent during pre-mobilization to get identification cards for families and all required forms filled out correctly. This needs to be accomplished before the National Guard Unit deploys to the mobilization station. Upon arrival at the mobilization station, it's too late to help your spouse. Many of our soldiers worked at resolving issues for several weeks after arrival at Fort Campbell. It takes time to prepare documents for Powers of Attorney, Wills and required medical forms, birth certificates, social security cards.

More emphasis needs to be placed on supporting the Family Support Groups by the Army. Money needs to be allocated for materials, stamps, and any necessary equipment required by the elected staff of the support group. The Family Support Group are the unsung heroes of this war. They must assume the role of both parents in our absence.

In closing, thank you for allowing me to discuss the issues concerning National Guard deployment. By making these changes, you will see highly motivated soldiers ready to go the extra distance to accomplish any and all required duties.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Mr. Hughes. Now we have time for some questions and further comments.

I'd like to start with the one about care plans. I think many civilians haven't thought much about this, haven't really thought about what happens when military parents with children, suddenly receive orders to be deployed to Iraq or Korea, wherever, training, and suddenly one parent is left with what two parents were doing. Or sometimes it's a single parent or occasionally, it might be both parents.

Last year when I was campaigning, I spent the night with Ted and Jean Purtam here, both retired, both at Fort Campbell. I see Ted at the back of the room. He was a colonel in Iraq 10 years ago in Desert Storm. His wife, a lieutenant colonel, was in charge of a nursing unit. They were both there. They had two young sons and Grandma was their care plan, and they had that worked out.

But that caused me to think about the care plans. And then Major Dolinish has pointed out that in some cases, servicemen and women who were required to have a care plan, didn't have one, and that meant that their unit suffered when the unit was deployed.

Talk to me a little bit about the care plans and how that works and whether there's anything that Congress or the Services might do to make it easier for military parents raising children to plan for the times when one or—when the only parent or both parents might be deployed.

Why don't we start with you, Ms. Taylor, and we will go down this direction.

Ms. TAYLOR. Well, I can only speak from a spouse's perspective because I've never been active duty. I read recently that the Army is looking into possibly only allowing one active duty to deploy at a time, and I don't necessarily know that that's the answer because that's asking the person that stays back to sacrifice their career or to perhaps not advance.

I honestly don't have an answer for that issue because although it's hard being a sole parent, I'm blessed that I'm flexible in my career and am able to be home for them when necessary.

Senator ALEXANDER. Ms. Medley?

Ms. MEDLEY. The exposure that I have is limited as a spouse; however, my thought would be definitely more challenging when we have two active duty personnel going to war because they definitely count on the other parent, and I would focus on that. I definitely think that we do our best, but it's by choice. It's an Army by choice. So definitely we have to be responsible for the choices we make in life.

Senator ALEXANDER. Major Dolinish, you used some pretty strong words. You said that some members of the service didn't tell the truth about having a care plan; therefore, when they were called to go, they couldn't go.

Major DOLINISH. Right. Sir, family care plans are provided from the moment—for one thing, a single soldier with children is not supposed to come into the Army. They may do so by transferring guardianship. And then what happens, though, is that as soon as a certain time period has passed, they regain that guardianship.

Any single parent in the Army or dual military couple has to have a family care plan. It's a very itemized legal document and it deals with everything from—if you were to leave this instance and you had 15 minutes, interim right here, who are you going to leave your child with? And it's notarized documents from that individual saying, I accept that responsibility, it includes financial documentation on how you're going to take care of your child in your absence, and includes long-term care in that extent.

It's a voluntary service. It's not a social institution. We come in knowing the risks. I know I spent 12 years with one or the other of us gone a lot of the time. Only one time did we both deploy, both

to Haiti, and in recognizing the Army Child Care System, my child at that time opted to stay with her interim care provider at Fort Bragg because she was more comfortable there with the other children. She thought it was just her turn to spend the night for a long time.

But we were fully prepared, we knew that was an option. And one of the reliefs of this deployment, it had been the first time where that wasn't a risk. But we made calculated decisions as a family and executed our care plan and did that.

But there are families that provide all that legal documentation, and then it has to be reviewed every year. It's a very detailed legal process. But then at the time they're told they're deploying, Aunt so-and-so can't take my kids or there's a myriad of problems. And many soldiers have done this many times and have avoided every deployment.

It's not right. It's not fair to the units. They then deploy without a soldier, without a skill, and there are not any excess soldiers running around. That hole doesn't get filled up. Someone they've trained with is now gone and is unavailable to the real-life mission, perhaps compromising that mission. And in a volunteer Army, that's unacceptable.

They know the risks, they've planned it legally, they've provided legal documentation.

Senator ALEXANDER. Sergeant Hughes, for Guardsmen and Reservists, I guess the issue is a little different. At least at one time it was a little bit more of a surprise to be called up for a long time, and now it's not so much of a surprise.

What would you have to say about the planning for the care of children when a single parent or both parents are suddenly called upon.

Sergeant HUGHES. Sir, we had a lot of issues, you know, once we got called up and stuff in trying to assign—like she talked about, assigning someone to take responsibility, whether it was going to be an aunt or a family member or something like that. But, you know, currently, we've got people to stay not only with their brothers or sisters or grandmother, grandfather, also with the neighbors, friends. It's not even a part of the family who's got actual custody of the children during the single parent deployment. It's hard for the single parent.

And what makes it really hard for my single parents is because we're at Fort Campbell, it's only about 380 miles from home and a lot of them can't bring their kids up here. And I have a lot of them that have asked that question and stuff. As of right now, based on their housing needs, that's impossible.

Senator ALEXANDER. There were some comments about what you call reintegration. The one witness said that leaving is difficult, coming home is more difficult sometimes. And sometimes that results in tragic incidents when soldiers come back from long periods of time away and something happens in the family, including in rare instances, spousal abuse. Maybe that's gone on for a long time and hasn't been discussed—it's just being more talked about today. Maybe it's a phenomenon of the long deployment.

Talk to me about reintegration and coming home and what the Army can do and what we in Congress can do to make that easier

on families. Sergeant Hughes, I'll let you go first and we will go this way this time, if I may do so.

Sergeant HUGHES. I think the best thing they can do is provide counseling initially, you know, once they get back, or you can actually start the counseling in theater at that time. And I think keeping a good communication line open between them and their families maybe prior to coming home, you know, they don't expect it has changed drastically or anything like that.

You know, basically that's about it, I think.

Senator ALEXANDER. Major Dolinish?

Major DOLINISH. The counseling I understand is improving and they're trying to standardize some of the briefings given on both sides from the soldier leaving the area of operation and the family here.

The Army has also recognized after the last incidents that a lot of the families are not going to like it, but they're not going to immediately come back home and go on block leave. The soldiers will be reintegrated a little bit more slowly by spending about half a day at work for the first couple of weeks so they're not just thrown in with the family. It's very difficult.

Many of the wives never had much control, and then for expanded periods of time, they are in charge and the children start to look to them. They're doing the finances, they're doing everything. Suddenly the husband is back and immediately thinks that, I'm home, I'm back in charge, the kids are going to answer to me, I'm going to take back over the checkbook.

But that's got to happen slowly and they've got to think it through and talk it out. The Army is good at talking to us about that in counseling, but it's not an easy process.

Senator ALEXANDER. Ms. Medley?

Ms. MEDLEY. I do agree it's not an easy process. I will say that definitely we assume two different roles. We become single parents, we become the household of the house. Our spouses, on the other hand, are exposed to a lot of danger in performing their missions.

I definitely would say that we have been receiving reunion briefings now. The good news is that we do have a standard reunion brief and it's going to be given to the soldiers, as well as to the spouses.

I definitely believe that probably the strongest or the most important process comparing the deployment process versus the redeployment process, definitely the reunion is going to be hard on the families. What is important to me and I am very happy to learn is that the initial brief, it will be definitely distracting to many families that are really focused on having their spouses back. That's the only thing we can focus about. That is our source of joy.

