



T H E M I L I T A R Y C O A L I T I O N

201 North Washington Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314
(703) 838-8113

STATEMENT OF

THE MILITARY COALITION (TMC)

Before the

Subcommittee on Military Personnel

House Armed Services Committee

Hearing on

The Military Resale System and Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) Overview

March 15, 2006

Presented by

**Master Chief Petty Officer Joseph Barnes, (USN-Ret)
Fleet Reserve Association**

And

**Commander René Campos (USN-Ret)
Military Officers Association of America**

MISTER CHAIRMAN AND DISTINGUISHED MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE. On behalf of The Military Coalition, a consortium of nationally prominent uniformed services and veterans' organizations, we are grateful to the committee for this opportunity to express our views concerning issues affecting the uniformed services community. This testimony provides the collective views of the following military and veterans' organizations, which represent approximately 5.5 million current and former members of the seven uniformed services, plus their families and survivors.

- Air Force Association
- Air Force Sergeants Association
- Air Force Women Officers Associated
- American Logistics Association
- AMVETS (American Veterans)
- Army Aviation Association of America
- Association of Military Surgeons of the United States
- Association of the United States Army
- Chief Warrant Officer and Warrant Officer Association, U.S. Coast Guard
- Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service, Inc.
- Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States
- Fleet Reserve Association
- Gold Star Wives of America, Inc.
- Jewish War Veterans of the United States of America
- Marine Corps League
- Marine Corps Reserve Association
- Military Chaplains Association of the United States of America
- Military Officers Association of America
- Military Order of the Purple Heart
- National Association for Uniformed Services
- National Guard Association of the United States
- National Military Family Association
- National Order of Battlefield Commissions
- Naval Enlisted Reserve Association
- Naval Reserve Association
- Non Commissioned Officers Association
- Reserve Enlisted Association
- Reserve Officers Association
- Society of Medical Consultants to the Armed Forces
- The Retired Enlisted Association
- United Armed Forces Association
- United States Army Warrant Officers Association
- United States Coast Guard Chief Petty Officers Association
- Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States
- Veterans' Widows International Network

The Military Coalition, Inc., does not receive any grants or contracts from the federal government.

Mr. Chairman, The Military Coalition (TMC) is grateful to you and the entire Subcommittee for your leadership and strong commitment to the well-being of the members of the military community: active duty and reserve component service members, retirees, their families, and survivors. We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on commissaries, exchanges, and Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) programs.

The need for robust and dependable personnel benefits, including resale, MWR, family support, and quality of life programs has never been greater. The impact of repeated deployments and increased personnel tempo has placed immeasurable stress on the military community as a whole. Resale activities and MWR programs have helped mitigate some of the negative impact of this stress across the military community and provide a bridge for sustained readiness.

In testimony today, the TMC presents its collective issues of major concern and offers recommendations on what needs to be done to address these important issues and sustain long-term military personnel and family readiness. This statement also highlights the perspective and value of these programs to the entire military beneficiary community.

The Coalition greatly appreciates the Subcommittee's continued support over the years in maintaining and preserving the commissary, exchange and MWR benefit value. In particular, the TMC thanks the Subcommittee for championing several provisions in last year's National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2006:

- Child care/family assistance benefits, including construction for child development centers
- Increase in authorized levels of supplies/services procurement from overseas exchange stores
- Mandate funds for overseas transportation of commissary exchange supplies
- Moratorium on commissary privatization studies

Unfortunately, we continue to hear reports from beneficiaries, Military Service leaders, and individual installations about limited base operations funding and cutbacks in services. The Coalition continues to look to this Subcommittee for leadership to sustain and enhance the commissary, exchange and MWR benefit and to ensure DoD and the Military Services remain committed and serious about the importance of non-pay elements of the military benefit package.

TMC believes that resale activities, MWR and other vital quality of life support services and programs are at even greater risk of funding cuts due to the additional costs and challenges of a Nation at war and because of other severe economic issues facing our country, such as the significant costs associated with Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma.

It is absolutely critical that these programs be given a continued high level of visibility by Congress and full funding. MWR, resale activities, and quality of life programs are an important force multiplier and contributor to mission and personal and family readiness.

