



Statement from Key Leaders of the Defense Community

Diversity is a strength of the U.S. military, and our experience as senior defense leaders tells us that capable and diverse teams are more effective in today's complex environment. Our military is already made up of people from all walks of life, and we will increasingly recruit from all segments of our population — this means that within five years, service members of color will likely make up the majority of recruits. Additionally, we know that with an All-Volunteer Force, the strength of the force depends significantly on the resilience and well-being of our military families.

While we recruit the Soldier, Sailor, Airman, Coast Guardsman, Guardian, and Marine, we retain the whole family. As such, it is our judgment that the important new research released by Blue Star Families about the experiences of military families of color can serve to begin a conversation that can improve the well-being of military families and ultimately strengthen our All-Volunteer Force. Even if some of us may not support all of the recommendations, we do encourage military and community leaders to consider and collaborate on addressing areas of challenge revealed by the research. By ensuring an inclusive environment for all military families — wherever military orders take them — we can enhance the effectiveness of the military and continue to attract America's best to our All-Volunteer Force.

Signatories

The Honorable Leon Panetta
23rd Secretary of Defense
(Obama)

The Honorable Chuck Hagel
24th Secretary of Defense
(Obama)

The Honorable Mark Esper
27th Secretary of Defense
(Trump)

The Honorable Robert Wilkie
10th Secretary of Veterans
Affairs (Trump)

The Honorable James L. Jones, Jr.
22nd Assistant to the President
for National Security Affairs (Obama),
General USMC (Ret)

The Honorable William J. Lynn III
30th Deputy Secretary
of Defense (Obama)

The Honorable Eric Fanning
22nd Secretary of the Army
(Obama)

The Honorable Ryan McCarthy
24th Secretary of the Army
(Trump)

The Honorable Richard Danzig
71st Secretary of the Navy
(Clinton)

The Honorable Kenneth Braithwaite
77th Secretary of the Navy
(Trump)

The Honorable Whit Peters
19th Secretary of the Air Force
(Clinton)

The Honorable Heather Wilson
24th Secretary of the Air Force
(Trump)

The Honorable Barbara Barrett
25th Secretary of the Air Force
(Trump)

General Joseph F. Dunford, Jr.
19th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs
of Staff, USMC (Ret)

General George W. Casey, Jr.
36th Chief of Staff, USA (Ret)

Admiral John M. Richardson
31st Chief of Naval Operations,
USN (Ret)

General David L. Goldfein
21st Chief of Staff, USAF (Ret)

General Robert B. Neller
37th Commandant, USMC (Ret.)

Admiral Paul F. Zunkuft
25th Commandant, USCG (Ret)

General Lester L. Lyles
28th Vice Chief of Staff, USAF (Ret)

General Larry O. Spencer
37th Vice Chief of Staff, USAF (Ret)

General Johnnie E. Wilson
13th Commander of Army Materiel
Command, USA (Ret)

General Edward A. Rice, Jr.
30th Commander of the Air Education
and Training Command, USAF (Ret)

General Vincent K. Brooks
Former Commander U.S. Forces-Korea,
United Nations Command, and ROK-U.S.
Combined Forces Command, USA (Ret)

General John "Mick" Nicholson
Former Commander, NATO-led Resolute
Support Mission and United States
Forces-Afghanistan, USA (Ret)

Alford L. McMichael
14th Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps,
USMC (Ret)

Carlton W. Kent
16th Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps,
USMC (Ret)

Vincent W. Patton III
8th Master Chief Petty Officer of the
Coast Guard, USCG (Ret)