However, my understanding is that the reunion process will be taking a briefing prior of our soldiers coming back, and later on, meeting again to see how we are doing. That will allow us to have the tools and go back and say, okay. Probably I am okay because that process, I understand. We are doing fine.

It's definitely a challenge, but I do believe that if we have been surviving until this point—if we have the right tools, we definitely will survive.

Senator ALEXANDER. Ms. Taylor?

Ms. TAYLOR. I agree with what's been said. In our family, we call it re-entry and we've had to do it quite often. The initial re-entry was during Desert Storm and I think that the Army has come a long way with assisting families with that part of the deployment because we learned from past experiences.

However, on a personal note, I have tried to do some proactive counseling, and in my statement, I mentioned the unacceptable waiting periods. I called to receive counseling for myself and my daughter because this has been an extremely difficult deployment for the three of us. And because it was not life-threatening, as in, you know, something's going to happen in the next 24 hours, it was a three-and-a-half week waiting period before we could be seen.

And to me, that's unacceptable because the issues are ongoing. And at the point where someone makes that phone call, it's reached a level where you need help now. Whether or not there's an issue of harm, the emotional phase, you've reached that point.

So I think that somehow maybe in working with Tri-Care and the local civilian counseling centers, perhaps that could be addressed.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Ms. Taylor. Let me ask all of you this question, and I'll start with Ms. Taylor. I'll come back with you. My sense is that the family issues, the issues of parents raising children is at least being more talked about today within the Army, within the Armed Services, than it was 5 years ago or 10 years ago.

I guess the first part of my question, is that true? And the second part, why is it true? Is it because the Army is changing? Is it because there are more women in the Army, because of somewhat more marriages, because there are more children, because there are more women and husbands, each of whom has a career, as many of you do, or is it just because we are becoming more open and willing to talk about issues like this?

How do you look at the last 10 years, say, in the Army dealing with issues of parents raising children, and to the extent there have been changes, what do you think has caused that change?

Ms. TAYLOR. Absolutely, I do think that there have been changes to the positive. My thoughts would be that it's a necessity because of the frequency of deployments.

When my husband and I went to our first assignment, he was gone, but not the frequency that he is now. The Army is smaller, there are more missions, and I think that out of necessity and because we're an educated people, we have discovered that counseling—and maybe it is a pride thing, that, you know, before, people just didn't talk about it. And in today's society, it's something that's just common. There's not as much negative stigma requesting counseling as perhaps there was in the past.

But I would say the frequency of deployments has necessitated the counseling and intervention.

Senator ALEXANDER. Ms. Medley, you've been looking at this for about 10 years. Have you seen any changes in the last 10 years, and if so, what do you think has caused those changes in terms of our attitude toward military families raising children?

Ms. MEDLEY. Well, I would start mentioning—what I mentioned in the beginning of my statement, the military provides you with

a sense of community that is very unique. It is one to be proud to be in the military. I think we are blessed by that.

And with that, I will link that with the FRG's. I will definitely say that it is a combat multiplier. What I will say is that the people are comfortable with their surroundings, the people that are dealing with the same issues they are, they are more willing to speak about their issues, definitely. That's why it's so important, and we stress so much about the support to the FRG's.

And people definitely are more willing to speak to others that are dealing with the same situation. We all see ourselves being completely bonded with the people surrounding us, and not so much with the civilian world, not because we do not feel their support, but we definitely do not understand if they have a sense of reality, of our own reality.

Parent raising children? Yes, it is an issue and we feel more open when we have other mothers dealing with the same issues we are. And I do believe that the reality is, true, we are improving in being more open and the sense of community, too.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you. Major Dolinish?

Major DOLINISH. The demographics of the Army have definitely changed, society has changed. Fathers are more and more demanding a place in their children's lives where—even my father, just one generation back, he basically went to work and came home. Mom took care of us. Today's fathers want to be a part of their children's lives and I think military fathers are no different.

I think the talk has definitely improved over the years, the programs have somewhat improved, the money has slightly improved. So we're going in the right direction and we're making strides, but there's a lot that we can continue to work on with the military family.

Senator ALEXANDER. Sergeant Hughes?

Sergeant HUGHES. There's been a big change between Desert Storm—that's when family groups really got initiated, I think, from our aspect. The difference between there and now is a huge change.

And like you said, we're going in the right direction, but it's different for a National Guardsmen. Here at Fort Campbell, I think—from what I've seen and heard through Family Support Groups and the programs they've set up and what I've seen here on base of all the programs they do for the kids, it's a role model for the Army, I think. But for the National Guard, it's a whole different picture because we don't have anything back home, you know.

It's a challenge for our Family Support Groups to get stamps to mail out our newsletters that we print off a little copy machine. And, you know, we've got a long way to go still on the National Guard aspect as far as helping the Family Support Groups, I think.

Major DOLINISH. If we ever get some kind of integrated system—the support group has reserve components that fall under us. Trying to link my readiness groups with their readiness groups is extremely difficult because there's no standard.

Sergeant HUGHES. And there needs to be a standard Army-wide thing—don't you agree with that—on the Family Support Groups? Let's all go on the same sheet of music.

Senator ALEXANDER. Am I correct that during Desert Storm, many families went, quote, home, away from post to some other

place where they felt more comfortable, but during this war in Iraq, that most families stayed at the post, or more families stayed at the post. A, am I right about that impression and, B, if it's true, why do you think it's true?

Sergeant HUGHES. More comfortable, I believe. You know, if their parents—if their husband has gone overseas or something, it may be more, and they get more comfort at home, you know, being home with their family members.

Senator ALEXANDER. Well, is it true that more stayed here? More families have stayed here?

Ms. MEDLEY. I will say I have been exposed to deployments back to back, and I can say, the first deployment, I did see a lot of people just go home.

Senator ALEXANDER. When was the last one?

Ms. MEDLEY. Last summer.

Major DOLINISH. That's part of the difference, though. This is a winter deployment during school. And as school is letting out, you're starting to see some people starting to drift home, but kind of afraid to because they keep hearing rumors, they're coming home, they're coming home.

So I think a lot of people are kind of holding on waiting here waiting for news. They're afraid to leave, that they're going to have to turn around and come back.

Senator ALEXANDER. Desert Storm was in the winter, as well.

Ms. TAYLOR. I think the difference—having stayed in Germany during Desert Storm and the majority of the spouses went home—what they learned is that if they stayed closer to the unit, they'll gain information as opposed to going home to Mom and Dad where maybe they're in a civilian community, there is no military understanding. What they found is it was better to stay to be around the people who understood, they're in the same situation. Even though Mom and Dad were a comfort, here was where you were going to gain information and have the real support structure.

Senator ALEXANDER. I've got a last question and I'm going to make it an easy one. I'm going to ask you the magic wand question and I'll start with you, Sergeant.

If you had a magic wand and you could think of one thing that would make life easier, in your case, for the National Guardsmen and their families raising children, what would you do?

Sergeant HUGHES. I'd like to see the State of Tennessee get more involved in the Family Support Groups funding-wise, facility-wise, and better coordination between the State and the Family Support Groups. I think that would be the biggest help, because I'm going to tell you, if you support your families and the troops know their family is being taken care of, they'll do anything you ask them.

Senator ALEXANDER. Major Dolinish?

Major DOLINISH. A paid officer member to be the Family Readiness Group leader all the time, at least for Brigade level, to provide the continuity so that no matter who's moving, who's coming, who's going, you maintain a steady keel.

And also, that office member needs to be in the National Guard and Reserve components where we could link in. We would have an established network of these folks to have some continuity, a real-life address where we can coordinate with each other, main-

tain the lessons learned and not—the FRG leadership and leaders tend to operate on a wave. It depends on whether there’s a deployment or not.

