A White Paper

*After* the Sea of Goodwill:

A Collective Approach to Veteran Reintegration

Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Chairman's Office of Reintegration: *Veterans / Families / Communities*

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> For a soldier, sailor, airman or Marine who has served in a military at war for more than a decade, reintegrating into civilian life can be challenging . . . [a]re we doing enough to ease this transition for those who have served and sacrificed so much on our behalf?[1]

> - Michèle A. Flournoy, April 2014

In the context of our nation's reaction to Vietnam veterans, citizens across the country have embraced the post 9-11 generation of veterans with open arms. Americans have pledged hundreds of thousands of jobs, hundreds of millions of dollars, and countless volunteer hours to recognize, assist, and thank our service members and their families in a groundswell of support—a "sea of goodwill." Yet as combat operations come to an end in Afghanistan, "the potential exists for this sea to become an ocean of apathy."[2] In fact, recent empirical evidence suggests that the "sea of goodwill" has already begun to wane.[3] The need remains, however, for substantive, long-term efforts to assist veterans and their family members as they transition out of uniform and reintegrate into their civilian communities.

In light of the likely reduction in attention and emphasis toward veterans and the military family, our country would benefit from an inclusive framework that better addresses the challenges veterans face and also finds opportunities to leverage their talent, experience, and

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[1]Michèle A. Flournoy, "We Aren't Doing Enough to Help Veterans Transition to Civilian Life," *Washington Post,* April 2, 2014, accessed April 3, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/we-arent-doing-enough-to-help-veterans-transition-to-civilian-life/2014/04/02/d43189e2-b52a-11e3-b899-20667de76985_story.html.

[2] Phillip Carter, *Upholding the Promise: Supporting Veterans and Military Personnel in the Next Four Years*, (Wash DC: Center for a New American Security, November 9, 2012), 6, accessed October 8, 2014, http://www.cnas.org/sites/default/files/publications-pdf/CNAS_UpholdingThePromise_Carter_2.pdf .

[3]As U.S. combat operations in Afghanistan come to an end, the public's attention will likely be drawn to other issues. Also, as combat operations come to a close, the public may no longer directly associate military service with sacrifice. This may result in a decline in the perceived need for ongoing support of service members, veterans and their families. Empirical data suggest a decline, too. Despite the gross domestic product (GDP) and S&P 500 increases since 2009, and a rise in the Consumer Confidence Sentiment Index from its lowest point in 2011, there was no corresponding increase in charitable giving, a major source of revenue for organizations that support veteran and military family needs. Moreover, the *Washington Post* recently reported that the wealthiest Americans gave a smaller share of their income to charity between 2006 and 2012. Associated Press, "Wealthy Giving Less to Charity; Utah Tops States," October 6, 2014, accessed October 7, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/charity-report-ranks-states-cities-on-generosity/2014/10/05/1917e3d6-4cb0-11e4-877c-335b53ffe736_story.html.

strength for the good of the nation.[4] *Now is the time to create a national structure—characterized by functional cooperation, cross-sector collaboration, and an integrated network—to establish a no-wrong-door capacity that allows our country to reintegrate effectively veterans and their families as a matter of course.*[5] Given the imminent need, this voluntary construct can be led by the private sector, championed by established leaders in the field, and characterized by effective public-private partnerships.[6]

Background

In 2010, the Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff published, "Sea of Goodwill: Matching the Donor to the Need," which called for community action teams to address the "reintegration trinity" of education, employment, and access to health care. These needs are most prevalent as veterans and their families reintegrate into civilian communities.[7] Though it addressed national-level challenges and institutional reform, the white paper

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[4] See the 2014 *Washington Post-*Kaiser Family Foundation partnership poll that highlights some of the challenges—to include economic struggles and feeling disconnected from civilian life—of Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans, accessed 9 October, 2014, http://kff.org/other/poll-finding/after-the-wars-survey-of-iraq-and-afghanistan-active-duty-soldiers-and-veterans.

