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DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE PRESENTATION  
TO THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY  
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT OF AIR FORCE WRITTEN TESTIMONY FOR THE STATUS OF  
JUNIOR RESERVE OFFICERS' TRAINING CORPS PROGRAMS ACROSS THE  
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE*

STATEMENT OF: THE HONORABLE ALEX WAGNER  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE  
(MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS)

*November 16, 2022*

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL  
RELEASED BY THE COMMITTEE ON  
OVERSIGHT AND REFORM  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF

## REPRESENTATIVES

### *Introduction*

Chairman Lynch, Ranking Member Grothman, and distinguished members of this subcommittee, thank you for your continued support and for the opportunity to testify on the status of the Department of the Air Force's Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (AFJROTC) Program.

I was outraged to learn of the acts of instructor misconduct within JROTC—even one incident of this nature is too many and is unacceptable—leaving a stain on our military. This program plays a critical role in developing our citizen leaders and establishing bonds between the military and communities across our Nation. The JROTC instructor cadre are representative of the Department of Defense and are expected to be role models in our partner schools. These instructors are trusted adults and mentors ; as such, we have a special obligation to ensure that they safeguard the lives of the young men and women entrusted to their care. The incidents of sexual misconduct highlighted in the *New York Times* investigation are inimical to our ethos and institutional core values.

Given the misconduct identified over the past 10 years, it is clear that the Department of the Air Force must do more to prevent these types of assaults from occurring at any of our JROTC units. To improve our prevention efforts, we are currently reviewing oversight, committing resources to ensure proper staffing levels, enhancing instructor screening, revamping initial and recurring training, as well as working to enhance instructor diversity. Our goal is to reduce the number of sexual assaults, harassment and other incidents of exploitation by instructors in our AFJROTC program to zero and I am committed to improving oversight and enhancing program resources.

### Program Management and Oversight

AFJROTC develops citizens of character dedicated to serving their Nation and community (regardless of whether cadets ultimately decide to pursue careers in the military). The program seeks to instill values of citizenship, service to the Nation, personal responsibility, and a sense of accomplishment in all cadets. Headquartered at the Jeanne M. Holm Center at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, the program comprises of 35 headquarters staff (HQ AFJROTC) responsible for overseeing and maintaining 870 geographically separated units across the United States with up to 1,900 instructors who train 95,000 cadets annually.

Currently, oversight of these units is conducted on multiple levels including by my organization and AFJROTC HQ, which includes compliance monitoring by a Division Chief and a Regional Director. Each of our nine Regional Directors are responsible for 97 AFJROTC units. On-site management of

each AFJROTC unit's courses and staff is conducted by local school officials, consistent with the other faculty and education programs under their purview.

Ideally, each AFJROTC Unit should be staffed by a minimum of two qualified instructors, one retired officer and one retired enlisted member. AFJROTC Unit Instructors are required to be retired Air Force members and must meet the following criteria: retired in the grade of E-6 to E-9 or O-4 to O-6, meet weight/body standards, hold at least a bachelor's degree, and have a record of honorable military service. Prior to receiving a certificate of eligibility, AFROTC instructors are subjected to a background investigation and military records check. Automatic disqualifiers include: any application falsification, administrative or Uniform Code of Military Justice actions related to abuse of authority/position, sexual misconduct, larceny, or any courts martial conviction. Only those who successfully pass these screenings are referred to a partner school for hiring consideration, where they are also subject to the school's hiring process and additional background checks.

After a school hires a certified instructor, HQ AFJROTC requires them to undertake an initial training course, which includes 38 virtual modules and a five-day in-residence program. Each instructor receives training regarding responsibilities to the program, host school, and students under their supervision. Any additional professional development, training, licenses, or credentialing requirements are at the discretion of the employing school district.

Host schools are required to ensure their JROTC instructors comply with their school district's rules and regulations, to include Title IX. In addition, HQ AFJROTC requires host schools and instructors to report information about their Unit program, including cadet activities, community service hours, hands-on events, field trips, and other key unit issues and/or activities. In the event of a matter involving instructor misconduct, the host school is responsible for reporting allegations of abuse, harassment, or sexual misconduct through the local school administration, and when relevant, to law enforcement. School administration is also required to report allegations to HQ AFJROTC. In cases where an allegation is substantiated, the instructor is immediately removed from his or her position, receives a lifetime ban from participation in the AFJROTC program, and is subject to civil and/or criminal penalties.

#### Program Gaps and Improvement Opportunities

Despite AFROTC instructor vetting, initial training courses, and ongoing program management, we recognize gaps remain and there is still much that can be done to improve program oversight.