Things get very low key and it’s hard to get rosters. And it will peak up and you’re getting all kinds of information flow from a fire hydrant and then it will back down again. And it’s very easy to lose everything every time it dips. An office member would maintain that throughout.

Senator ALEXANDER. That means a paid full-time person to do what a volunteer now does?

Major DOLINISH. I know I put in probably three or four hours a day on to military-related specifics.

Senator ALEXANDER. It’s usually true that volunteer organizations work better if there’s a full-time coordinator and volunteer.

Major DOLINISH. And not all the way down to Company levels. At least at Brigade and up where everybody has access to that resource and can spread the wealth.

Senator ALEXANDER. Ms. Medley?

Ms. MEDLEY. I definitely would go for a sense of proportion, which is a magic scenario anyway, but definitely allow our soldiers to be soldiers. They are soldiers by choice and we cannot doubt that they are in love with their mission, they really are, but they will get discouraged if they don’t have the opportunity to become good parents and good spouses.

So I would definitely focus on their sense of proportion to provide the soldiers a healthy life, mentally and also emotionally.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you.

Ms. Taylor?

Ms. TAYLOR. My magic wand would involve housing. As someone who has been researching for the past 2 months the area of Virginia because on-post housing is impossible, the ability to have on-post housing or maybe contracted housing.

And with that issue is the schools. The standards in every area that we have been is so different, different than when we started in New York to Kansas to now here, and again now to Virginia, and trying to have all the necessary records for what they require is a huge challenge.

And if every place that we went had a school available on post and we could live on post, that would be ideal. I know that that will probably never happen, however, that’s an issue that I would like to see addressed.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you.

Let me thank all of you for your testimony. And let me just observe, I guess I should have expected this, but I am impressed with the directness of your testimony and balance of your testimony. You’ve looked hard to see things that have gone well, and you’ve not been afraid to talk about things that need work. And that gives those of us in the Congress a way to go about doing things.

Let me leave with an invitation to you. As I mentioned to the first panel, this is an ongoing discussion. I’ll be getting together with the three other senators who are holding hearings between now and June 19th.

Four senators actually working on the same thing at once is nearly a record, I want you to know that. So I want you to know

how important we believe it is, the subject of military parents raising children and supporting military families.

And we won't stop with June 19th. We will continue to be interested, not just in Fort Campbell, but other places in the country, and some of you are likely to be in those places in the country, so I hope you'll stay in touch with me or my staff and help us do a better job.

I can't come to Fort Campbell without saying to Colonel Ruggley and Ms. Petraeus and General Petraeus how proud we are of all the forces here, the Special Operation Forces, 101st Airborne, the civilians, the National Guardsmen, and Reservists. It's a great source of pride to all of us from Tennessee and Kentucky to be associated with such terrific men and women, and you have represented them well today.

Thank you very much for your time.

[Additional material follows.]

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

PREPARED STATEMENT OF COL. KIM L. SUMMERS

Senator Alexander, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and the committee for allowing me to speak to these critical issues. As the Garrison Commander of Fort Campbell for the past two years, I have observed many facets of these questions and hope to provide an informative perspective.

Fort Campbell is the home to some 24,916 soldiers and supports 14,700 Reserve and National Guard soldiers, 46,177 family members, and over 124,000 retirees. The installation encompasses 105,000 acres and borders two states and four counties. Our association and relationship with the local communities is top notch. In my 25 years of service, I have seen none better. As a result of this extraordinary relationship and these communities' genuine care for soldiers, our community support structure is second to none. An example is the joint commitment of both the Christian County and Montgomery County school systems who teamed up with our own on-post schools in adopting the Secondary Education Transfer Study program more than a year ago. This program has made it much simpler and smoother for high school students of military families to transfer between duty assignments and associated schools without disadvantaging the student academically.

In order for our soldiers to properly prepare for missions when our nation calls, we as an installation offer a variety of family support services to our soldiers and families. This support allows the military member to train to the highest standard. As part of that readiness preparation, the Garrison of Fort Campbell, as well as the entire chain of command of our Army, know the importance and relationship family readiness plays in each soldier's ability to accomplish the mission. As with our community support programs, our family readiness operations are world class due to the support we receive from Congress, the Army, and our own work force. Our programs include such services as Family Readiness Center, Volunteer Coordinator, School Liaison, Child and Youth Services, Family Assistance Center, Army Emergency Relief, Chaplains Helping Hand, to name but a few. The Family Readiness Group (FRG) system is a key element in the support of families. This organization provides the link between family requirements and the Chain of Command. That Chain of Command, better known as the Rear Detachment, is staffed with dedicated leaders at every level. The Rear Detachment structure and its high quality soldiers illustrate the steadfast dedication to excellence our deployed commanders place on insuring our families are properly cared for.

Another vital program in supporting family readiness is providing child care services. Our continued expansion of child care opportunities is a daily challenge during times of deployment. Respite care is at a premium. With the increased demands of single parenting as a result of the deployment, it is evident that this is an area of increasing need. Availability of child care services, from hourly to 24 hour service, is ripe for enhancement.

It is not enough to bring services and make facilities available to our families. We must also provide a means to assist in educating our families, spouses, and soldiers. A key tool is the Army Family Team Building program. This program provides training to family members on military environment, financial readiness and goods and services available to them in order to function in the military structure. This program proves itself every day during deployments. Families and soldiers are better prepared as a result of this training.

As we provide services and products to our families, none of this would work without a solid and regular communication process. Fort Campbell provides forums for our families and Rear Detachments to not only communicate with each other through family readiness group meetings, social settings and recreational opportunities, but through official channels as well. We hold a bi-weekly senior Family Readiness Group leader meeting. At this meeting are the primary representatives from the service areas and the Installation Chain of Command. Also attending are the Senior Spouses from the major units on post down to the Battalion level. These spouses/representatives provide the link for information flow back to families. Even though communicating official information is a command responsibility, this critical aspect of family support is an excellent way to insure maximum information distribution. The process of keeping the families informed of unit activities, surfacing issues in the family support arena, and providing a feedback loop is essential to sustaining current, accurate and timely information flow. Our Installation Rear Detachment Command and Staff meeting is a parallel effort that compliments our Bi-Weekly FRG. In this meeting, we focus on military business; but as previously stated, taking care of families is military business. As a result of these meetings and procedures, we have harnessed the collective intelligence in order to prioritize issues

and redirect resources as needed. These meetings compliment our installation media and communication methods, like Fort Campbell Channel 9, Courier Post Newspaper, and local media venues.

But with all the successes and magnificent support from Congress, our communities, Army, and Post systems; we do have areas that need attention. The most prominent of these lies in the child care arena. Specifically, respite care availability and facilities. Due to deployments, families become single parent households instantly. Even though our systems and facilities are in place to support the family, we lack enough capability to handle short-term child care on a recurring basis. Before the deployment, both parents would work the schedule. During deployments, that flexibility is gone. The problem is magnified with special needs children. We have one parent doing the job of two is the bottom line. If we could enhance the availability of respite care resources, it would qualitatively and quantitatively improve our family support.

The second area needing attention is that of resources to facilitate improvement in our family support system. Dedicated facilities on Fort Campbell are at a premium, but dedicated family support facilities are necessary in order to provide a place for the myriad of family readiness/family support tasks to be accomplished. From FRG flyers to producing event calendars, having meeting space and providing child care are all requirements for successful programs. The Installation provides for these needs but not to the level we would expect for such an important part of soldier readiness. Unit areas are restrictive and often not available. Even though the installation provides space for our FRG's, the competition to support units and other priorities is so intense that it makes sense to consider a new facility for family support.

Programs to leverage other sources of support are alive and well at Fort Campbell. An example of this is the support we receive from the Armed Forces YMCA. Donations from charities are wonderful and very generous but do not cover the requirements. Volunteers give back to our Installation literally millions of dollars in time each year, but we can do more. Dedicated full time support personnel in the family readiness business would be a tremendous sign of commitment and progress. Additionally, a family readiness facility certified for child care and having the ability to provide for the needs of our families and those that support them would be tremendous.