[5] A "no-wrong-door" capacity is the ability of an organization (public or private) that addresses a specific reintegration need to immediately refer the individual requesting help to the right organizations that can address additional or peripheral needs. A primary challenge across the veteran and military family reintegration landscape is navigation, given the thousands of entities that seek to help transitioning service members. A "no-wrong-door" capacity is the ability to ensure that an organization can conduct a "warm-handover" to another organization with a different or complementary purpose. Instead of handing an individual a phone number or URL, the organization conducts direct coordination on the individual's behalf, ensuring that the "gaining organization" is expecting the individual in need of additional assistance and that the individual knows where to go next and at what time.

[6] For the purposed of this paper, "private sector" includes for-profit, not-for-profit, and philanthropic entities.

[7] United States Government. Department of Defense. *Sea of Goodwill: Matching the Donor to the Need* (Wash DC: Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Warrior and Family Support, 2010), 4.

necessarily emphasized a community-level, bottom-up, grass-roots approach.  Multiple communities answered the call by establishing action teams that assist veterans and their families as they navigate the transition from military service to civilian life.

Following the publication of the "Sea of Goodwill" white paper, several veterans community thought leaders advocated for a more holistic approach to supporting veterans and their families as they return to civilian society.  The Center for New American Security called for engagement of a "broader community of interest with equities in these issues" and a structure for the veterans and military community that "rationalizes both the horizontal division of labor among federal agencies and the vertical division of labor among the federal government and state, local and community organizations."[8] Similarly, the University of Southern California's School of Social Work's publication, "A National Veterans Covenant," advocated for a coordinated system that more effectively delivers services to veterans and their families.[9] Syracuse University's Institute for Veterans and the Military Family and Institute for National Security and Counterterrorism called for a top-down, "whole-of-government" approach in their report entitled *A National Veterans Strategy: The Economic, Social, and Security Imperative*. With the advent of the second Obama administration, the report noted that the administration, "in close collaboration with Congress . . . [was] well-positioned to act on a historic opportunity" to

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[8] Carter, *Upholding the Promise*, 20, 24.

[9] Hassan, Anthony, Marilyn Flynn, and Ron Avi Astor. *A National Veterans Covenant: Community as the Catalyst and Resource.* Center for Innovation and Research on Veterans & Military Families. (Los Angeles: The University of Southern California, 2013), 6, accessed October 9, 2014, http://cir.usc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/2013-04-A-National-Veterans-Covenant-Full-NEWcover.pdf.

"conceptualize . . . and institutionalize . . . a National Veterans Strategy."[10]  To date, the federal government has not implemented any of the Syracuse report's six recommendations.

The creation of a comprehensive, government-led veterans strategy may be a bridge too far.  Critics might suggest that the government is not the solution or that it cannot move quickly enough, but those are no reasons to disregard the need to seek an alternative solution.  We believe that long-term, sustainable success in a national veterans strategy is more likely if the effort is embraced and led by the private sector, which can often move faster to address exigent need.

A simple modification of the Syracuse report's final recommendation reveals a unique and still timely opportunity for the private sector to lead a top-down approach to create a national no-wrong-door capacity for reintegrating veterans and their families—in essence, a national veterans consortium.  From the Syracuse report:

> Recommendation: Congress should create a voluntary coalition of veteran-serving organizations, philanthropic associations, and other private sector stakeholders, responsible for cultivating and formalizing a model of collaborative engagement (public-private, private-private and national-state-community) that best aligns the resources of government, corporate, foundation and community partners in support of veterans and their families.[11]

Replacing "Congress should" with "The private sector can" underscores the potential in what remains a valid and propitious recommendation.  Free of both the political and bureaucratic constraints inherent in federal government, private sector stake holders have a unique opportunity to lead the country toward a structure that offers functional cooperation, cross-sector

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[10]Syracuse University, *A National Veterans Strategy*, 5-6.

[11]Syracuse University, *A National Veterans Strategy*, 17.

collaboration, and an integrated network.  We need to move beyond distinct community action

teams toward a construct that integrates those teams, and other regional, state, and national

veterans efforts, into a broader national capacity to address the reintegration needs of the military

family.


