

Prepared Statement

of

The Honorable Michael L. Dominguez

**Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense
(Personnel and Readiness)**

Before the

U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs

Seamless Transition

VA/DoD/DoL Cooperation & Collaboration

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*Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense
for Personnel and Readiness
The Honorable Michael L. Dominguez*

Michael L. Dominguez was nominated by the President as the Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness on November 21, 2005 and confirmed by the Senate on July 11, 2006. As a presidential appointee confirmed by the Senate, he is the primary assistant to the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness providing



staff advice to the Secretary of Defense and Deputy Secretary of Defense for total force management as it relates to manpower; force structure; readiness; reserve component affairs; health affairs; training; and personnel policy and management, including equal opportunity, morale, welfare, recreation, and quality of life matters.

Prior to this appointment, Mr. Dominguez served, from August 2001 until July 2006, as the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Manpower and Reserve Affairs. His responsibilities included developing and overseeing Air Force manpower and personnel policies, readiness, and Reserve Component affairs.

Mr. Dominguez also served as Acting-Secretary of the Air Force from March 28, 2005 thru July 29, 2005. In this role, he was responsible for the affairs of the Department of the Air Force, including the organizing, training, equipping and providing for the welfare of its more than 360,000 men and women on active duty, 180,000 members of the Air National Guard and the Air Force Reserve, 160,000 civilians, and their families.

As an Air Force dependent, Mr. Dominguez grew up on bases around the world. After graduating in 1975 from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., he was commissioned a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army, reported to Vicenza, Italy, then worked varied assignments with the 1st Battalion, 509th Infantry (Airborne) and the Southern European Task Force. After leaving the military in 1980, Mr. Dominguez went into private business and attended Stanford University's Graduate School of Business. In 1983 he joined the Office of the Secretary of Defense as an analyst for Program Analysis and Evaluation (PA&E).

Mr. Dominguez entered the Senior Executive Service in 1991 as PA&E's Director for Planning and Analytical Support. In this position he oversaw production of DOD's long-range planning forecast and its \$12 billion in annual information technology investments. He also directed the PA&E modernization of computing, communications and modeling infrastructure. He joined the Chief of Naval Operations staff in 1994 and assisted in the Navy's development of multi-year programs and annual budgets. Mr. Dominguez left federal government in 1997 to join a technology service organization. In 1999 he began work at the Center for Naval Analyses where he organized and directed studies of complex public policy and program issues. In 2001 he rejoined the staff of the Chief of Naval Operations where he worked until his appointment as Assistant Secretary of the Air Force.

EDUCATION

- 1975 Bachelor of Science degree, U.S. Military Academy, West Point, N.Y.
- 1983 Master's degree in business administration, Stanford University, Stanford, Calif.
- 1989 Program for Senior Officials in National Security, Harvard University

CAREER CHRONOLOGY

1. June 1983 - September 1988, program analyst, Office of the Secretary of Defense for Program Analysis and Evaluation, Washington, D.C.
2. October 1988 - September 1991, executive assistant to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Program Analysis and Evaluation, Washington, D.C.
3. October 1991 - September 1994, Director for Planning and Analytical Support, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Program Analysis and Evaluation, Washington D.C.
4. October 1994 - April 1997, Associate Director for Programming, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Washington, D.C.
5. April 1997 - September 1999, General Manager, Tech 2000 Inc., Herndon, Va.
6. September 1999 - January 2001, Research Project Director, Center for Naval Analyses, Alexandria, Va.
7. January 2001 - August 2001, Assistant Director for Space, Information Warfare, and Command and Control, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Washington, D.C.
8. August 2001 - March 2005, Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, Washington, D.C.
9. March 2005 – July 2005, acting Secretary of the Air Force and Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, Washington, D.C.
10. July 2005 – July 2006, Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, Washington, D.C.
11. July 2006 – Present, Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, Washington, D.C.