Additionally, DoD/Military Services place these programs at even greater risk by allocating short-term resources through supplemental funding rather than ensuring these programs are fully funded and committed for in the Defense budget. By providing a wide range of recreational and critical support services, DoD/Services not only send a clear message to servicemembers and families and all beneficiaries that they are valued, but such programs are also key to attracting and retaining a quality force.

OVERSEAS REBASING, BASE REALIGNMENT AND CLOSURE (BRAC)

Today servicemembers and their families are being asked to endure ever-greater workloads and sacrifices. TMC is particularly concerned about the potential impact of implementing the Defense Department's transformation, Global Repositioning, Army modularity, and BRAC initiatives. The TMC believes there must be serious consideration given to determining the implications of such initiatives to not only currently serving military members and their families, but to all beneficiary populations.

History has shown that when we fail to consider or address military personnel and family issues during the planning and implementation of major change to policies and programs, installation alignments, operations and services, the consequences can be devastating, particularly in the areas of recruiting and retention.

Because of the multiple DoD modernization efforts that are occurring simultaneously, TMC is concerned about the synchronization, pace of planning and implementation timetables, including the timing of budgets and resource allocations, and the evaluation of the rebasing and BRAC plans. If not properly forecasted in the rebasing plan, thousands of military and civilian personnel and family members will return home to unprepared bases and local communities which may result in devastating and irreparable consequences for our Nation and our beneficiaries.

As the military community continues to respond to heightened operations tempo and anticipates the movement of servicemembers and families due to transformation initiatives, global rebasing, and base closure and realignment, the TMC asks that Congress:

- Highlight and protect the interests of all beneficiaries impacted by overseas rebasing. Beneficiaries are defined as active and Guard and Reserve members, retirees, veterans, their families, and survivors.
- Ensure necessary family support/quality of life program dollars are in line with the DoD/Military Services rebasing and BRAC plans. Critical family support/quality of life programs include such services as MWR, child care, exchanges and commissaries, housing health care, education, family centers, and other traditional support programs.
- Insist that support services and infrastructure remain in place at both the closing and the gaining installations throughout the entire transition period.
- Resist any DoD initiatives to close, cut or limit access to family support/quality of life programs or facilities.

On August 9, 2005, the Coalition sent a letter to the BRAC Commission highlighting several critical issues for the Commission to consider and areas that should be monitored throughout the BRAC process. TMC believes these issues remain relevant during the implementation of rebasing and BRAC. These issues include:

- Health Care Access—coordination and beneficiary impact.
- Quality of Life Programs—preserving access to QoL benefits, supporting closing and gaining communities, commissaries, exchanges, education, transition support, housing, and maintaining a connection with civilian communities.
- Guard and Reserve Issues—DoD substantially deviated from certain Services recommendations, and closures will have a negative impact on recruiting and retention.
- MWR and Military Construction Concerns—higher upfront execution/investment costs should be anticipated. The availability of community infrastructure, DoD prematurely reduced base operations funding in previous BRAC rounds, validity of long-term estimates, and coordination with other government departments is essential.

Members of the military community, especially retirees, are concerned about the impact base closures will have on their access to the commissary, exchange, and MWR benefits they have earned. They are concerned that the size of the retiree and Guard and Reserve populations remaining in a location will not be considered in decisions about whether to keep commissaries and exchanges open. Our interest is in raising awareness of the imperative that military family and quality of life concerns be considered by policy-makers in their decision-making process when implementing of any rebasing or transformation plans.

Quality of life issues that affect servicemembers and families must be considered on an equal basis with other mission-related tasks in any plan to move troops or to close or realign installations. Core quality of life infrastructure is needed to support the military community—it must be maintained and cannot be an afterthought. Plans must include the preservation of these important and critical programs.

There have already been indications of problems and lack of military and civilian community infrastructure and resources in implementing recent Army modularity initiatives. DoD must program in the cost of family support and quality of life as a part of its base realignment and closure calculations, ask for resources when needs are identified, and then ensure these resources are allocated to the Services. TMC will be monitoring closely the implementation and results of DoD/Services transformation plans. The Coalition recognizes that balancing between modernization of the force and force structure is on the minds of everyone. Servicemembers and their families demand predictability in deployment schedules and they want stability at home. This holds true not only in mission execution, but also during military transformation.