A National Veterans Consortium


*Functional Cooperation Enables Vertical Integration*


Across the veteran and military family landscape are organizations at the national, state,

and local levels that focus on a specific function.  Examples of specific functions include (but are

not limited to) education, employment, financial literacy, health care, housing, legal needs, and

religion.  Those organizations that provide a common expertise can voluntarily cooperate to

create a functional community characterized by collective sharing, planning, and coordinating.

Only when a willingness to cooperate with similarly-purposed organizations supersedes

competitive suspicion can a functional community reach its full potential.[12]

In theory, cooperation across a function would be characterized by different organizations

sharing information, contributing resources to each other and to complementary initiatives,

promoting similar efforts, pursuing joint endeavors, sharing successful techniques, learning from

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[12]While this paper does not adopt the same construct or definition of terms, much of our discussion on partnering and collaborating between organizations is based on Paul C. Light's *Making Nonprofits Work: A Report on the Tides of Nonprofit Management Reform* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2000).

each other's mistakes, and creating a collective vision that fosters sustained cooperation throughout the function.[13]  Effective cooperation within a function would require regular and voluntary interaction between like organizations at the national, state, and local echelons.

As Paul C. Light explains in *Making Nonprofits Work: A Report on the Tides of Nonprofit Management Reform*, the aforementioned theory is nothing more than a "call for activity."[14]  To describe what functional cooperation would look like in execution, we must "specify the conditions under which one or another form of partnership advances an organization's mission."[15]  By cooperating across a function, organizations at every echelon can broaden awareness of potential funders, share or contribute to informational technology development, and disseminate effective methods or procedures.  Function-wide cooperation can also promote a professional exchange of training methods, the refinement of assessment techniques, and the identification and reduction of duplicative efforts.

Local organizations can provide valuable "street-level" feedback to state and national organizations (public and private) addressing the same function.  Similarly, national or state organizations can share policy or capacity information unknown to local efforts.  Ultimately, open communication throughout the function can help prevent the "fragmentation of the knowledge base on what the sector might do to improve organizational effectiveness."[16]

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[13]Ibid., 61.  Light presents a useful figure to explain different levels of partnership by defining cooperation, coordination, and collaboration separately.  For the purposes of our argument, we combine several of Light's distinctions into cooperation and collaboration.  The definitions and examples we present, however, are taken from Light's work.

[14]Ibid., 62.

[15]Ibid.

[16]Ibid., 30.

Reducing any barrier to communication can enable a broader functional conversation, one that allows local entities to inform state and national efforts, and vice versa.

Leadership and structure within a function is critical to sustaining effective cooperation. At each echelon, "lead" public and private organizations exist within every function.[17] If these organizations cooperated in establishing a function's steering committee, their participation would not only lend credence to the effort but also force broader participation by other organizations that seek to maintain relevancy within the function. The committee must remain sensitive to concerns across the function and avoid any perception that the committee exists to control or limit agency or diversity within a function.

The paradigm is not difficult to imagine. Much like functional working groups at the local level, it requires the commitment of a few organizations to champion the initial organizational effort, identify the medium(s) to support sharing, and establish, revise, and update the process for sharing information. The functional community "leaders" should serve a pre-determined term, relinquishing leadership to the next set of appointed steering committee members. With comparatively little effort, the benefit could be profound, encourage broad participation, and gradually achieve a level of vertical integration that maximizes functional effectiveness and efficiency.

Vertical integration will also help the field move away from *isolated impact* toward *collective impact*. Isolated impact is a product of thousands of organizations pursuing

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[17]It is inappropriate for a government entity like this office to list or even suggest which organizations are leaders in their respective functions. Within each function there must emerge a relatively small group of established organizations (at the national, state, and local levels) to create and sustain a steering committee until vertical integration is established. To prevent concerns of one organization dominating the function or enjoying undue influence, the initial steering committee should establish a charter that clearly defines steering committee participation goals, term limits, and participation expectations.

"independent solutions to major social problems, often at odds with each other and exponentially increasing the perceived resources required to make meaningful progress."[18]  Increased integration can improve a functional community's capacity for collective impact.  The prospect should prove equally attractive to philanthropists trying to navigate that function's landscape.