In conclusion, our support structure is critical in maintaining soldier readiness. I personally and professionally am very proud of what Fort Campbell does in that effort. Our surrounding communities have embraced our soldiers and families like none other. This teamwork and mutual support is proof we are progressing in this effort. Fort Campbell is a wonderful place to live, work and play. When our soldiers are called to duty in a distant land, with the continued help from all, Fort Campbell will rise to the occasion and insure our family readiness will be every bit as high as the readiness of our soldiers.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HOLLISTER K. PETRAEUS

Good afternoon. I'm Holly Petraeus, wife of Major General David H. Petraeus, the Commander of the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) and Fort Campbell, and I'm here today to speak to you as an Army wife of almost 29 years.

You have asked "how has the Army taken care of its soldiers' families during this deployment?" My experience here at Fort Campbell has been a very positive one. The key element has been good communication between the deploying units, the military and civilian staff remaining here at Fort Campbell, and the volunteer Family Readiness Group (FRG) leaders. There has been a commitment to leaving high-quality officers back as Rear Detachment Commanders, and that has paid dividends. The Rear Detachment Commanders are our link to the units overseas, as well as having the power to resolve many issues here at home.

Among the military remaining here on post, the Installation Commander has conducted bi-weekly information meetings with senior spouses and key FRG leaders. These have been a great venue for bringing up issues that concern us, and for hearing what the installation is doing to address those issues. Also, the post hospital has been very responsive to family concerns. They made every effort to bring in Reservists and civilians to quickly fill the gaps left by deploying doctors. They've done some special things for the moms who give birth while the dads are deployed, and they've also started up a fitness program for family members. The five chaplains who remain here have also done a wonderful job, continuing to run the regular religious programs while offering deployment-related counseling and also running a very successful charitable effort, Operation Helping Hand, which is used to help family members where Army Emergency Relief cannot.

On the DoD civilian side, the people in Army Community Services (ACS) have been super. They run our Family Assistance Center, a “one-stop shopping” for family members who need assistance while the soldiers are deployed. They also coordinate deployment-related training such as Army Family Team building. Other civilian activities which have played an important role have been: Morale Welfare and Recreation (MWR), which has worked with local charities and sponsors to provide some very well-attended free family functions such as monthly Family Fun Fairs; Child Development Services which runs our post day and after-school care; and our Fort Campbell Schools, which have not only addressed deployment-related issues with their own students, but have provided the local off-post school systems with training on how to handle deployment-related problems.

I have to mention also the invaluable service of our volunteer FRG leaders. They are the command’s link to the families, and although they are dealing at home with the same deployment issues as everyone else, they dedicate a substantial portion of their free time to reaching out to help others.

Now, as to the question of what could be done better: I do feel that the Army is asking a great deal of our FRG leaders. They have no official status, but they bear a lot of responsibility. When Secretary of the Army White was here in April, he suggested that some of the key FRG positions should be salaried. These volunteers dedicate their time and often their own money, too, keeping in communication with family members over a far-flung area, and they should not only receive some reimbursement for that, but also have the status and protection of being official DoD employees.

I’d also like to see more money available for child care during deployments. Young soldiers’ spouses’ will not come out for meetings and social functions if they cannot bring their children, and if we are to reach them with the information they need we must ensure that free child care is available on-site. As deployments go on respite care is also important. We are stretching our dollars and using charitable donations as well, but more funding in this area would be great.

Another thing I think the Army (and all the services) can improve on is casualty notification, not so much for fatalities but for seriously and very seriously injured. This has caused a lot of heartburn for us here during this deployment, because of the lack of timely information coming from overseas. Sometimes the first notice a family has received has been a call directly from a doctor at a military hospital overseas, although there has been no information about the casualty sent to the division casualty office. On one occasion, a soldier who had been sent home for convalescent leave called from Nashville Airport looking for a ride—and that was our first indication that he had been returned to the United States! The problem has been particularly bad with soldiers treated in the Navy system. It has been almost impossible to get information on their status or their whereabouts. As you can imagine this has been very upsetting for the families. In this automated age we should be able to do a better job of tracking who is where and letting the family members know in a timely manner.

On a larger scale, I’d like to address what Congress can do for us. Number one in the minds of many here is that we need more soldiers on active duty, particularly in certain key specialties. In recent years the Army has downsized while adding on more and more overseas missions. The obvious result of this is that many of our soldiers have been deployed repeatedly over the last few years. In this group, for example, my husband has been deployed 16 of the last 24 months and Gricell Medley’s has been deployed 15 of the last 17 months. Many families in our Chinook helicopter battalion, our Military Police battalion, our logistics and our special operations units can tell the same story. This unrelenting pace of deployments is a retention issue. Families will not be willing to go it alone forever, with little relief in sight. By the way, I know that a House Committee is currently looking at the possibility of making some European and Korean tours unaccompanied unit rotations, and I can tell you that to the families that will be perceived as just one more deployment added to the load that they already bear.

I would also ask Congress to let us keep our on-post schools. I know they are being reviewed, and I would like to say that they provide a high-quality and consistent education for our children who move from State to State, where the quality of education varies and where the local school districts are underfunded in the area of impact aid. A number of our schools here at Fort Campbell have achieved Blue Ribbon status, and they are valued accordingly by the families.

In closing, I’d like to thank Senator Alexander for coming here today to let our voices be heard. I’m proud of the way our military, our families, and our local communities have worked together during this deployment, and I’d like that to be the main message that you take away today. Thank you.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MAJ. JOSIE FEES

Good afternoon. I'm Josie Fees, Program Operations Specialist and I am here today to speak to you on behalf of Ft Campbell's Child and Youth Services Program. I am pleased to say I am a military family member for over 33 years and with Child and Youth Services for 15 years.

I have been with Ft Campbell's Child and Youth Services for 3 years and I speak to you with a tremendous sense of pride. I first noticed Child and Youth Service's commitment to quality and high standards for families because the Child and Youth Services programs obtain national accreditation status—and that includes the Family Child Care homes. I then witnessed the overwhelming kindness on 9-11 when the U.S. was under attack and the installation immediately went into action to protect soldiers, their families and the civilian workforce.

It was very difficult to get on or off the installation that day. Without hesitation, the Child and Youth Services staff volunteered to stay and to do whatever necessary to ensure that all the children were safe and that their needs were met until parents could pick them up. The School Age Services staff gathered the children who were remaining at the schools because parents not able to pick them up at the scheduled time in order to allow the teachers to go home. All the children were fed and involved in fun activities until the last child was safely picked up. Child and Youth Services staff stayed past midnight and arrived back at 5 in the morning to receive the children. The staff never once complained. There is a saying that "the Army takes care of their own." Ft Campbell has proven that to me time and time again. I will share the one that really touched me.

My husband left for the Sinai in January and his commander, CPT Himes told me before James left that if ever I need them just call. Just because James is gone we will still be here for you. To my surprise I received a call in February from CPT Himes letting me know he was deploying but wanted to give me the POC and number in his absence in case I needed anything. I know as a commander he had a lot going on due to the deployment yet he remembered about a family member who was no longer in his unit. It was such a wonderful feeling to be apart of such a great installation. Now with the division deployed how has Child and Youth Services supported deployed families?

Beginning with the mobilization phase, a parent notified the Child and Youth Services Manager on Feb 10, 2003 that they had a need for extended childcare due to the mobilization mission requirements. Extended care was established immediately the same day. Child and Youth Services offered extended care evening weekends and holiday at no cost to the parent so that the soldiers could focus on their mission requirements.