The Military Coalition opposes initiatives that would reduce critical family support/quality of life programs and strongly supports permanent full funding of these programs to sustain the current levels of service for all beneficiaries. TMC urges Congress to preserve the availability of commissaries, exchanges, and MWR programs during shifts in troop populations and base closures and realignments. The size of the military retiree, National Guard and Reserve populations in the vicinity of a closing installation and the impact of closure on these beneficiaries should be considered before decisions are made to close commissaries and exchanges. Congress made it clear in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2006 that the Secretary of Defense should not transfer any unit until adequate facilities and quality of life support are available at the receiving installation.

THE COMMISSARY BENEFIT AND THE DEFENSE COMMISSARY AGENCY

The TMC is committed to preserving the value of the commissary benefit—which is widely recognized as a cornerstone of quality of life benefits and a valued part of the servicemembers’ total compensation package. Benefits such as the commissary, exchange, resale activities, and other quality of life programs have been highly valued during these demanding times. These benefits are not only key to sustaining morale and reassuring deployed personnel that their families are provided for; they ultimately ensure our military readiness and positively impact retention.

The Coalition seeks to protect access to the commissary benefit, and will continue to scrutinize store closures, privatization, staff reductions, or other initiatives that may diminish the scope and quality of the benefit. Specifically we urge the Subcommittee to:

- Support funding levels for the commissary benefit to increase its value
- Promote increased outreach by the Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA) to expand patronage and enhance access to the commissary benefit for all beneficiaries—especially National Guard and Reserve members and their families.
- Monitor store closures to ensure that closure criteria are appropriately and consistently applied. TMC stresses the importance of evaluating the impact on all customers (beneficiaries) of BRAC actions and other closures and initiatives.
- Monitor customer satisfaction survey data and encourage DeCA initiatives to enhance customer service.
- Monitor and evaluate the BX-Mart and hybrid store demonstrations and continue opposition to BX-Marts at non-BRAC sites.

TMC applauds Congress for passing a provision last year in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2006 (Sec. 672) that establishes a moratorium through December 31, 2008 on Commissary privatization studies to allow the Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA) to reengineer its workforce prior to competing with civilian entities. Additionally, we thank Congress for passing a provision that increases authorized levels to \$100,000 per contract to procure goods and services overseas (Sec. 661) and a provision that mandates appropriated funds be used to ship goods for sale in overseas commissaries and exchanges (Sec 664).

TMC notes that FY 2006 shipping rates are 15% higher than last year and that DeCA has less transportation money for the current fiscal year than in FY 2005, which may negatively impact the shipment of products to overseas stores.

The Coalition is grateful for the continued strong support of this Subcommittee in preserving this top rated benefit. TMC supports efforts to improve cost savings, ensure effective oversight and management of the commissary benefit, and improve responsiveness to the needs of beneficiaries. However, we are concerned about the unrelenting pressure on DeCA to cut spending and squeeze additional efficiencies from its operations—despite years of effective reform initiatives and recognition of the agency for instituting improved business practices. Of special concern to TMC is a \$15 million budget shortage in FY 2006, and a proposed reduction of \$30 million to DeCA's FY 2007 budget. At some point budget reductions will negatively impact customers by necessitating reduced store hours, fewer employees or other cost saving initiatives. TMC asks the Subcommittee's leadership to authorize adequate funding and ensure that this highly valued benefit is sustained and not evaluated solely on the basis of appropriated dollars.

As a result of DeCA's outstanding job managing the military commissaries, shoppers continue to save on average of over 31 percent on groceries when compared to the retail grocery stores. Savings like these, combined with other agency improvements, equate to important savings for junior enlisted personnel who struggle with expenses, especially in high-cost duty locations. The commissary benefit and savings have become increasingly more important to the National Guard and Reserve members and their families. When called to active duty and there is a reduction in pay because of the difference between their civilian and military salary, savings from the commissary benefit are critical. And, the benefit continues to be highly valued by military retirees and survivors with limited incomes.