Cooperation among similarly-purposed organizations has real potential.[19]  Of course it would require organizations to work together, to subordinate personal and organizational agendas to mission accomplishment, and to align their behavior with their altruistic rhetoric.  Achieving vertical integration throughout a function can ultimately hone the function's ability to connect those who need that function's expertise with those organizations poised to provide the assistance.

*Cross-Sector Collaboration Enables Horizontal Integration*

Similarly, a national veterans consortium requires horizontal integration, achieved by establishing methods to support cooperation across functions and between echelons.  Organizations from one function must become comfortable sharing information, recommending others, and eliminating redundancies with organizations from another function.

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[18]John Kania and Mark Kramer, "Collective Impact," *Stanford Social Innovation Review,* (Winter 2011): 38.

[19]We believe there is an inherent incentive for similarly-purposed organizations to work collectively.  A collaborative, integrated effort would not only benefit veterans and their families, but could also benefit the organizations by enhancing their own effectiveness, increasing their stature, and improving their competitiveness for funding.  Sharing lessons, exchanging techniques, and referring transitioning service members and their families are but a few of the benefits available through cooperative coordination.

Information sharing requirements undergird the concept of cross-sector cooperation. Any organization dedicated to veteran and military family reintegration understands that rarely will a veteran present with a singular problem. The capacity to rapidly refer a veteran in need to an organization that can help is critical to any no-wrong-door capacity.

Reintegration organizations often struggle to identify veterans and their families. Once a veteran presents at a reintegration-oriented entity, the organization should be quick to pass the veteran's name and contact information (if the veteran agrees) to other organizations that might be suited to help the veteran manage a specific challenge or navigate the reintegration process.

Similarly, organizations at the local, state, and national level must become comfortable recommending other organizations. "We don't do homelessness" is far more discouraging than "we focus on VA benefits here but I'm happy to introduce you to another organization in town that can help you with finding a home." Conducting a "warm hand-off" to another organization that specializes in a veteran's specific need is a hallmark of effective reintegration programs, vastly different than a suggestion to "try these Internet links and see what you can find."

Lastly, organizations within functions must be willing to identify redundant capabilities within other organizations and either eliminate them or find room to establish a revised program that pursues efficiencies or increases capacity and capability. Along the fringes of each function lie organizational pursuits and capabilities that will necessarily blend into another function's realm. This type of redundancy represents a less-than-effective use of diminishing resources. While it would be unrealistic to expect harmonious reconciliation of every redundant effort, organizations would be wise to "see" their landscape, recognize more established expertise, and

work to either amplify existing efforts or identify and establish the capability most needed within their range of influence.[20]

As John Kania and Mark Kramer (both managing directors at Foundation Strategy Group) explained, "large-scale social change comes from better cross-sector coordination rather than from isolated intervention of individual organizations." "Substantially greater progress," they argued, "could be made in . . . our most serious and complex social problems if non-profits, governments, businesses, and the public were brought together around a common agenda . . ."[21] Cross-function collaboration provides the horizontal integration necessary for a national no-wrong-door capacity and allows organizations at any echelon to conduct a warm-handover of a veteran to the right entity at the right time.

*Integrated Network Enables a National No-Wrong-Door Capacity*

To achieve effective cooperation within functions and cross-sector collaboration across the country, the functional communities must be fully networked to facilitate rapid and habitual information sharing and coordination.[22] Given ever-increasing access to the Internet and our nation's unmatched capacity for virtual interaction, a national veterans consortium requires an

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[20]These recommendations constitute a combination of *coordination* and *collaboration* definitions Paul C. Light uses in "Making Non-Profits Work," 61.

[21]Kania and Kramer, "Collective Impact," 38.

[22] This recommendation is not new. For example, the University of Southern California's Center for Innovation and Research on Veterans & Military Families 2014 report, *The State of the American Veteran: The Los Angeles County Veterans Study*, found that veteran support organizations are not organized to provide holistic support to current and returning veterans. This report recommended establishing a veteran community support network that can provide a comprehensive plan to engage and support veterans in transition. Accessed October 7, 2014, http://cir.usc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/USC010_CIRLAVetReport_FPpgs.pdf.