Since the deployment Child and Youth Services continue to provide contingency services so that soldiers and family members are at ease knowing their child care needs are met. Child and Youth Services provided on-site childcare for Family Readiness Group meetings both during the mobilization and the deployment. We also provided many evening briefings to explain childcare options available to family members. Child and Youth Services provided training for units that want to do their own childcare through a program called Volunteer Child Care Unit Setting. We offer respite care to family members due to deployment issues. The Family Assistance Center offers childcare that is being provided by Child and Youth Services staff. Family Child Care provides emergency care for military families due to deployment issues. Social Work Services will coordinate placement of children with a provider designated to providing emergency care. Emergency care providers are available 24 hours a day. All programs are allowing parents the flexibility to withdraw children and take vacations as needed without the parent having to pay to hold their slot.

Child and Youth Services provided many family services in April during the Month of the Military Child including a "Pamper the Parent" day where parents were treated to free facials, haircuts, and manicures. Child and Youth Services participate in Fort Campbell's Family Fun Fairs. School Age Services sponsored the Americas Kids Run held 17 May 2003. The free event was a huge success for children and families at Fort Campbell. There was an essay contest titled "I am a Military Child". Winners received special prizes and were invited to read their essays at the Volunteer of the Month Ceremony at the Eagle Conference Center. School Age Services have implemented a program to help children with deployed parents stay connected by setting up maps at all 6 satellite sites so that the children can map where their parent are around the world. The staff at the childcare centers is helping the children put together scrapbooks so the parents will have pictures of the events they missed out on while they were deployed. The teen program has taken an active lead on mentoring the younger children and volunteering in the community in support of deployed families.

Sports and Fitness program depends largely on volunteer coaches and since many of them are soldiers the deployment has caused a shortage of coaches for the children/youth. Fortunately spouses along with some Child and Youth Services staff stepped up and volunteered to coach the children/youth sports. This ensured no interruption in the youth sports program. These are just a few of many examples of the partnerships with Child and Youth Services and other Community Activity Based Centers strong sense of commitment and dedication to our military families during this deployment.

Child and Youth Services is a large employer of family members. We recognize that the support internal as well as external is very important during deployments and I have to say Ft Campbell has does a fantastic job. We provide training for the staff so they can recognize and understand the affects deployment has on children. We provide stress training for staff since many are family members facing the same deployment issues themselves. Many such as myself who have been a spouse during Desert Storm/Desert Shield and Just Cause, are able to support the younger family members going through it the first time. We understand the unique challenges that come with deployments.

What can Child and Youth Services do better to meet the need of our deployed families and what type of support does Child and Youth Services need in order meet their needs?

Because the Child and Youth Services program has a mobilization and contingency plan in place, we are able to implement it as soon as the need for need for extended child care arises. With even more advanced notice from the command of the mobilization of the division, we can implement sooner rather than later if parents express a need for the extended hours care.

We appreciate the support Congress has provided to the Child and Youth Service Program and we will continue to maintain our "model for the nation" status with your support. We continue to be able to provide a safe, healthy nurturing program for young children and offer our youth a safe place with fun activities to go to instead of being home alone.

In closing I would like to say as a very proud Ft Campbell family member and representative of Child and Youth Services thank you for allowing us the opportunity to tell you about our outstanding installation and some of the things we do to show families come first. As well as what we need to do to improve the quality of life for military families during deployments. The genuine concern that congress has for our military communities means more than I can express.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF WILLA GARRETT

Hello. I am Willa Garrett, Fort Campbell Child and Youth Services School Liaison Officer (SLO). I feel quite honored to address you on the support services offered to families during this deployment. Along with serving as a vehicle for information for parents, students and schools, my responsibilities include collaborating with local schools and installation organizations to facilitate the education transition experience for our children. Below I provided the following information on our schools and the support offered to our families during the recent deployment.

SCHOOLS: At present, the majority of Fort Campbell married soldiers live off the installation in cities located in Kentucky and Tennessee. Consequently, more than half of Fort Campbell's school-age children (averaging 8,000) are educated in off-post schools.

Currently, the installation has five Department of Defense Domestic Dependent Elementary Secondary Schools (DDESS) Schools located on the installation—five elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school. Each year, the Fort Campbell School District serves over 4200 students that reside on the installation. Each of the schools offers a half-day 4-year old program and full day kindergarten based on National Association of Education for Young Children standards. The schools utilize the Department of Defense Education Activity (DODEA) curriculum that is based on national standards.

Fort Campbell Schools have received several distinguished awards such as the US Department of Education School of Excellence Award—the Blue Ribbon Award for overall achievement. Fort Campbell's Parent Partnership Program is considered one of the best in the nation, and was researched by Vanderbilt University in relation to student achievement, "March Toward Excellence: School Success and Minority Student Achievement in Department of Defense Schools", Report to the National Education Goals Panel. At the onset of the deployment, Fort Campbell Schools readily offered training for their staff and parents.

Clarksville/Montgomery County School System of Tennessee serves almost half of our school-age population. Active duty military-sponsored students comprise more

than 23% of CMCSS total enrollment. The school district provides cutting edge technology for students by offering Distance Learning Labs, Video Broadcasting Classes, Mobile Technology Labs, Automated Libraries, and a Junior Technology Program. CMCSS administers the Terra Nova Test to evaluate student achievement, and has consistently scored above state and national averages in all academic areas. The school system brings business into the high school classroom to give students work experiences through internships, co-op opportunities and job shadowing. The district has received many awards. These include "Expansion Management" magazine's blue ribbon award for outstanding achievement, chosen by School Match, a service company for parenting magazines, Governor's A+ Award for three consecutive years, and recognized as best in Tennessee for three years. Counselors conducted individual and group counseling sessions for children of deployed parents. Some schools also conducted parent workshops with free childcare to assist with the stress of the deployment.

Christian County Public Schools in Kentucky educate approximately 1100 military-sponsored students each year. There are eleven elementary schools, three middle schools, and two high schools in Christian County. All of the Christian County schools are accredited by the state of Kentucky and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. In addition to the traditional educational settings, programs are offered at a career & technical center, a day treatment center, an alternative school, a preschool center, an optional high school, and an Adult Education Center. Christian County consistently seeks opportunities to support the military by sponsoring events such as "Salute to the Military." This past year, the School Liaison Officer served on the district's Barriers to Learning sub-committee for the Consolidated Training Plan for Teachers. As a result of the committee's commitment to children, the board voted to provide awareness training targeting the unique factors of educating military students. During the deployment, many schools made phone calls to individual families to offer support as needed.

CONTINUITY OF EDUCATION WHEN FAMILY IS TRANSFERRED: Continuity of education for students that are transitioning to and from the Fort Campbell area has improved greatly over the past three years. Through the positive relations and communication established through the School Liaison Officer position, together with the local school districts have developed a greater understanding and sensitivity about the challenges that military-sponsored students incur as a result of transitioning from one school district to another. Fort Campbell Schools were part of the original nine school systems involved in a study commissioned by the Army and conducted by the Military Child Education Coalition Military Child Education (MCEC) Secondary Education Transition Study (SETS).

Since the initial study, the School Liaison Officer and the Fort Campbell Schools have been working with the local school districts of Clarksville-Montgomery County and Christian County to develop a local action plan that makes transitioning for all mobile students a more seamless venture for students and their families. Fort Campbell, Clarksville and Christian County Schools consistently work to ensure children who move have the same advantages and opportunities as those children who remain in one location for their entire school career. Efforts are being made to help families move with greater ease and remain in the area when it seems that the move is harmful to children.

The area schools have implemented some of the following measures to ensure a smoother transition of students into the area: 1) Enrollment information is available on district web sites; 2) Enrollment information is available on the local TV station and in the newspaper during the summer; 3) Student Ambassadors assigned to new students once school starts; 4) If a student transfers as a senior, counselors work with the new school to ensure graduation without delay. 5) Schools provide transitioning student with an unofficial copy of their transcripts to allow for immediate placement upon arrival at the new school. At the installation, soldiers in-process through the School Liaison Office to receive first-hand information about area schools and child care and youth programs. Soldiers also out-process through the School Liaison Office to ensure local school clearance. Also, many soldiers have requested and received approval for stabilization for their high school junior or senior to allow graduation with local class.