DeCA's outreach effort to beneficiaries is impressive. The agency provides opportunities for customers to give feedback through surveys and a great deal of information about the benefit is posted on the DeCA website (www.commissaries.com). DeCA sponsors and collaborates with its business partners to provide special events, lot sales, information, single servicemember events, and special activities for families and deployed servicemembers. These initiatives not only educate more active duty personnel about the benefit, but also foster a community of cohesion between the military beneficiary communities. Through the support provided by commissary vendors, the Scholarships for Military Children program eases the financial burden faced by many families who send a child off to college.

The Coalition urges Congress to oppose any initiative that would reduce benefits or savings for members, and strongly supports full funding of the benefit in FY 2007 and beyond to sustain the current level of service for all beneficiaries. TMC asks this Subcommittee's support in closely monitoring Commissary funding and policies and scrutinizing store closures, privatization, staff reductions, or other initiatives that may diminish the scope and quality of the benefit for all beneficiaries.

MILITARY EXCHANGES

As in years past, beneficiaries continue to rate high the importance of military exchanges as a benefit and service, second only to commissaries. The benefit is also highly valued by the military community, including vendors who provide services in exchange malls and ancillary locations such as service stations, barber shops, and shoppettes. It enhances the sense of community where members serve and live.

Exchange services bring a ‘sense of home’ to servicemembers deployed, in the form of Navy ship stores and in Army and Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES) activities in remote, overseas, and combat area locations. TMC commends DoD and exchange employees for their support to deployed troops and for providing important retail operations, Internet cafes, and phone services in remote and often dangerous locations. AAFES “Gifts from the Homefront” program continues to allow people to purchase AAFES gift certificates that can be sent to individual authorized patrons or donated to deployed servemembers through the Red Cross, Air Force Aid Society, the Fisher House, and several other organizations.

Beneficiaries expect and value low everyday prices on consumer goods and the convenience of catalog and Internet mail order services. Online exchanges continue to increase in popularity, especially with those Guard and Reserve members and retirees not located near a military installation or those who are deployed or located overseas. Online stores also provide greater access and flexibility in using the benefit exchange customers have earned.

Exchanges not only provide essential goods and services, but they also generate vital funding for a variety of MWR programs that are critical to maintaining a high quality of life for members of the military community and to maintaining mission and personal/family readiness. Funds generated by the exchanges are funds that do not have to be spent out of the servicemembers and their families’ pockets—or funds that need to be appropriated by the government—to support MWR programs.

Special military exchange and MWR outreach programs such as concerts, ‘Still Serving’, and Retiree Appreciation Days, help to recognize the contributions of those currently serving and those who have served in the military community. Opportunities and events that bring together all beneficiary populations help to not only increase and strengthen the military benefit, but help in promoting and identifying with today’s military force. Many exchanges also sponsor children’s and family events to support family readiness.

While much has been done to improve and enhance the exchange benefit in many locations, much remains to be done on product lines to ensure that brand name goods in a variety of price points are available to meet the needs of the very diverse beneficiary population. Additionally, exchanges must be more aggressive at ensuring exchange prices on products carried are comparable, not just to identical brands, but to other brands of similar quality in both military and civilian stores. If exchanges expect to be the ‘store

of choice' for military beneficiaries, they must carry the goods beneficiaries need and desire, in the price range they can afford, and of the quality they expect.

EXCHANGE SHARED SERVICES

Like the Subcommittee, TMC is interested in the status of DoD's proposal to consolidate some exchange operations. As you know, DoD's initial efforts to consolidate exchange operations were changed to a proposal to create a "shared services model." Efforts to improve efficiencies in the exchange system are of interest to TMC members because they have an impact on prices of goods sold in the exchanges, customer service, and exchange contributions to MWR.

Over the last several years DoD, the Armed Services, Congress and the exchange systems have looked at the ideas of exchange consolidation again and again. In general, they found the prospect of such initiatives to be impracticable, and could cause some severe consequences to the Services. DoD then focused on a shared services approach. For over two years the DoD Unified Exchange Task Force (UETF) has been developing several shared services models designed to reduce overhead costs in the areas of logistics, finance and accounting, information technology, human resources, and non-procurement. DoD officials have assured TMC and this Subcommittee that this approach is based on reducing 'backroom' costs for the exchanges so that they will have greater margins from which to offer their customers better pricing.