AWARDS AND HONORS

1980 Army Commendation Medal
1988 and 1994 Defense Meritorious Civilian Service Medal
1993 Defense Civilian Service Medal
1997 Superior Civilian Service Medal, Department of the Navy
1998 Meritorious Executive Presidential Rank Award

January 2005, July 2005 and July 2006, Air Force Exceptional Civilian Service Medal

Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss issues relating to employment of our returning veterans, Service members, and members of the National Guard and Reserves. I'd like to recognize the cooperation and collaboration among the Department of Defense (DoD), the Department of Labor (DOL), the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

We require a great deal from our Armed Forces and I want to affirm the Department's commitment to all our Service members – Active, National Guard and Reserves and their families.

Returning to private life after serving in the military is a very complex undertaking. To assist them in doing so, we must empower Service members with the tools and information they need to fashion individual solutions to the challenges they will face as they return to civilian life. DOD, along with DOL and the VA, has worked to provide them with a variety of tools, including the Transition Assistance Program (TAP).

Let me begin with some general comments regarding the cooperation and collaboration among DoD, DOL and VA.

I am impressed by the dedication and willingness of our Federal partners to provide an assortment of highly desirable transition services. The cooperation and support we receive from DOL and VA is outstanding. You can be truly proud of the manner in which DoD, DOL, and VA, have continued to enthusiastically

support our men and women in uniform. Obviously, the sustained interest and support of this Committee is also vital to our efforts.

While the three departments have been working together in earnest for well over a decade, the many professionals within the departments are bringing DoD, DOL, and VA closer together at a pace greater than at anytime before. Examples of our collaborative efforts include the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) Steering Committee and the Secretary of Labor's Advisory Committee on Employment, Training, and Employer Outreach. DoD and VA also partner extensively through the VA/DoD Joint Executive Council (JEC), the Benefits Executive Council (BEC), and the Health Executive Council (HEC), Veterans Employment, Training, and Employer Outreach (ACVETEO).

Whether separating, retiring or being released from active duty as a member of the National Guard or Reserves, the transitory Service member's most immediate goal is finding a job, changing careers, and improving his/her economic quality of life. DoD believes that none of our efforts are more important than creating an uninterrupted continuum of opportunities at every level, as our Service personnel and their families transition from military service to veteran status. This includes helping them reach and achieve their employment potential and aspirations to their full capability.

The rest of my statement today will touch on the many activities under way that reflect the shared commitment to delivering transition assistance, employment assistance, and benefits information.

TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Since its inception in 1990, the goal of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) has been to provide Service members and their families the skills, tools, knowledge, and self-confidence necessary for a successful reentry into the Nation's civilian work force. We deliver TAP through a collaborative effort involving DOL, the Military Services, VA, DHS, the Department of Education (ED), the Small Business Administration (SBA), the National Veterans Business Development Corporation, and other federal, state, local and non-profit organizations. The Veterans Service and Military Service Organizations provide outstanding support to TAP and to our Service members and their families at both the national and local levels. The goal is to help prepare them to move into the job market.

There is much concern about how we can better serve the National Guard and Reserve Components coming from Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF)/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). So with that high priority, let me tell you first about the new technological breakthrough that will change how the National Guard and Reserve members transition out of the military, in addition to serving as a valuable tool for the Active Component Service members as well.

TURBOTAP

When TAP was originally developed in 1990, we did not design it with the needs of the National Guard and Reserves in mind. Their mission has changed

dramatically since 9-11 and the requirements, with respect to TAP, warrant a fresh look. To better meet the needs of the Guard and Reserves, DoD, with the cooperation and collaboration of the Military Services, National Guard Bureau (NGB), DOL, VA, ED, SBA, and the National Veterans Business Development Corporation, has designed a dynamic, automated web-based system for delivery of transition assistance and related information. This portal architecture will be the backbone of the updated DoD TAP process for National Guard and Reserve Service members. Each Reservist and Guardsman will be able to create a lifelong account to which he/she or his/her spouse can refer, at any time during his/her life. Usability, flexibility, adaptability, and individual customization are the keys to successful implementation of this new technology-enabled process. The goal for this system is to increase Service member participation and satisfaction.