One major challenge to our program is the 97:1 Regional Director-to-Unit ratio, as it only enables on-site evaluations approximately every three years. This impacts HQ AFJROTC's ability to

maintain effective oversight and engage with partner schools and their AFJROTC units. The Department of the Air Force is working to reduce the Regional Director-to-Unit Ratio to approximately 30:1, which would allow us to conduct annual on-site inspections. A management advisory study is currently underway and additional manpower requirements should be known by the end of the year.

To further ensure effective program oversight and cadet safeguards, we are currently reviewing both the AFJROTC Memorandum of Agreement (which outlines the requirements for each school to host an AFJROTC detachment) and the AFJROTC Unit Assessment Checklist to include rubrics, evaluation checklists, record keeping requirements, drill, and PT requirements for each unit. We also anticipate this review to be completed by the end of this calendar year with subsequent enhancements to occur shortly thereafter.

We have also identified inadequate unit staffing as a key program deficiency. Starting last year, DoD policy required each unit have a minimum of two instructors assigned; however, 161 of our 870 units (18.5%) are currently staffed by a single instructor as many of these units are in hard-to-fill areas. AFROTC data demonstrates that single instructor units tend to experience more negative incidents than those that are fully manned. Over the past five years, two of the seven incidents of sexual misconduct and half of known arrests occurred at AFJROTC units having only a single instructor.

Although ensuring fully manned units clearly benefit program objectives and cadet safety, attracting qualified candidates to fill these instructor positions poses a continuing challenge<sup>1</sup>. Pending legislation could help expand the pool of potential instructors. The Senate Armed Services Committee's FY23 National Defense Authorization Act would expand JROTC instructor eligibility to include active members of the reserve component (e.g., Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard) and all veterans separated under honorable conditions. If this provision were to make it into the final bill and signed into law, it would enable us to draw from a larger, more diverse instructor candidate pool, further mitigate instructor shortfalls, and reduce risk for program non-compliance and instructor misconduct.

Differing school district employee background check requirements also presents a vulnerability. To address this concern, the Department of the Air Force is adopting the Child Care National Agency Check and Inquiries (CNACI) background investigations requirements for all AFJROTC instructors and instructor applicants. The HQ AFJROTC staff is currently planning to begin implementation of the improved background investigation process no later than April 2023.

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<sup>1</sup> Contributing factors include teacher pay, host school locations, and lack of propensity among the military retiree population.

Additionally, while our instructor training is comprehensive, we believe improvements are necessary to strengthen the program. At present, HQ AFJROTC only provides initial instructor training, while subsequent required training is provided at the discretion of each local school district. By the end of the year, HQ AFJROTC will begin instituting instructor training that will reinforce expected instructor conduct as well as strengthen each unit's culture and environment. We are also now requiring an "Instructor Prohibited Activities Acknowledgment" form which will be reviewed, initialed, and signed by all current and future instructors on an annual basis.

Our review has also found that while HQ AFJROTC reports allegations of sexual abuse, harassment, or other AFJROTC instructor misconduct through their immediate chain of command, this information is not always reported to my team nor the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (OSD P&R). To rectify this, my staff is working with OSD P&R to develop guidance and tools for instructor misconduct reporting so we can be made aware and are responsive at the agency-level.

The final challenge we have identified is a lack of instructor diversity—particularly regarding gender. A RAND report from 2015 noted that of the 6.1 percent of military females reporting sexual assault, 94 percent of perpetrators were male. Similarly, of the AFJROTC instances of sexual misconduct that occurred over the last 10 years, all perpetrators were male. While our AFJROTC cadet corps is over 40 percent female, women represent only 9.2 percent of our AFJROTC instructor cadre. To address this, HQ AFJROTC is developing a diversity and inclusion outreach strategy to promote recruitment of a more diverse instructor cadre and I'm traveling to Montgomery, Alabama this month to review and sharpen this strategy with the headquarters team. By taking actions to address this gender imbalance in our instructor cadre, we believe we will be able to further reduce sexual assault and misconduct while engendering a strong culture of dignity and respect.

### *Conclusion*

I am very thankful to the outstanding instructors and staff who continue to work hard day-in and day-out giving their best to this program and our local communities in order to motivate and inspire our next generation of leaders. Their efforts truly change lives and help us grow stronger Air & Space Forces. However, as I stated at the outset, even one incident is too many and the Department owes our cadets a program where every individual associated with AFJROTC can learn, grow, and thrive — without having to worry about the integrity of their instructors.

We are aggressively taking action focused on improving the safety and well-being of AFJROTC cadets and will demonstrate to the American people that we take our responsibility seriously. Thank

you for your support and for the opportunity to appear before you today.