DoD has provided TMC no updates or report of their findings and recommendations since June 2005. Prior to that time the UETF consistently provided monthly updates to Coalition organizations. The Coalition assumes that a UETF legislative package has not been sent to the Hill. TMC reserves any position on shared services until DoD's business-based analysis and recommendations clearly demonstrate that such change will enhance the benefit to the patron and increase the MWR dividend.

TMC fully supports a letter signed by the Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee Military Personnel Subcommittee on January 25, 2006 that addresses concerns about possible DoD consolidation of the military exchange systems without congressional approval. Further, this Subcommittee, like the TMC, has yet to be provided with a credible business analysis supporting consolidation or shared services and is concerned that any "weakening of the benefits will not only hurt morale, but also damage recruiting and retention programs during a time of war."

TMC asks this Subcommittee to exercise strong oversight as necessary to ensure that the exchanges, whether or not they share services, continue to provide appropriate product choices, competitive prices, and increased funding for MWR programs. Additionally, TMC asks Congress to ensure that exchange customers or beneficiaries of MWR programs will not be forced to bear the costs of implementing any consolidation or shared service initiative. At this point, TMC believes it is reasonable to question whether the \$17 million spent on the DoD UETF study has served any

practical purpose, and whether that money wouldn't have been better spent on funding for more urgent MWR activities.

MORALE, WELFARE, AND RECREATION (MWR) PROGRAMS

Along with commissaries and exchanges, beneficiaries also value highly MWR programs. Each Service runs its own MWR program to support the military community. These programs provide the needed services, recreation facilities and community resources to maintain mission readiness, promote fitness, build esprit de corps, establish a sense of military community, and enhance the quality of life for single and married servicemembers and their families.

MWR programs form an interrelated fiscal network. Any program additions or funding cuts that are made in any part of the program will have some discernable effect on other parts of the program. TMC is particularly concerned about:

- Availability of appropriated funds to support Category A (mission sustaining programs) and B (community support programs) MWR activities.
- Funding shortfalls in base operations support having a devastating effect on MWR programs.
- Child care is a major retention and force readiness issue because the force has become increasingly married and the frequency of deployment has increased.
- Limited departmental standards established that prescribe what level of MWR, commissary and exchange support should exist on an installation supporting any given population of beneficiaries.

Today, two-thirds of active duty families and virtually all Guard and Reserve families live off military installations, and approximately sixty percent of these servicemembers are married. MWR, quality of life and family support programs are especially critical to the readiness of our forces and serve as a central network of support to installations and unit commanders and their military community during periods of conflict and extended and unpredictable separations.

More than a half of a million members of the National Guard and Reserve have been mobilized since September 11, 2001, with thousands more to be activated. Today, they face the same challenges as their active counterparts with a deployment pace greater than any time since World War II. Operational tempo has placed enormous strains on reservists and their family members and demands are expected to be even greater in the future as reserve forces are further integrated into the active component and frequency of deployments increase.

As operational commitments, deployments and training missions continue to accelerate and remain unpredictable, military family and community are becoming overwhelmed. The Services are also showing signs of fatigue—in maintaining program funding levels and the necessary personnel to support these programs. The caregivers supporting families are overburdened during these times of high operational tempo.

Funding for the Global War on Terror (GWOT) through wartime supplemental appropriations bills has helped meet immediate MWR, resale, family support services and other quality of life activities at installations with deployed units. But, permanent and long-term funding in the budget is needed to highlight these important and essential programs to keep them visible and less vulnerable to cuts.

TMC believes that we must do all we can to ensure that critical personnel, readiness, and MWR, quality of life and support services are in sync and aligned with our military strategy. Planning military operations and end strength levels without factoring in personnel and family support services is a formula for failure, resulting in problems with readiness and retention, and ultimately negatively impacting national security.

TMC associations and members continue to be concerned about the long-range impact of patronage levels on activities because of reductions in MWR and family support services. Some reductions are due to deployments of units, while some may be due to the early signs of problems in planning for DoD and the Services' modernization and transformation initiatives.