We are excited by the possibilities for TurboTAP. National Guard and Reserve personnel will be able to access employment information, build a resume on-line, do a job search, contact their local One-Stop Career Center for employment assistance, and the list goes on. **TURBOTAP ALLOWS AN INDIVIDUAL TO DEVELOP AND PRINT OUT HIS OR HER OWN INDIVIDUAL TRANSITION PLAN.**

Some of the features of TurboTAP are:

- A comprehensive Transition Guide for the Guard and Reserves as well as a comprehensive Preseparation Guide for Active Component Service members. These guides provide information on benefits and services

available to transitioning Service members as well as contact points for further assistance.

- Life long account for National Guard, Reserves and Active Component Service members which allows them to use the system indefinitely
- A personal profile that can be updated anytime
- A customized Individual Transition Plan
- Transition information that can be accessed anytime, anywhere
- An Employment Hub containing job searches, resume builder and military occupational translator using the O*NET to convert to civilian occupational skills
- Direct email access to any DOL One-Stop Career Center
- A VA Benefits Hub providing information on VA benefits, services and programs and finally
- "Helpful checklists" to remind Service members about key things they should do before separating or being released from active duty.

TurboTAP allows Service members, veterans, retirees, and demobilizing members of the Reserve Components to locate and find the nearest DOL One-Stop Career Center, VA Regional Office, VA Vet Center, VA Medical Center, and military installation to where they live. These facilities with their highly trained and dedicated staffs, stand ready to help our deserving men and women who have served this Nation with honor.

TurboTAP will better meet the needs of the National Guard, Reserves and Active Component Service members and their families because it gives them the tools to connect and access the information to meet their needs when they are ready – present or future. We have high expectations for this being a 21st century approach to delivering individualized information and benefits to Service members and families. With the expected success, we further plan to make transition an on-line transaction much like banking and bill paying have become. The success and accountability of transition will be managed on-line versus a form being hand carried to a personnel file. As we move down this road, we will solicit your approval and legislative support.

TurboTAP was launched on June 9th. The site can be accessed at <http://www.TurboTAP.org>.

Components of Transition Assistance Program

The four components of TAP emphasize preparation for employment rather than job placement itself.

Preparation Counseling is the first component of TAP– This counseling is mandatory for separating and retiring Service members and all eligible demobilizing members of the National Guard and Reserves. The Military Services are responsible for providing Preparation Counseling. During the 2 – 2 ½ hour Preparation Counseling session of TAP, Active Component Service members are introduced to information about employment opportunities and how to go about finding a job. Also during this phase of TAP, Active Component

Service members, looking for a job post-military, are encouraged to attend a DOL TAP Employment Workshop.

During the Preseparation Counseling phase of TAP for the National Guard and Reserves, similar information is provided geared to their needs. However, instead of encouraging them to attend a DOL Employment Workshop, they receive a Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) Briefing. USERRA Briefings are scheduled at installation demobilization sites in coordination with the demobilization commander; therefore, based on availability of staff, the briefing may be conducted by a qualified and trained DOL representative, a representative from the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserves or another qualified and trained individual, such as a member of the Judge Advocate General Corps or Solicitor General's staff. National Guard and Reserve personnel are also informed, during the Preseparation Counseling session, about the services available to them at the DOL One-Stop Career Centers. Members looking for jobs or a career change are encouraged to visit and register with the One-Stop Career Center nearest their residence, once they return home.

Why does the Department emphasize a USERRA Briefing for our National Guard and Reserve personnel? The overwhelming majority of those activated have jobs when they are activated; therefore, they have jobs to which they will return. This is supported by the 2006 Status of Forces Survey conducted by the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) which shows that 78% of National

Guard and Reserve members, who were activated in the 24 months preceding the survey, were employed prior to activation. We plan to address meeting their needs once home by leveraging technology.

While at the demobilization station, they get information about their eligibility to receive employment assistance and other transition services up to 180 days after demobilization from any of the Military Services Transition Office and DOL Career Once Stop Center.

In addition to the DOL Employment Workshops, the Military Services provide a vast array of additional employment seminars and one-on-one counseling to Service members. This extensive assistance covers: resume and cover letter writing; information about electronic job banks and internet access to automated employment tools (resume writer, cover letter and job assistance tutorials); tools on salary negotiation; location of job fairs; details about Federal employment workshops and seminars; opportunities for post military employment networking; relocation assistance; information about government partnerships for employment and training; benefits for members who are involuntarily separated; employer panels; and information about Veterans benefits (including disability benefits).

