

Department of Defense Military Family Readiness Council
19 December 2008 (2:00 – 4:00 PM)
Pentagon Conference Center Room B1
Minutes

The Department of Defense Military Family Readiness Council convened at 2:00 PM on 19 December 2008 at the Pentagon Conference Center (Room B1). Members and public present during the meeting are at enclosures one. Materials used during the meeting are at enclosure two.

Welcome and Introductions; Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, Dr. Chu – Dr Chu is looking forward to the advice of the Council. He stated that statutes have not caught up to the reality that military members are married in greater numbers than they have been in the past.

Federal Advisory Committee Act; Colonel Denise Dailey, USA (Designated Federal Officer) – Col Dailey introduced herself as the DFO and made herself available for questions about the Federal Advisory Committee Act.

Overview of Current Guidance and Strategic Framework of Family Programs and Policies; Dr. Lynda Davis – Dr. Davis briefed the Council on the Functions and Framework for the Military Family Readiness Council. She provided a definition of “Military Family Readiness” as - “Family readiness is a state of being when one is prepared to effectively cope with challenges of daily living experienced in the unique context of military service. Ready families are knowledgeable about the potential challenges they may face; equipped with the skills to competently function in the face of such challenges; and aware of the supportive resources available to them in managing such challenges.” Dr. Davis said it is important to look at this definition to ensure that the Council is comfortable with its intent. It can be adjusted as necessary. She continued by discussing the requirements in the statute NDAA 08 Sec 1781b. Per the statute family readiness must be available to Active and Reserve Component; identifiable and measurable with DoD-wide goals; and there must be continuous evaluation and resource allocation. The Council needs to look at what’s there and have an evaluation process in place. She recommended to the Council that there be an inventory of all the family readiness programs in place. In March 2009 we will report on the details of the plans required for a five-year period. Additionally, a one-time report on the policies required by the statute must be submitted on 1 February 2009. The Congressional Staffs involved have asked that we provide an understandable story about how we are doing family readiness.

Comments from Family Organizations

National Military Family Association (NMFA); Ms. Kelly Hruska - We wanted to start with a brief summary of what we feel is working. We feel that the Family Readiness Groups across the military are doing a good job. Our concern is

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that they are being funded with Global War on Terrorism money. We appreciate the outreach to the National Guard and Reserves, and the recognition that not all family members carry ID Cards. Survivor Benefit Plan has increased and we appreciate that. Congress has done a lot for our wounded warriors, i.e. military family life consultants. NMFA recommends work on state unemployment compensation for displaced spouses. Now that the improved GI Bill has been passed, specific attention needs to be given to its implementation.

We appreciate the Family and Medical Leave Act. NMFA's main concern is health care. We must improve access to care at Military Treatment Facilities and with TRICARE. Behavioral health improvements are needed. Education on mental health and substance abuse is also needed, and a consistent level of support for the Exceptional Family Member Program is desired. They are also recommending a one year transitional Extended Care Health Option (ECHO) benefit for currently enrolled family members of retiring Service members.

National Association for Uniformed Services (NAUS); Mr. Richard Jones - Mr. Jones said the NAUS is well aware of the many challenges military families face. The NAUS is pleased to be a part of the Council and recognizes the demands on the families and the Service members. Both active and reserves are showing wear. Families have been involuntarily extended due to stop loss. Army suicides are at their highest, and Army and Marine Corps divorce rates are at their highest. Families have increased out of pocket costs. We can formulate a national strategy.

Armed Services Young Men's Christian Association (ASYMCA); Mr. S. Frank Gallo (RADM, Ret.) - RADM Gallo provided a short briefing on the ASYMCA. The ASYMCA routinely conducts needs assessments of childcare, transportation, financial management, and communication of community programs. There were very few surprises from an assessment conducted in San Diego. He stated that there is a lack of understanding at the Service level. Contracts are being provided to organizations that do not provide childcare. Drop off availability and affordability is problematic, and ASYMCA is attempting to address these deficits. RADM Gallo further stated that transportation to on/off base community services is a problem. ASYMCA is providing transportation at a few locations. Newcomer briefings with child watch services help Service members and their spouses participate in these important events. Spouse employment issues did not show up in the San Diego study. There is a specific request for funding for spouses to travel to memorial services and ASYMCA was asked to assist with funding. RADM Gallo shared that the new DoD Wellness contract for National Guard and Reserves has 4,578 family memberships that have been funded as of this week (7,400 children/1.6 million dollars).

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Comments from Military Services:

Director, Air Force Services; Mr. Arthur Myers – The Air Force just completed a survey of 60,000 families. The results are being processed. The Airman and Family Readiness Centers captured the following data in FY08. They reached:

- | 59,000 - Service members during Deployment Readiness Briefings.
- | 36,000 - Service members during Transition Assistance Program Briefings.
- | 56,000 - Personal Finance Appointments
- | 22,000 - Employment Readiness (family members) Appointments
- | 59,000 - Relocation Program (families) Appointments

The Air Force has two areas of concern; employment of spouses and “sense of community”. In reference to the care of Wounded Warriors, the Air Force just hired two Recovery Care Coordinators. Dr. Chu asked about the reference to the employment of spouses and Mr. Myers replied that it is the availability of employment that is the concern.

Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force; CMSAF McKinley – We need to discuss retention; does a service member PCS and lose \$100,000 or more on a home sale, or do they separate. He expressed concerned about the downstream effect of foreclosures on retention. Additionally, he stated we have some work to do on readiness for the Guard and Reserve families.

Director, Navy Staff; VADM Harvey – No matter which scenario you want to project the operational tempo will likely be very close to what it is today (at least from Navy perspective). Operational readiness is inseparable from the readiness of our families. Dr. Davis pointed out the challenge of defining “effective”; what do we need to do to make it effective? RADM Gallo has nailed readiness—financial readiness, spouse employment and readiness; these are our top priorities. We should not rely on supplemental funds. The law requires continuous assessments. The Navy is working hard on rapid surveys. We have a survey in January 2009 that is focused on family readiness and will mandate a fresh look at our families. This is the only way we can respond to Congress, especially in a particular area or locale. It is wonderful to have lots of resources. We benefit hugely from ASYMCA, Military OneSource, Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society, but at the end of the day it is about us and our core Service. We must use all the resources available wisely. We cannot be overly reliant on the kindness of strangers to take care of our own.

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USMC, Director, Personnel and Family Services; Mr. Larsen, MajGen USMC (Ret.) – Family readiness is key to mission readiness and has a big impact on retention. There is no bigger advocate than General and Mrs. Conway. General Conway wanted the family readiness programs put on a war-time footing. We increased funding to \$110 million a year for family programs. Our Quality of Life (QoL) survey has been completed. We can measure the improvement in the QoL by the responses to the questions, and it shows that they are having an impact. In November the Marine Corps conducted a functionality assessment of personal financial readiness. Next month, we will conduct an assessment of transition and deployment programs.

Office of the Deputy Commandant for Manpower and Reserve Affairs USMC; SgtMaj. Burs – The surveys conducted assisted the Marine Corps in their recruiting efforts.

USA, Commanding General, Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation Command (FMWRC); MG MacDonald - This is a good forum to be in to go forward. The Army put together the Army Family Covenant and \$780 million has been moved to address the seven lines of operation in the Army Family Covenant. This contract with our families has been signed by every installation Commander. We have a number of surveys that assist us with identifying the needs of Army families. Additionally, the Army Family Action Plan was developed from a grass-roots advocacy system and has been expanded to include wounded warrior issues. Currently there are 75 open issues from 634 initially identified in the Army Family Action plan. These are the type of issues that NMFA takes forward to Congress. One of the things they have worked on includes the Army Spouse Employment Program. The Army found 41 Fortune 500 companies that are looking for middle managers that move. These companies have hired 27,000 spouses. Among our other issues is the Army needs an additional 83,000 childcare spaces to meet the need of soldiers.

The Army has three priorities:

When you get orders and you find out where you are going, soldiers and their families want to know how the school is and how is the housing? Contracting housing has been a great fix. Schools remain a concern.

The number two issue is the implementing instructions of the Montgomery GI Bill. This is a retention issue. The support is going to be huge.

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The number three issue is access to health care; the TRICARE program access to health care; getting appointments to the MTF and getting specialized care. The Council should move ahead on these issues.

Chief, National Guard Bureau; General McKinley – Childcare continues to be a big issue. Additionally, we are looking at the multiple deployments and their impact on our Service members and their families.

Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Religious Affairs Office; Colonel Bruno – Col Bruno stated one of Admiral Mullens' deep concerns is that we may only know part of the experiences of our family members. Admiral Mullens constantly challenges the data.

Wrap up Discussion:

Dr. Chu- Dr. Chu said he was struck by how many people mentioned child care and spouse employment. He urged patience with regards to the MGIB regulations. We have five nominations for focus areas for 2009:

- Spouse Employment
- Schools/ Education
- Childcare
- Access to health care
- Financial Readiness

Mr. Larsen – Access to health care and education are priority issues.

Dr. Chu – We have made school quality an issue with the State Governors and have talked with States where school policies could be more military child friendly. He continued that he is very happy with the governors that are doing in-state tuition.

Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs; Dr. Stephen Jones – So much focus is already on health care. We may want to prioritize the other issues at a higher level.

Mr. Larsen – We are talking about the average guys that do not have a particular case that everyone is going to champion. General Granger said he is not going to miss any more town hall meetings; he listened to people say that they can't get appointments and access to care. Reimbursement for mileage should be addressed.

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Principal Deputy Reserve Affairs; Dr. Winkler – If we want to look at the total force, then we should focus on childcare, health care and financial readiness.