TMC appreciates DoD's and the Services' efforts in prioritizing support to deployed services members and their families and the enhancements MWR and family support programs have experienced in the last decade. New and innovative ideas and solutions to old problem areas are being explored and implemented to make sure deployed servicemembers have the necessary recreation, fitness equipment, computers, and communications services and networks while assuring that families back home also have the necessary support services to keep them linked to their servicemember and to the community in which they live.

TMC recognizes that the communication is particularly important to servicemembers and their families and that much has been done to leverage technology to improve this linkage. The Coalition, however, will continue to stress that this communication should not be at the expense of our servicemembers. While the Services have done much to outreach and educate military and family members about available resources and how to access these resources through successful programs like Military OneSource which provides 24/7, toll-free or online access to military and civilian community resources, TMC insists that these programs should supplement or augment existing MWR and family support programs and should also be expanded to include retirees. These new services or programs cannot, and should not be viewed as a replacement for traditional face-to-face, direct service MWR and family programs.

The MWR and family support network has proven its value to retention and readiness over the years. Such programs not only promote personal and family well being, but also helps improve the quality of life of those who serve. In fully supporting these key programs, DoD/Services demonstrate their support to servicemembers and their families by showing them how much they are valued and appreciated for all they do for our country.

TMC urges Congress to energize DoD to honor its commitment to the troops by funding MWR programs at least to the 85 percent level for Category A and 75 percent for Category B requirements to maintain a well-funded MWR and family readiness support structure. The Coalition asks the Subcommittee to block any DoD/Service initiatives that withhold, reduce, or eliminate program dollar availability for military beneficiaries. Commanders should not have to choose between funds to support servicemembers and their families and funds to support operational requirements. TMC also urges Congress to expand its emphasis on developing and funding additional support programs to meet the needs of family members of the Guard and Reserve.

CHILD CARE AND YOUTH PROGRAMS

Child care and youth programs are key components of the family readiness and support structure. TMC thanks Congress and DoD for the additional \$60 million in supplemental funding over the last three years to increase capacity and extend the hours of child care services, including evening and weekend care and summer camps for children of deployed servicemembers. In recent testimony before Congress, several Senior Enlisted Advisors again emphasized the importance of child care as one of their top quality of life issues for members of their Services.

TMC believes that while the military's child care system remains the national benchmark by which other programs are measured, additional resources are still required to meet existing child care needs of the uniformed services community, including the Coast Guard, National Guard, and Reserve personnel and families. Availability of quality child care is hard to come by these days for both military and civilian families.

DoD estimates a shortage of approximately 31,000 child care spaces, projections much higher than initially expected because of ongoing realignment of military forces from Europe and elsewhere to stateside installations and because of the war. The FY 2006 NDAA gave DoD funding authority to obtain modular buildings as a temporary fix to create 4,000 new child care spaces to meet existing needs and has earmarked another \$90 million to build new child care centers. TMC is very pleased that for the FY 2007 budget, DoD's requested funds for eight new child development centers. These centers will be vital for areas experiencing increases in growth and demand.

Temporary child care facilities, contracting with civilian centers off the installations, and building new child care centers will help with some of the need. But, TMC is concerned that DoD's future projections of need as they relate to rebasing and BRAC efforts may be underestimated—resources may not be adequately committed in the budget to address longer-term needs because of the reliance on funding through supplemental appropriations.

Clearly, more must be done to meet the needs of families, particularly National Guard and Reserve families who cannot access child care on a military installation. Congress has given DoD several authorities over the years to improve military families' access to

affordable child care. TMC asks Congress and DoD to make sure these authorities are used to the fullest. Using additional resources like Military OneSource and expanding partnerships with organizations like the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRRA) have helped families locate child care, but many families are still unaware of these programs. TMC also asks Congress to pressure DoD to implement flexible spending accounts (FSAs) to enable military families to pay health care and child care expenses with pre-tax dollars.

TMC supports innovative ways of addressing the child care needs of all military families, including the Guard and Reserve, the needs of geographically-dispersed families and those impacted by war, the realignment of military forces from Europe and elsewhere to stateside installations. The Coalition urges Congress to continue to push for additional subsidies, the use of information and referral services, Flexible Spending Accounts, temporary facilities, child care center military construction projects, and other options to help increase quality, capacity and affordability of child care in the DoD child development system.