The second component of TAP is the DOL TAP Employment Workshop. Attendance is voluntary on the part of Active Component Service members and their spouses, with the exception of the Marine Corps which has made attending the DOL Employment Workshop mandatory. The DOL

Employment Workshops are 2 ½ days in length. The curriculum, facilitators, workshop materials, data collection and analysis related to the employment workshops are the responsibility of DOL. During the 2 ½ day workshop, Active Component Service members receive information on labor market conditions, assessing individual skills and competencies, how to write effective resumes and cover letters, proper interviewing techniques, and the best methods of searching for jobs. They also learn how to use electronic employment data banks. Finally, they get information addressing the special employment needs of those separating with a disability.

The third component of TAP is the VA Benefits Briefing – This, too, is voluntary for Active Component Service members and is four hours in length. The four hour briefing addresses education and training; health care; home loans; life insurance; vocational rehabilitation and employment (VR&E); disability benefits; burial benefits; and dependents' and survivors' benefits.

Demobilizing National Guard and Reserve Service members receive a one-hour VA briefing which also includes information on Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP). Although not mandatory, if a VA Benefits Briefing is on the demobilization schedule, all members of that unit receive the briefing. The materials, information, counselors, and all data collection and analysis related to the VA Benefits Briefings are the responsibility of the VA.

The fourth and final component of TAP is DTAP -- Attendance at the Disabled Transition Assistance Program is voluntary for Active Component

Service members and is a separate two hour briefing. DTAP is for Service members and veterans who have, or suspect they have a service-connected disability or an injury or illness that was aggravated by service. During the two hour DTAP briefing, VA addresses Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment, sometimes referred to as Chapter 31. DTAP addresses the five tracks to employment: re-employment; rapid access to employment; employment through long term services; independent living services; and self employment. DTAP also addresses other services such as medical, dental, optical, mental health treatment, special adapted housing, vet centers, vocational/educational counseling and special hiring authorities for Federal employment. VA provides all materials and information, counselors, data collection and any analysis related to DTAP.

Finally, we cannot overlook the many options for federal employment such as: Veterans Recruitment Appointment (VRA), Veterans Employment Opportunities Act (VEOA), Appointment of 30% or More Disabled Veterans, Federal Career Intern Program (FCIP), Small Business Administration and the National Veterans Business Development Corporation Programs for those who want to start their own business or franchise.

I now want to share with you some on-going initiatives in DoD as they relate to post-military employment for our Service members.

OTHER INITIATIVES UNDERWAY

SPECIAL WORKING GROUP ON TRANSITION TO CIVILIAN EMPLOYMENT OF NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVES

A more recent initiative is the establishment of a two-year Special Working Group on Transition to Civilian Employment of National Guard and Reserve Members Returning from Mobilized Status in direct or indirect Support of Operation Iraqi Freedom or Operation Enduring Freedom, as specified in Section 676 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007.

The working group will identify and assess the needs of CONUS and OCONUS military members with regard to returning to civilian occupations or school, the pre- and post- deployment delivery of these services, and the effect of the severity of wounds or injuries upon their return to the civilian workforce. We look forward to accessing this valuable information and utilizing it to the benefit of transitioning Service members.

SUPPORT FOR SEVERELY INJURED

As you are aware, DoD and VA established task forces to review how wounded Service members are served and how to better collaborate to meet the needs of the members and their families. However, today, the Joint Seamless Transition Program, established by VA, in coordination with the Military Services, also facilitates a more timely receipt of benefits for severely injured Service members. Veteran Benefits Administration (VBA) counselors visit all severely injured patients and inform them of the full range of VA services, including

readjustment programs, employment programs, and information on educational and housing benefits.

Seamless Transition helps these personnel touch base with vocational rehabilitation and employment services, and assists in putting them in contact with other employment resources available through DOL, the Military Services, the Joint Seamless Transition Office, DoD and the Military Services severely injured and wounded programs. All of these are available to help Service members and their families connect with the employment assistance they need.