Internet-based platform that not only connects the veteran or family member with those trying to provide assistance, but that also connects each of the organizations trying to help veterans and their families reintegrate. It becomes the medium through which the consortium achieves vertical and horizontal integration, connecting the thousands of brick-and-mortar entities across the country with other organizations and the veterans and family members they seek to assist.

The platform or portal should maintain the capacity to confirm veteran identity or association, offer contemporary search functions, and help veterans locate local public and private agencies willing to help them reintegrate. The platform should offer an interactive capacity that helps both sides of the equation navigate reintegration terrain. It must help veterans choose which organizations are best suited to address their specific needs, and must similarly help organizations identify veterans in need. It should also enable those organizations by facilitating veteran identification, providing case management tools, and offering the mechanisms that foster the aforementioned vertical and horizontal integration among functions.

The potential is real. If the vast majority of organizations seeking to help veterans and their families participate in a distinct virtual platform, they create a singular destination for transitioning service members and their families, providing a convenient location at which the veteran can self-identify, by-passing the most challenging constraints associated with the Privacy Act and the government's legal obligation to secure personally identifiable information.

This capability can be built today with existing technology, but it must be more user-friendly than a Universal Resource Locator (URL) list, which provides valuable information but does little to help veterans and their families, or the organizations that seek to help them, navigate the complex and confusing reintegration landscape. This capability, however, should

avoid an unintentional drift toward social interaction. Socially-based platforms serve a valuable function, but do not offer some of the problem-solving mechanisms veterans and their families need most. Effectively networking a national veterans consortium requires a developed, reliable business model focused on action, connecting those in need to those who provide it.

To achieve the level of vertical and horizontal integration necessary to network fully the veteran and military family landscape, we should work toward a capability that allows a veteran or family member to search and find a local non-profit organization that addresses their specific need. That local organization must then be able to conduct a warm-handover to another local organization with a different mission to address a different need. Each local organization should be poised to coordinate with local and state public agencies that provide support or use local-level feedback and data to identify policy shortfalls. And national organizations should enjoy the reach down to state and local entities to better understand lower echelon needs and priorities, to disseminate policy or regulatory developments, and to capture and share effective techniques across functions. In the end, a virtual portal capability must link veterans and their families with brick-and-mortar locations, networking a veteran and military family community dedicated to successful reintegration.

## Operationalizing the Strategy

The intent of this white paper is to invigorate the discussion about a national-level construct comprised of organizations which, through their own established credibility and leadership, attract a broad audience of willing participants interested in the same goal: the

successful reintegration of veterans and their families into our civilian communities.  To that end, the Chairman's Office of Reintegration will soon publish an example charter of such an organization, intended to complement this paper with a document that captures the "how" necessary to sustaining a national veterans consortium.

The charter will offer a vision, mission, objectives, structure, and a plan of implementation.  The charter is not proscriptive, but provided to spark continued discussion of the most effective means of establishing a national no-wrong-door capacity.

It is important to note that despite this consortium's reliance on private sector leadership, the public sector must play an active and significant role.  Only through effective public and private partnerships can our country reach its full potential in addressing veteran and military family challenges.  As Rick Cohen from *NonProfit Quarterly* explained, "public-private partnerships involve active players who see their mutual interests in joining forces, not passive entities reluctantly dragged to the table."[23]

The Departments of Defense, Labor, and Veterans Affairs (VA) must empower and enable subordinate organizations and leaders with policies that support increased public-private partnerships.  Non-binding memorandums of agreement or understanding between military installations, VA hospitals or clinics, or American Jobs Centers and private organizations are a positive step in teaching both sectors how to work together.  Leaders in the public sector, at

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[23]Rick Cohen, "Foundations and Joint Chiefs Meet on Challenges in Veterans Philanthropy," *NonProfit Quarterly* (September 26, 2013), accessed October 3, 2013, https://nonprofitquarterly.org/philanthropy/22967-the-community-foundations-response-to-veterans.html.

every echelon, must become more confident partners with private entities and learn to "serve as active participants in [a] generation of real partnerships that change conditions for veterans."[24]

Some may think that this paper relieves the public sector of too much responsibility, that it does not ask enough of our federal, state, or local governments.  We believe that government must proactively participate in this construct by increasing access, sharing data and information, and finding ways to partner effectively with the private sector.  We also recognize that the government must continue to contribute significantly to this whole-of-nation effort.  The government, after all, remains the largest funder of veteran services.[25] We remain convinced, however, that the private sector is more capable of crafting a reintegration structure that is both adaptive and well-timed.  The proposed consortium must outpace the waning sea of goodwill; the private sector can move fast enough to ensure that it does.