FITNESS, LIBRARIES, RECREATION AND MILITARY CLUB FACILITIES

Military men and women have high expectations for their careers and they value their off-duty time. They place a great deal of importance on physical exercise, health, libraries and learning, and access to the Internet. DoD needs programs that are flexible and innovative in meeting the needs of this new generation of customers. High rates of operational/personnel tempos exacerbate the need for high-quality, responsive recreational opportunities to offset this pace of operations and stress on personnel, equipment and facilities.

Like other quality of life programs, fitness, recreation and intramural sports, single servicemember programs, libraries, and club facilities also make a tangible and powerful difference in the military community—each contributes to unit fitness and readiness, as well as building community camaraderie. TMC congratulates the Services for increasing single servicemember activities and making these programs a priority.

TMC has supported DoD's and the Services' emphasis on standards to measure fitness of servicemembers and the operations of centers. The Coalition is pleased to see that DoD's FY 2007 budget proposal includes two fitness center construction projects for locations preparing to receive servicemembers and families due to Service-mandated troop changes or global rebasing. However, the FY 2007 request will not meet all the immediate, let alone the long term needs facing these installations. While MWR and fitness facilities are identified by each of the Services as highly visible and mission critical programs, the TMC is concerned that deteriorating and aging facilities and construction needs are so high that it requires intervention and leadership from Congress to address these issues.

The Services have done much to revitalize libraries and to meet the education needs of the military community. The military force is a much more educated force than in years past. Furthermore, libraries and education centers provide opportunities for fulfilling

military requirements by offering a place for information on career and transition assistance, military professional development, support for voluntary education, and a resource for lifelong and distance learning. TMC encourages the leveraging of technology, including increasing Internet access and interconnectivity, material acquisition, and integrating resources with command knowledge management systems and family support networks.

Installation facilities such as bowling alleys, swimming pools, athletic fields, the military clubs, and golf courses are also interlinked into a complete military community system that supports unit cohesion, individual development, family well being, and the mission of the total force. True communities are not just made up of houses and places of work; they also include the support facilities and programs that promote community interaction and wholesome, safe activities for the entire military community, drawing also retirees and their families and survivors who live off base back to the installation. MWR and quality of life programs must continue to responsive, be of high quality, and reflect modern needs and expectations of the military community.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Chairman, The Military Coalition is extremely grateful to this distinguished Subcommittee for its vigilance and active commitment to protecting the commissary and exchange benefit, and its oversight and support of MWR and other family and quality of life support programs for the military community around the world. These programs bring a touch of home and provide a focal point for developing and maintaining a sense of community for active, Guard and Reserve, retirees, family members and survivors, and single servicemembers wherever they might be. The Coalition looks forward to working with the Subcommittee in pursuit of the goals we have outlined in our testimony. Like the Subcommittee, we recognize how important these programs are to our national security and to mission readiness and force retention. Thank you for the opportunity to present the Coalition's views on these critically important issues.

Joseph L. Barnes, MCPO, US Navy (Ret)
National Executive Secretary, Fleet Reserve Association (FRA),
Co-Chair, TMC
And
Co-Chair, TMC Personnel & Compensation Committee

Joseph L. (Joe) Barnes was selected to serve as the Fleet Reserve Association's (FRA's) National Executive Secretary (NES) in September 2002 during a pre-national convention meeting of the FRA's National Board of Directors (NBOD) in Kissimmee, Fla. He is FRA's senior lobbyist and chairman of the Association's National Committee on Legislative Service. He is also the chief assistant to the National President and the NBOD, and responsible for managing FRA's National Headquarters.

A retired Navy Master Chief, Barnes served as FRA's Director of Legislative Programs and advisor to FRA's National Committee on Legislative Service since 1994. During his tenure, the Association realized significant legislative gains, and was recognized with a certificate award for excellence in government relations from the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE).

In addition to his FRA duties, Barnes is a member of the Defense Commissary Agency's (DeCA's) Patron Council, and was elected Co-Chairman of the 36-organization Military Coalition (TMC) in November 2004. He also serves as Co-Chairman of TMC's Personnel, Compensation and Commissaries Committee and testifies frequently on behalf of FRA and TMC on Capitol Hill.