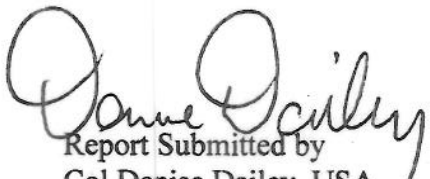
Dr. Chu – We agree to the following; with the emphasis that Dr. Winkler said there are three issues that affect everyone.

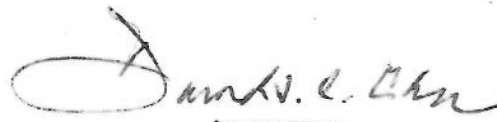
- Childcare
- Access to health care
- Financial Readiness
 - Spouse Employment
 - Schools/ Education

The emphasis in health care is the access issue. It is not always the health care system. Sometimes patients have particular preferences to see a physician and they may not get an appointment to see that physician, so then they say they don't have access.

The report is due soon. Be descriptive on here's what we are doing. For example, Childcare has been studied extensively.

Meeting adjourned at 3:11PM.


Report Submitted by
Col Denise Dailey, USA
DFO, Family Readiness Council


Report Certified by
David S. C. Chu
Chair, Family Readiness Council

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Members Present:

David S. C. Chu, Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness
Ms. Kelly Hruska, Deputy Director of Government Relations, National
Military Family Association (NMFA)
Mr. Richard A. Jones, Legislative Affairs Director, National Association for
Uniformed Services (NAUS)
RADM S. Frank Gallo (Ret.), National Executive Director, Armed Services
YMCA
CMSAF Rodney McKinley, Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force

Members Excused:

GEN Peter Chiarelli, USA, Vice Chief of Staff, U. S. Army
General James Amos, USMC, Assistant Commandant, U.S. Marine Corps
ADM Patrick Walsh, USN, Vice Chief of Naval Operations
General William Fraser, USAF, Vice Chief of Staff, U. S. Air Force
SMA Kenneth Preston, USA
SgtMajMC Carlton Kent, USMC
MCPON Rickey West, USN

Present in Lieu of Members:

For GEN Chiarelli: MG John McDonald, USA, Commanding General, Family
and Morale, Welfare and Recreation Command (FMWRC)
For Gen Amos: MajGen Timothy Larsen, USMC(Ret.), Director, Personnel
and Family Services, Office of the Deputy Commandant for Manpower and
Reserve Affairs, U.S. Marine Corps
For ADM Walsh: VADM John C. Harvey, Jr., USN, Director, Navy Staff
For Gen Fraser: Mr. Arthur Myers, Director, Air Force Services
For SMA Preston: CSM John M. Gaines, Jr., Command Sergeant Major, U. S.
Army Installations Command (IMCOM)
For SgtMajMC Kent: SgtMaj Burs, Office of the Deputy Commandant for
Manpower and Reserve Affairs, U.S. Marine Corps
For MCPON West: CMDCM Loretta Glenn, Executive Assistant to the
Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy

Advisors Present:

Mr. Dominguez, Principal Deputy, Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel
and Readiness
General Craig R. McKinley, Chief, National Guard Bureau
Dr. John Winkler, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, Reserve
Affairs
Mr. James Scott, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Reserve Affairs
Dr. Stephen Jones, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health
Affairs
Dr. Lynda C. Davis, Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Military
Community & Family Policy (MC&FP)

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Mr. William J. Carr, Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Military Personnel Policy

Ms. Kathleen Ott, Principal Director for the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Civilian Personnel Policy

Colonel Robert Bruno, Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Religious Affairs Office

Colonel Dailey, Designated Federal Officer, Military Family Readiness Council

Others Present:

Joanie Capella-Weinard, ASA (M&RA)

William Martin, IMCOM

Stacey Barnes, Program Analyst, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for MC&FP

Joy Dunlap, Deputy Director, Military Officers Association of America

COL Wolverton, OUSD, Military Assistant, for the Principal Deputy (OUSD/P&R)

Kathleen Moakler, Director for Government Relations, NMFA

Capt. Edward Simmer, Senior Executive for Psychological health, Defense Centers of Excellence

Peggy Simmer, MS, Command Ombudsman, Naval Medical Center Portsmouth and Navy Medicine East Regional Ombudsman.

Mr. John Baker, Director FFR for Commander, Navy Installations Command

LTC Thomas Dowlas, J1 Joint Staff, J1-DAG

COL Macedonia, Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Brad Booty, Contractor, ICF

Maj. John Krause, Manpower & Reserve Affairs, HQMC

COL Marty Wong, Chief of National Guard Family Programs, National Guard Bureau J1-FP

Dr. Lolita O'Donnell, Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury

Annie Fowler, Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy (M&RA), Personnel Readiness & Community Support

Mr. Charles E. Milam, Deputy Directory of Air Force Services

S. Lederer, Researcher, ICF

Elise Pressma, Analyst, Government Accountability Office (GAO)

C. Jenna Sandhelm, Senior Analyst, GAO

Jerrie McCue, Senior Projects Officer, Army Well-Being

Karen Jowers, Senior Staff Writer, Army Times

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Meeting Book