To expand employment assistance to our severely injured and wounded, the Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense, Civilian Personnel Management Service, has undertaken a broad outreach program called "Hiring Heroes Career Fairs" to assist severely injured Service members and their families in finding employment opportunities in the DoD, other Federal agencies, and the private sector. Outreach efforts to Service members and veterans are conducted by working across government and the private sector to ensure information offered through their educational and training programs is available to the Service members at the career fairs.

Career fairs that support the Department's "Hiring Heroes" program have been offered at the following locations: Walter Reed Army Medical Center, DC; Fort Sam Houston, TX; Womack Army Medical Center, Fort Bragg, NC; Eisenhower Army Medical Center, Fort Gordon, GA; and Walson Army Medical Center, Fort Dix, NJ. Three career fairs have been conducted in partnership with

the Coalition to Salute America's Heroes, a non-profit organization. Over 2,000 Service members and their family members have attended these career fairs and several more are planned well into the future.

Corporate America has responded to the call; many Fortune 500 companies and small businesses are recruiting injured and wounded veterans for their skills, experience, maturity, and work ethic. Many of these companies are creating special programs geared specifically toward finding employment in their respective companies for these veterans and their family members.

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS ON RETURNING GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR HEROES

Now, I'd like to turn your attention to the recommendations contained in the recent report of the President's Task Force on Returning Global War on Terror Heroes that relate to employment. Of the 25 overall recommendations, DoD is the lead agency on two that are related to employment:

- **The first recommendation, O-1, calls for us to "Increase Attendance at TAP and DTAP Sessions."** This recommendation calls for DoD to increase attendance at TAP and DTAP sessions to 85% of those separating Service members and demobilizing National Guard and Reserves Forces. To meet this challenge, a Departmental Memorandum is being prepared that will go to the Secretariats of each Military Department informing them of the Department's 85% attendance goal. Due to the complexities and uniqueness of the National Guard and Reserves, how they mobilize and demobilize, this is the area where we plan to

leverage TurboTAP technology to help us achieve this goal. We want at least 85% of all demobilizing National Guard and Reserves as well as Active Component Service members, to establish a TurboTAP account and use the system as intended.

- **The second recommendation is O-4, "Improve Civilian Workforce Credentialing and Certification."** During the Preseparation Counseling phase of TAP, Service members (National Guard, Reserves and Active Component) learn where and how to access information relating to licensure, certification and apprenticeship. The Army, after doing extensive research, conducting gap analysis, and following a comprehensive review of the credentialing process, created "Credentialing Opportunities On-Line (COOL)" or Army COOL. This robust web site helps soldiers find civilian credentialing programs related to their military occupational specialty. It helps them understand what it takes to obtain a credential and it helps them identify resources available to pay credential fees. The Navy followed the Army with Navy COOL. DoD is working with the Air Force and Marine Corps and hopes that they will soon join their sister Services with a COOL web site.

I have already addressed the fact that, during the Preseparation Counseling phase of TAP, information about the DOL One-Stop Career Center web site is provided to Active and Reserve Component personnel. One of the tools on this web site is the Credentials Center, which a Service member can use to locate State-specific occupational licensing requirements, find agency contact

information, information on industry-recognized certifications as well as the associated workforce education and examinations that test or enhance knowledge, experience or skills in an occupation or profession. DoD and DOL established a "Credentialing Working Group," that is charged with developing appropriate goals, objectives, and outcomes that will help remove credentialing barriers that some veterans and transitioning Service members face today.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Chairman, as I stated earlier in my remarks, the collaboration and partnership between DOL, VA, SBA, the VSOs and MSOs and others is outstanding. The collaborative structures we have in place (JEC, BEC, HEC, TAP Steering Committee, Advisory Committee on Veterans Employment and Training and Employer Outreach, and the Joint VA Seamless Transition Office) provide multiple forums for our continued dialogue on these crucial issues. The Report to the President on "Returning Global War on Terror Heroes" provides us another opportunity to communicate, strategize and work together.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my statement. On behalf of the men and women in the military today and their families, I thank you and the members of the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs for your steadfast support during these demanding times.