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[24]Ibid.

[25] In FY13 the VA spent almost $12 billion on education & vocational rehabilitation/employment services for veterans.  See VA Expenditure Tables, accessed October 6, 2014, http://www.va.gov/vetdata/Expenditures.asp.  The FY15 VA Budget Request includes $500 million for the Supportive Services for Veterans Families and invests $1 billion in the out years for the Veterans Job Corps. See VA FY15 VA budget highlights, accessed October 6, 2014, http://www.va.gov/budget/docs/summary/Fy2015-FastFactsVAsBudgetHighlights.pdf.

An Investment in the Common Defense

> . . . as [service members] return home and transition back into civilian communities . . . we ought to make it a priority to help them channel their experience, ethos, and desire for personal challenge into continuing to make a difference.  Their strengths are our strengths, the steel of America's national character.[26]
>
> - General Martin E. Dempsey, November 2013

The success with which we reintegrate our veterans and their families as they return to our civilian communities directly contributes to a sustainable, viable, all-volunteer force.  After all, the all-volunteer force *is* the American way of manning its military.  For only 35 of our 238 years have we relied on conscription to fill the ranks.  Voluntarily raising our hand and taking an oath to protect and defend the Constitution of the United States is our custom, a defining moment for everyone in our all-volunteer force.  The willingness of our nation's children to sustain this tradition is a product of how they see our society—our civilian communities and our government—embrace veterans and their families upon their return from service.  Recognizing these men and women as valuable civic assets will inspire future generations to take the same oath . . . to sustain the all-volunteer force.

Our challenge today is to capture what remains of the "sea of goodwill" and "transform the outpouring into tangible support."[27]  A construct that normalizes reintegration would be as

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[26]Martin E. Dempsey. "Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: 'Their Strengths Are Our Strengths,'" *Parade* (November 9, 2013), accessed July 8, 2014, http://parade.condenast.com/225831/martinedempsey/chairman-of-the-joint-chiefs-of-staff-their-strengths-are-our-strengths/.

[27]John J. Kruzel, "Brain Injury Research Warrants Urgency, Mullen Says," *Armed Forces Press Service* (November 4, 2009), accessed July 8, 2014, http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=56537.

profound as it would be timely.  A national veterans consortium characterized by functional cooperation, cross-sector collaboration, and an integrated network will create the no-wrong-door capacity that our country needs to reintegrate veterans and their families—transforming reintegration from a problem into a procedure.  Over the next five years, more than a million men and women will depart the military and move back into the civilian community.[28]  It's critical that we "show the next generation of Americans that military service is noble and worthwhile—and when you sacrifice for your fellow citizens, you will find strong support when you come home."[29]  A networked, national structure will show that strong support, preserve our all-volunteer force, and contribute to the common defense—a collective effort that further tempers "the steel of America's national character."[30]

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[28] The number of transitioning veterans takes into account normal attrition rates as well as current force reduction programs across the Services.  It is important to note that while the force reduction will result in an increase in the number of transitioning service members, it constitutes a fraction of the normal, annual separation volume.

[29]George W. Bush, "Empowering Our Nation's Warriors," Remarks, A National Leadership Summit on Post-9/11 Veterans and Military Families, George W. Bush Institute, Dallas, Texas  (February 19, 2014), accessed 15 October 2014, http://www.bushcenter.org/remarks-president-george-w-bush-bush-institute%E2%80%99s-empowering-our-nation%E2%80%99s-warriors-summit.

[30]Dempsey, "Chairman."