He received the United States Coast Guard's Meritorious Public Service Award for providing consistent and exceptional support of Coast Guard from 2000 to 2003 and was appointed an Honorary Member of the United States Coast Guard by Admiral James Loy, former Commandant of the Coast Guard, and then-Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard Vince Patton at FRA's 74th National Convention in September 2001. Barnes is also an ex-officio member of the U.S. Navy Memorial Foundation's Board of Directors.

Barnes joined FRA's National Headquarters team in 1993 as editor of On Watch, FRA's quarterly publication distributed to Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard personnel. While on active duty, he was the public affairs director for the United States Navy Band in Washington, DC. His responsibilities included directing marketing and promotion efforts for extensive national concert tours, network radio and television appearances, and major special events in the nation's capital. His awards include the Defense Meritorious Service and Navy Commendation Medals.

Barnes holds a bachelor's degree in education and a master's degree in public relations management from The American University, Washington, DC, and earned the Certified Association Executive (CAE) designation from ASAE in 2003. He's an accredited member of the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC), a member of ASAE, the American League of Lobbyists, the U.S. Naval Institute, Navy League, and National Chief Petty Officer's Association.

He is a member of the FRA Branch 181 board of directors and has served in a variety of volunteer leadership positions in community and school organizations. He is married to the former Patricia Flaherty of Wichita, Kansas and the Barnes' have three daughters, Christina, Allison, and Emily and reside in Fairfax, Virginia.

René A. Campos, CDR, US Navy (Ret)
Deputy Director, Government Relations, Military Officers Association of America (MOAA)
and
Co-Chair, TMC Morale, Welfare & Recreation (MWR), Military Construction, & Base
Realignment & Closure (BRAC) Committee

CDR Campos entered the Navy in 1973, graduating from Boot Camp at Recruit Training Command, Orlando, FL. She attended Photographer's Mate "A" School, Pensacola, FL with follow-on assignments at Attack Squadron 122, NAS Lemoore, CA; NATO Headquarters Public Affairs/Intelligence Staff, NAS Keflavik, Iceland; and Naval Training Center/RTC Orlando, FL.

CDR Campos earned her Bachelor of Arts Degree in Criminal Justice and Psychology from Columbia College, MO, during her off-duty time. She received her commission in 1982 through Officer Candidate School, Newport, RI.

Subsequent assignments included: Public Affairs Officer, NAS, Meridian, MS; Officer Recruiter, Officer Programs Officer, and Enlisted Programs Officer, Navy Recruiting District, Atlanta, GA; and Branch Head, Enlisted Performance Evaluations and Management Information Systems Branch (Pers-3), Bureau of Naval Personnel, Washington, DC. Her Executive Officer tour included Officer in Charge, Personnel Support Detachment (PSD), Joint Naval Air Station, Willow Grove, PA. Returning to Washington, DC, CDR Campos was assigned as the Branch Head, Transition, Relocation and Deployment Support Programs (Pers-662) and then fleeted up to become the Director of the Resource Management/Comptroller Office (Pers-6C) at the Bureau of Naval Personnel.

In 1998, she earned her Master's of Arts Degree in Business from the University of Phoenix, majoring in Organizational Management. When the Bureau of Naval Personnel relocated to Millington, TN in June 1998, she remained in Washington to stand-up the Personal Readiness and Community Support/Quality of Life (QOL) Liaison Detachment Office, serving as the Deputy Director of the Detachment. She was nominated by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy and selected for the position of Associate Director, Office of Family Programs under the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy in July 2000 until her retirement in June 2004.

Her sub-specialties included Manpower and Personnel and Financial Management. Personal awards include: Legion of Merit; Meritorious Service Medals; Joint Service Commendation Medal; Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medals; Navy & Marine Corps Achievement Medals; Meritorious Unit Commendation; National Defense Service Medals; and the Navy Good Conduct Medal.

CDR Campos (US Navy-Ret) has worked as the Deputy Director of Military Family Matters in the Government Relations Department for the Military Officers Association of America since October 2004. She lives in Washington, DC with her husband Alfonso, and their two children, Ryan and Nissa.