To prevent loss of credit and access to opportunities, many transition efforts have been considered and implemented in each of our school districts. Fort Campbell Schools have incorporated many programs to ease the transition of students. To name a few: 1) Implementation of the Chart Your Course Program to assist students who are transitioning to high school; 2) Summer enrollment counselor works June and August as well as being available two days a week in July to help new students in their class selection; 3) A transition lab established to help new students catch up in classes in which they may be behind or need to earn credit; 4) All grades are

given both as number grades and as letter grades; 5) The Interactive Counseling Center (ICC) is becoming a great tool for assisting with tryouts, interviews, and record reviews; 6) Stabilization letters are written in support of parents who have juniors/seniors that are nearing high school completion.

WHEN THERE IS A TRAGEDY IN A CHILD'S LIFE, ARE THE TEACHERS EQUIPPED TO DEAL WITH IT? In support of the recent deployment, the Fort Campbell Schools did an excellent job of providing training for their counselors and those of a neighboring school district. The School Liaison Officer (SLO) partnered with post hospital's Chief of Psychology and the psychologist for the Soldier/Family Health Readiness Program to offer coping strategies to the counselors, teachers and administrators of the off-post school district. The ultimate goal was to furnish the educational staff with information needed to fully support our children during such a critical time.

Half day training sessions were conducted and specifically addressed the following:

- Information about services provided by the Family Assistance Center (FAC)
- Presentation on 'Deployment, Stress, Families and School' that addressed identifying stress in adults and children, as well as ways to assist children in dealing with such frustrations.
- Suggestions for dealing with the reunion cycle of the deployment, as well as what to expect during this phase.
- Current childcare opportunities and youth activities sponsored by Child and Youth Services, along with many other support services on the installation such as the YMCA Coop Nursery and the Chaplains Operation Helping Hand.
- Recommended hands-on activities for children.
- Information/recommendations were also offered on developing emergency contingency plans.

During this most recent deployment, it has been quite obvious that each of our Secondary Education Transition Memorandum of Agreement Signatories are serious about their commitment to our children. Superintendents, principals and counselors welcomed information about how to work with our children during this time. Teachers and counselors were extremely positive and demonstrated a genuine interest in the well being of our military-sponsored children.

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT: Fort Campbell, Clarksville and Christian County Schools offer periodic parent sessions and family involvement opportunities throughout the school year. Military parents are invited to participate in local Parent Teacher Organizations, as well as site based council meetings to assist in making meaningful decisions about how their schools are run.

Child and Youth Services staff coordinate briefings for parents on child development (age and stages) and stress management. Parent advisory groups for full day and preschool enrolled children have quarterly meetings to look at program improvements and share information. Training opportunities and family oriented activities are frequently communicated to each school district.

The School Liaison Officer serves on the Family Resource Youth Service Center advisory board for a Christian County school that has a predominantly military enrollment. The Family Resource Center is designed to promote the flow of resources and support to families in ways to strengthen their functioning of individual members and family unit. The center's focus is on education to enhance parenting skills, education for preschool parents and their children, health services or referral to health services, GED (for adults) and literacy based programs for students and adults and programs promoting family activities.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of our children and schools. Fort Campbell continues to provide excellent support services to the families of our deployed soldiers. The teamwork displayed by each one of our support agencies was definitely commendable, and was what I consider to be a demonstration of true dedication and commitment. I am most grateful to be a part of the Fort Campbell family, as it has afforded the opportunity to make a difference in the educational experience of our children and support mission readiness.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ROBERT E. VAIL

Good afternoon, I am honored to provide input to these field hearings on how well the Army serves our soldier's families and children during a major deployment. As Director, Community Activities Business Center, I am responsible for administering the Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) programs at Fort Campbell as well as the Army Community Services (ACS), Army Substance Abuse Program, Lodging and Continuing Education Programs.

The support Fort Campbell has been able to provide to the families and children has been outstanding. I attribute this to the great programs that the Army has in place to provide this support, a tremendously supportive surrounding community, an installation commander and garrison commander who care, and excellent communication with the families, primarily through the Family Readiness Groups (FRGs). We have successfully improved processes as a result of lessons learned in Desert Shield/Storm. Many of these improvements have come from getting input from the families that we are supporting and the senior FRG leaders have been a great source of ideas in this regard.

I will summarize some of our successes:

COMMUNICATION TO THE FAMILY MEMBERS: This has been a huge success and has started at the top. The Installation Commander holds routine meetings with the spouses of senior leaders and the leaders of the primary FRGs. We make extensive use of that forum as well as the mailboxes at the FRC to alert family members of opportunities available to them, both on and off post. The Rear Detachment Commanders have also been a great conduit of information to the families.

FAMILY ASSISTANCE CENTER (FAC): Upon deployment of the soldiers, the Garrison Commander directed the stand up of the FAC to provide a "one-stop shop" to provide virtually all assistance a family might need. The FAC is located in the Lee Family Center, a building that already houses most of the ACS functions. Personnel from Finance, Personnel, Legal Assistance, Tri-Care and Health Services joined Army Emergency Relief, Exceptional Family Member Services, Relocation Assistance, Employment Assistance and other services already in the building. Family members also have immediate access to information on Child and Youth Services, Community Mental Health, American Red Cross, Housing, Transportation and the Chaplains Office. A food closet and emergency housing assistance are also available at the center, though the latter has not yet been needed. On site childcare is provided at no charge so the parent could seek assistance without the distraction of tending to the needs of their children. We also have a toll free number in order to provide assistance for family members living outside of the Fort Campbell Community. This center has been especially important for the families of Reserve Component Soldiers that have little on-going contact with the military community.

FAMILY READINESS GROUP (FRG) SUPPORT: We have long had a Family Readiness Center (FRC) to support our FRGs. The center includes a meeting area, mailboxes for over 200 groups, public access computers, printing support, copier support and training materials. Upon deployment, the Commanding General (CG) immediately directed that we increase the funding for this center to support the increased printing/copier demands to maintain communication with the families and to provide training materials for the FRG deployment meetings. Additional copiers were made available as well to meet the demand. Our goal is to expand this facility even further, to include providing more space and on site child care.

ARMY FAMILY TEAM BUILDING PROGRAM (AFTB): This program, which provides training to family members on the military environment, financial readiness and the like, proved its worth during the deployment. Families are better prepared than they might otherwise have been. Further, with the training modules in place they are able to export training to groups as needed.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT SERVICES: Fort Campbell's childcare and youth services are exemplary in normal conditions and they have proved themselves capable of providing exceptional services in extraordinary conditions. As we became aware of the need for expanded services needed due to deployment preparations, we immediately expanded the hours of the Child Development Centers, at no additional charge to the parents. This included nights, weekends and holidays as needed. As stated above, we set up a satellite childcare facility in the FAC, also at no charge. When the Family Readiness Groups (FRGs) needed to meet on deployment issues we provided free childcare for them, either on site or at the centers. Family Child Care Homes proved to be a special asset. These providers were available to care for children 24 hours a day. In some cases they are also included in soldiers' Family Care Plans as the primary custodian of the children. This is especially important for single and dual military parents.

ENTERTAINMENT EVENTS: MWR was able to gain sponsorship from businesses and charities to provide monthly, free of charge, "Family Fun Days" at various activities on post. These events incorporate things like fire safety emphasis with games for children and free food and drinks. They have been very successful with as many as 3500 participants and have garnered extremely positive feedback. We have conducted these events since March when it was done concurrently with the opening of a new Fire Department in the Lee Village housing area. The April event was held at Hooper Bowling Alley and the May event at Destiny Parks and Pavilions/Horse Stables. All events include information booths on such things as

Safety, Continuing Education Opportunities, Library Services, etc. as well as inflatable games for the younger children, dunking booths, climbing walls and the like.

