

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

PRESENTATION TO THE MILITARY PERSONNEL SUBCOMMITTEE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SUBJECT: "Care of Injured and Wounded Service Members"

**STATEMENT OF: LIEUTENANT GENERAL ROGER A. BRADY
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 UNITED STATES AIR FORCE**

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Mr. Chairman, Representative Snyder, and committee members, thank you for this opportunity to discuss with you this very important subject. You have all led from the front to ensure consistent support to the great young men and women who defend this country. Again, we thank you.

In war our top priorities are to accomplish the mission and to take care of our people. Back on the home front, the best thing we can do to support the men and women who are in harm's way is to take care of their families. We owe our military men and women the certainty that regardless of what befalls them, we will look after them and their loved ones.

When an Airman is wounded in action, the Air Force is doing whatever it takes to help them recover. Our Palace HART (Helping Airmen Recover Together) program follows Air Force wounded in action until they return to active duty or are medically retired, with follow-up even beyond that point. We work to retain them on active duty if it is at all possible. If we are unable to return an Airman to active duty, we work to get them civilian employment within the Air Force. And, along the way we make sure they are counseled on all the benefits they are entitled to within the Department of Defense, Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Department of Labor. To further our efforts, the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD P&R) recently stood up a Joint Support Operations Center. This center complements our own program to ensure that no injured Airmen is forgotten or neglected. As of today, 172 Airmen have been wounded in action; 165 of them have returned to active duty; two were placed on the temporary disability retired list (TDRL) and five are receiving ongoing medical care.

I've talked to many of the injured Airmen returning from war. We are proud of them and the incredible courage they demonstrate as they travel the hard road to recovery. Every Airman

I've talked to wanted to return to active duty and their unit. The skill and dedication of the services' medical personnel and helicopter and airlift crews have improved the odds of survival and recovery far beyond what would have been possible even ten years ago.

But what of the Killed in Action? These people join the ranks of our pantheon of heroes. When a military member pays the ultimate price for his country, I believe we must take care of those they leave behind – their family. We cannot lessen their pain, we cannot heal their hurt, but we can help them with the unforgiving demands of continuing their lives. Here is where the Air Force focuses on the whole experience: from compassionately making the initial contact, to carefully organizing the transition period and funeral, and finally to assisting the family in adjusting to the long-term loss.

I am proud of our very professional and compassionate Casualty Assistance Officers. These highly trained professionals are with the families from the point they are initially notified, and stick with them for as long as they are needed. This personal relationship is crucial to properly taking care of the bereaved. The Casualty Assistance Officer, alongside chaplains and other friends within the community, help the family cope with difficult emotions, while also helping them navigate through the details that attend an extremely difficult situation.

Ladies and gentlemen, this effort is founded on our core values – integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all we do. We are proud to be part of a great joint team fighting the Global War on Terrorism.

Thank you Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, for the unwavering support you have given these great Americans. Together, we're going to get this right.