**OCJCS**

**WARRIOR AND FAMILY SUPPORT OFFICE**

# KEEPING FAITH WITH OUR MILITARY FAMILY

September 4, 2012

# Introduction

The All-Volunteer Joint Force is our Nation's decisive advantage, and its lifeline is our military family. It consists of Service members, the family members who stand and serve with them, veterans of every generation, and the loved ones of our fallen.

This paper defines our military family now and in the future, and discusses how we must keep building faith and cultivating the trusted relationship between them and the Nation to maintain the most capable All-Volunteer Joint Force of 2020.

Today's military families and their supporting communities are influencing and shaping our military families of 2020 and beyond. As we reorganize, train, and re-equip our force, the centerpiece of ensuring accomplishment of our Nation's objectives rests with the men and women who make up the all-volunteer force.

The development of Joint Force 2020 to be smaller, but nonetheless superior, will require investment in our human capital today. Joint Force 2020 depends upon a military family that is resilient, adaptive, and more importantly, selflessly formed and instilled with the values of service to this Nation. The larger effect will be a military institution that not only defends the Nation, but also produces more apt, responsible and driven citizens who contribute back to their communities as leaders strengthening the fabric of America.

A decade of combat and uncertain fiscal constraints will test the trust and confidence of our military family. This trust will define the strength of our national security in the future, as it determines whether or not brave and talented men and women will continue volunteering to serve.

# Our Military Family

Our Military Family is borne from communities and cities across America. From every part of our society, large and small communities send their sons and daughters to serve. Our military family members eventually return back to their communities. As a reflection of the society they serve, it is comprised of more than those who wear and have worn the uniform. Our military family consists of:

- Service members – wounded or well, individuals who currently serve in the U.S. Armed Forces in Active, Reserve, or National Guard status in any Service.

- Veterans - individuals who have served, during war or peacetime, in the U.S. Armed Forces in Active, Reserve, or National Guard status in any branch of Service, and in any war period or peacetime.

- Parents, spouses, significant others, children, caregivers and all extended family members who form the support network for a Service member or veteran.

- Our families of the fallen, comforted with the knowledge that the U.S. military will not forget them or their sacrifice.

# Today and Tomorrow's Military Family

Today's military families have endured and sacrificed much. They serve to defend the principles of life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness that America enjoys. This willingness to sacrifice by so few, for so much, and for so long showcases their unique potential to positively contribute to their communities and society.

We must keep faith with our military families. They must know that their sons, daughters, fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters will be the best led, trained, equipped, and ready force in the world. They will never be sent into harm's way without the full preparedness and support of this Nation. Consistent with that obligation, as our men and women defend our Nation abroad, they must also know that the full resources of their Services and the Department of Defense are made available to protect and safeguard their families. These commitments not only keep faith with an all- volunteer force but also serve to enhance readiness of the Service member and their families. Readiness is essential to the achievement of current and future national objectives by our military family.

Balanced with these imperatives is the necessity to sustain the force in a manner that provides for the greatest level of readiness. Keeping faith with our military families also requires that we have just and competitive compensation and benefits within a sustainable budget.

Of equal importance is ensuring that our Nation better understands the experience, strength, and commitment to service of our military families (i). Our military family today has the technical skills, significant experience, and ethical and civic-oriented values that are essential to the well-being of society. They are extraordinary human capital resources and civic assets that are accustomed to policies and structure, but can easily adapt to dynamic workplace situations (ii). They have high rates of volunteerism, voting behavior, and charitable giving (iii). They are loyal, possess leadership and teamwork skills, and simply deserve the future opportunities they have sacrificed to defend. Yet, the imperative to transition the Joint force from current conflict to future readiness is quickly transitioning many military families from service back to their communities.

The uncertain economic environment coupled with an "epidemic of disconnection" (iv) between the military and society at large proves a challenge for today's military family in transition and reintegration. Reintegration requires a triad of support: career-building education, meaningful employment, and access to well-being programs.

No single governmental agency can handle these tasks alone, nor should it. As a Nation, we must build key partnerships between national and community efforts, coordinate those efforts, and face the challenges together (v). Communities have come forward in a "Sea of Goodwill" forming coalitions and community action teams to assist with reintegration. Change is also under way with Service transition programs that prepare our military families for a more effective reintegration.

Although challenged, our military family strives to continue to serve. The potential of greatness to become community leaders and contributing members of society is manifested from the opportunity of its successful reintegration.

# Keeping Faith with Our Military Family

Keeping faith with our Military Family means: (1) meeting our commitment to Service members and family readiness, (2) maintaining a fiscally balanced all-volunteer force, and (3) providing an effective transition and reintegration to preserve their trust.

The Joint Force rests upon the strength of our military family. Keeping faith with it must be seen in a continuum from the day they willingly volunteer to serve to their continued service after transitioning from military duty. Keeping faith with our military family requires the following actions:

- ***Organize, train, educate, and equip a ready Joint Force***
- ***Support families as our Service members accomplish our national security objectives***
- ***Sustain our Service members' readiness and family support***
- ***Build public awareness of the remarkable potential and the needs of our military***
- ***Connect and assist with communities to support collaborative efforts that help our military families' reintegration through local, state, regional, and national coordination***
- ***Revision of Services' transition programs in order to prepare our military families for a more effective reintegration***
- ***Maintain a competitive pay and compensation structure that supports a fiscally sustainable all-volunteer Joint Force***
- ***Sustain the Joint Force healthcare system maintaining quality access and options***

# Conclusion

The development of Joint Force 2020 hinges on our ability to invest in our human capital today. Our military families are our Nation's greatest asset and will make a positive impact in society -- given the opportunity to excel, they will thrive. The well-being of our military families will shape the well-being of Joint Force 2020 and beyond.

## Authors


Col Anthony M. Henderson, USMC
Lt Col Randall E. Smith, USAF
LtCol Dennis Hart, USMC
LTC Tony Forbes, USA
MAJ Eric S. Harrison, USA
MAJ Chris B. Manglicmot, USA


## Contact Information


**Warrior and Family Support Office**
**Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff**
Phone number: 703.692.2105
The Pentagon
Washington, DC
20318-9999
www.jcs.mil/wfs

# References


The White House (2011, January). *Strengthening Our Military Families: Meeting America's Commitment*. Retrieved from http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2011/0111_initiative/Strengthening_our_Military_January_2011.pdf

Harrell, M.C. & Berglass, N. (2012, June). *Employing America's Veterans: Perspectives from Business*. Retrieved from http://www.cnas.org/files/documents/publications/CNAS_EmployingAmericasVeterans_HarrellBerglass.pdf

Blue Star Families, Department of Research and Policy. (2012, May). 2012 Military Family Lifestyle Survey: Findings and Analysis. Retrieved from http://www.bluestarfam.org/policy/surveys

Woodward, B. (2011, January 27). The Bravest Families in America. The Oprah Winfrey Show. http://www.oprah.com/oprahshow/The-Bravest-Families-in-America_1/4

Copeland, J.W. & Sutherland, D.W. *Sea of Goodwill: Matching the Donor to the Need*. Retrieved from http://www.jcs.mil//content/files/2011-12/120711143735_SOGW_donor_to_need.pdf