CROSS LEVELING OF RESOURCES: We were able to divert personnel from activities that have a primarily soldier support function to those with a family support function, which kept our costs down significantly. For example, some of the government employees that normally work on drug prevention classes in the units were diverted to the FAC when their workload decreased due to the deployment. Likewise, some of the government employees involved in soldier education counseling were also diverted to the FAC. Having these resources available helped tremendously, but would have been CRITICAL if the Family Assistance Center had had to open on a 24 hour a day basis, which we were prepared to do upon demand.

REFOCUSING OF SOLDIER FACILITIES/SERVICES TO FAMILIES: We made a special effort to refocus facilities and services that were in place to support the soldiers to benefit families and youth. For example:

Fort Campbell has six Physical Fitness Centers that exist to support soldier fitness/readiness. We focused on the family's needs and family usage was up about 43%.

We have two exceptional softball complexes with four fields each that are dedicated primarily for soldier intramural sports. Since the demand from units is down, we have reconfigured one of the facilities for youth sports programs.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT: This has been absolutely outstanding. Various organizations have raised about \$200,000 in support of the families living in the Fort Campbell community. Some of these funds have been provided to support MWR events such as the Family Fun Days, events at the on-post schools, childcare in exceptional circumstances, and the individual needs of soldiers and their families. We have even had to designate a "Donations Manager" to keep track of the outpouring of support. Individuals and businesses have asked to "sponsor" a family; we have literally gotten truckloads of products for "any soldier" or for their families. There is no question that the surrounding communities support the soldiers, families and especially the kids.

Naturally there are things that could be done better:

CHILD CARE: Upon deployment there is a critical and almost unending need for childcare. First and foremost, the soldier needs to get his/her unit ready to deploy so they cannot be released from work at the usual time and need expanded child care. They often need weekend and holiday child care as well. Family Readiness Groups need to have meetings to help the families prepare for deployment and to keep them informed. There is a need for childcare in the Family Assistance Center as mentioned above, and also emergency childcare, especially in the event of casualties. There is also the need for respite care for the parent that has no break and no assistance in their parental responsibilities. Congress has provided resources for "contingency related child care". Often, the installation must provide the services and reimbursement comes after the fact. This is not the best way to manage operations, but supporting soldiers is the goal. Quicker reimbursement would ease the burden on the installation.

SUPPORT FOR EXCEPTIONAL FAMILY MEMBER CHILDREN: EFMP childcare needs often cannot be provided for on post. For example, we had a family with four special needs children; two were diabetic and required insulin injections. Government child development facilities are not staffed with the medical personnel authorized to administer shots. The respite care for this family had to be provided off post, and but for the Chaplain's Fund, we would have been unable to meet the needs of this family.

FAMILY READINESS CENTER: As stated, this is a great initiative to support the FRGs. Because we had an FRC in place, the transition to deployment conditions was relatively easy. One shortcoming was the lack of some specific resource materials that are not available through Army channels. FRGs and families voice the need for and value of some books, comic books, coloring books, etc. that help explain the departure of a parent to their children. Some of these materials cost as much as \$5 each and we are unable to devote the necessary resources to stockpile or reproduce them by the tens of thousands needed. Recommend that "deployment kits" for FRCs with these materials be made available copying the kits that the library system stockpiles for use during deployments This is a critical need, and is often overlooked (over 20,000 paperbacks were handed out to soldiers as they deployed.) This would provide a ready supply of deployment materials and could be used during major deployments at any impacted installation.

In closing I would like to say that it is these family support services that are key to keeping families in the area where they can be better nurtured, and kept aware of the information they need to have. They also serve to help with long-term retention of our great soldiers. I am extremely proud of what CABC, the post, as a whole

and the surrounding communities have done to put their arms around the military families. Fort Campbell is a great place to live, work, play, and when the need arises, be supported during a deployment.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MAJ. JOYCE DOLINISH

Deployment issues are a key topic to all military families. As part of a volunteer force, individuals choose the life of a soldier because they believe that they are part of an organization that can make a difference in the world and in them as individuals. Their career choice is not an easy one—for them or their family. The money is not great, the housing often substandard, the relocations difficult, and the time away from their family increases yearly. Yet they remain on duty, serving despite hardships, proving again and again that they are the best Army in the world.

While the families feel nothing but pride and support for all soldiers, they all at some point begin to question when the constant separation becomes too much to bear as a family. Within our Group, units redeployed from Afghanistan only to begin preparation for deployment to Iraq. As we make plans for welcoming home soldiers returning from Iraq, we are planning the departure ceremonies for units re-deploying to Afghanistan. We continue to hear plans to further reduce the size of the Army and know that our soldiers will spend even less time with their families. We hear of efforts to change accompanied tours to Europe to a “rotation”. . . a friendly euphemism for another deployment. Most Americans think that a military mission is done when the press stops reporting it—families know that it takes years to complete the job and bring everyone home. Pride and loyalty hold the military family together—but at some point in the near future soldiers may face ultimatums from their families as the amount of time together becomes less than the amount of time apart.

I believe that the issue of single parents or both parents facing deployment is being viewed from the wrong angle by most observers. The Army is a voluntary career choice and all single soldiers or dual military couples with children are at all times aware of the potential for deployment and are required to provide extensive legal documentation of a valid care plan that will activate upon deployment. If they can not provide this plan they are released from active duty. The parents who deployed had plans in place and executed them. The real problem is the number of soldiers whose care plans, when notified of deployment, suddenly were not valid. These soldiers knowingly, willingly lied to their command and provided false legal documentation. The units deployed without these soldiers, perhaps compromising their mission. Soldiers are informed adults who must make difficult decisions regarding their families. The life of a soldier is not an easy one, especially for single parents or dual military couples. If they decide to pursue it, they must be prepared for separations and have a valid plan to care for their children. If they do not have someone they trust, ready to assume the role of parent at any time requested, they must pursue another career. Civilians make job decisions based on the amount of time they will be away from their family—soldiers must make the same tough decisions. The Army life is not for everyone.

Contrary to popular belief, the return of a soldier from a long deployment is more difficult than their departure. Redeployment briefings are normally offered at family readiness group (FRG) meetings when rumors start that soldiers are coming home. FRG leaders hope that each family will attend at least one briefing, but can not enforce it. FRG leaders, chaplains, and social workers from the hospital jointly present these briefings, but there is no standard format or books to use. The resources available on military installations are insufficient to provide the ongoing support needed by many soldiers and their families.

On-post schools are one of the positive aspects of a deployment and military life. Children are surrounded by peers going through the same thing they are. Teachers and counselors are experienced with deployments and trained to watch the children for signs of excessive stress. Teachers have constant access to families and support from military units and the installation. Exceptional discipline is maintained, in part because the military parent can be held accountable for their child's actions. Fort Campbell is fortunate to have outstanding community support—but the off-post schools can not compete with the on-post schools' ability to prepare children for the constant deployment and redeployment of soldiers. Funding continues to be reduced for on-post school systems at a time of increasing soldier deployments—when they can least afford to cut corners or reduce programs. A bare bones educational system is not enough for the children of soldiers. The funding to ensure that teachers and counselors are trained and available in sufficient numbers to meet the students' needs is critical on all military installations.

On-post schools are also better prepared to ensure the continuity of education for each child as a family transfers throughout a military career. Department of Defense guidelines ensure that all schools on military installations have similar curriculums. Improvements have been made and agreements coordinated with many off-post schools near military bases to ease the transition of military students. However, gaps continue to occur. Constant moves are extremely difficult on children—gaps in curriculums or the calculation of credits for graduation make the moves even more traumatic.

The most positive aspect of this deployment has been the way that the installation, military rear detachments, families and the local community have pulled together. Large scale deployments are difficult on everyone. Communication and mutual support has been outstanding. Most military families are extremely self sufficient, but they need to know what is going on. The relatively few families that needed support (emotional, health, financial) received the help they needed quickly and from many sources. A positive environment willing to listen and assist when needed was immediately established and maintained.

The key negative areas of this deployment were casualty notification and tracking of casualties in the medical system. Embedded media provided real-time coverage of events. Families knew immediately that an accident or casualty had occurred and by watching closely could often narrow the event to a specific unit. While no one argues that all casualty notification must be 100 percent accurate, the time from the incident until the Department of the Army approves notification of the next of kin is unacceptable given today's media and communication capability. (A death in our Group occurred at about 5 a.m. local time—approval to notify the wife was received too late to notify her that day, but by the 6 a.m. notification the next day the spouse had already been called from Iraq.) Injured soldiers are nearly impossible to track in the multi service medical system. Today's military family demands and deserves a casualty notification system that recognizes the impact of instant media and communication.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF GRICELL MEDLEY

Senator Alexander (Distinguished Members of Congress)—good afternoon! Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to talk to you today about our family's experience with the military.

My name is Gricell Medley. My husband, Major Lee Medley, is the Commander of a CH47 Chinook Helicopter Company in the 7th Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment. We have been married nine years and have been blessed with two young daughters, Lia and Emma.

I met my husband during his service in Panama. We married in 1994. The challenges of being newlyweds from two different cultures created a special bond between my husband and I. The main reason we've stayed in the Army is because my husband loves his job and serving our nation. Some of the other reasons we've stayed are because of the excellent medical care, career advancement, continuous training, retirement benefits, on-post housing, DOD schools and sense of community.

My husband took command of his company in 2001. As the Commander's wife, I assumed the role of the unit's Family Readiness Group (FRG) Leader.

Since Desert Storm the Army has continued to place emphasis and importance on the Army's FRGs. I think this is one of the things the Army has done well in the business of taking care of soldiers and their families. Simply defined the FRG consists of volunteers, usually the spouses of the soldiers working together to provide assistance and information to all families and single soldiers within the unit. It is important to remember that everyone is welcome to participate regardless of his or her rank. Above the company level we join with the FRG from our higher headquarters supporting the larger efforts and beneficial projects. Our FRG organizes informational briefs for the spouses, updates and disseminates information about deployments, welcomes new spouses, visits hospitalized family members and soldiers, and plans Easter Egg Hunts and other special events. In my opinion the most important role of the FRG remains information management. Without our dedicated volunteers FRGs would not function.

While the FRG is a great strength of the Army, we could do better by actually funding the FRG program with paid personnel to provide continuity and stability for the unit.

One of the things the Army needs to take a closer look at is the price the op tempo takes on its soldiers and family members. The operational tempo of the Army has increased over the last decade while the divisional strength of the Army has

decreased. In other words, more missions and more deployments with fewer people, especially in certain fields like Chinook helicopter units.

I would like to take a moment to tell you how these increased deployments have affected my family. Our youngest daughter, Emma is seventeen months old. My husband has been deployed fifteen of those months. He has been deployed to Korea, two JRTC rotations in Fort Polk, Afghanistan for eight months and to Iraq since March of this year. He was only home for 21 days between Afghanistan and Iraq. The majority of that time was spent training and preparing his soldiers for redeployment. While I am extremely proud of our soldiers and families these numerous separations and deployments to stressful environments have taken an enormous toll on our Army families. I am afraid it is a retention issue for our young officers and enlisted personnel. Many of them get out of the Army because they don't like the repeated separations from their families.

I mentioned to you that my husband's company spent eight months in Afghanistan. I would like to make sure that you know that 7th Battalion of the 101st has maintained all of the Chinook personnel rotations in Afghanistan since January 2001. C Company currently in Afghanistan was previously there for four months, home for 2 months and then returned to Afghanistan in December of 2002. We do not know when they will return.

This "unknown" is one of the frustrations that soldiers and their families face. We don't know when they will return home or what their recovery time will be. In addition, I have read in the Army Times about the Army's plans to send fewer families to Europe and Korea and instead rotate battalions for 6-month deployments. To our family we see that as "one more deployment". My family hopes that change never happens. We would much rather go as a family for two or three years. It is very important to us to keep our family together as much as possible.

Again, thank you for taking the time to listen to my comments today. I feel honored to have had the opportunity to share my thoughts with you and appreciate your interest in improving the quality of life for our Army families.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MICHELLE M. TAYLOR

Hi. My name is Michelle Taylor, my husband Kirk is a Major in the Division's Plans Section. As an Army wife of 15 years and geographic single parent for two of the last three years, I'm here to share my thoughts and observations concerning support for the families of deployed soldiers.

Overall, I have to commend the efforts of the Installation staff and leadership. I am convinced that they have all put their best foot forward in attempting to handle the myriad of issues that arise when an entire Division deploys. Army Community Services and the Family Assistance Center are both examples of the larger effort to take care of the families and communities left behind. In addition, the hospital has remained responsive despite the deployment of many of its medical staff.

However, the lynchpin of support is provided through the family support groups that exist to support families at the grassroots level. This is essentially a self-help resource in that the more a spouse attends and participates, the greater the benefit he or she receives. Family support groups exist year round and the familiarity it breeds amongst its members aids in the early identification of families who are in need. This early "screening" helps the more experienced group members steer others to resources before the situation becomes a crisis. I have been frustrated at times by the seemingly lack of information flow down to the company-level, but I suspect that the problem resides largely in the adage "We don't know what we don't know."

Another source of enormous support resides in our church communities. As you might expect, many of the post chaplains (including all the Catholic chaplains) deployed in support of the troops. The foundation of community that resides uniquely in our church community, regardless of faith, has truly helped to catch family members who fall through the family support group safety net.

Lastly, the local communities of Clarksville, Oak Grove and Hopkinsville have responded in their always gracious manner. The knowledge that the community at large values the sacrifices of both the soldiers and their family members is reassuring and takes a little of the sting out of the series of separations we've recently experienced.

The most obvious response as to how you and your fellow members of Congress can help is easily summed up in one word: Money. More specifically, we need help in several areas to include:

Improvements in the Tri-Care System and delivery of health care services. The long wait for non-life threatening (but essential to quality of life) care is unacceptable.

Changes to the maintenance and development of on-post housing is also needed. As an off-post family (the result of a 12-month waiting list upon arrival to Fort Campbell), gaining access to several of the available programs is problematic.

Funding for childcare facilities is also needed. Spouses with young children are far less likely to attend family support group and other like organizations when they have to also spend their meager disposable funds for child sitting services.

While the Government has relieved soldiers in the Iraqi theater of war of the Federal tax burden, others are not so lucky. Many hardship (unaccompanied) tours do not enjoy the same relief. A good example is our forces serving in Korea. Despite my husband's commitment to living a very Spartan lifestyle during his last tour, the assignment to Korea was a financial hardship based solely on the need to maintain two "households". This additional financial burden was managed on a Major's salary, but the same cannot be said for our younger soldiers and families.

Lastly, I'm tired. I would not trade the friendships and experiences that our family has enjoyed as a result of my husband's service, but the pace of deployments has reached a point that I personally find unacceptable. I'm proud of Kirk's service to our Nation. He is my hero, but he is also a husband and father. The Army needs people like my husband to lead soldiers where it matters most, at the tactical unit level. I will accompany Kirk where the Army sees fit to assign him next, but I will not encourage another move to a tactical unit. I find that sad, but the bottom line is that assignment to a Divisional unit right now is a near guarantee of prolonged separations with little hope for change in the near future.

Senator Alexander, thank you for joining us and allowing us to give voice to our concerns. The Army is a close knit family, and when possible we take care of our own. Whatever help you and the members of Congress can provide is greatly appreciated. Thank You.

[Whereupon, at 4:00 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]