

**“Military housing is inadequate at best and getting worse. We have a very bad situation that was developed over the last decade or so, and it’s widespread. Junior enlisted servicemembers and officers bear the brunt of the housing problem and are often forced to live off base. Worse, housing allowances paid to service members are inadequate to rent decent housing.”**

*HON. William Perry, Secretary of Defense*

By CSM James Skellion

Quality housing is essential to the Army, its soldiers and their families. Some initiatives already in effect include a change to the mandatory Family Housing Assignment Policy (AR 210-50), which requires only key and essential military and civilian personnel to be housed on post or a government-owned facility. This policy change aims to ensure voluntary occupancy of on-post family housing; provide additional on-post housing for junior grade soldiers; and help eliminate poor quality and/or unneeded family housing.

Key and essential designated housing should be kept to an absolute minimum in CONUS because it’s the right thing to do. Housing is an emotional issue that directly impacts on morale, productivity, recruitment, retention and loyalty. How-

ever, the most important fact is that soldiers who need on-post housing will get it.

Soldiers unhappy with their home environment can’t “be all they can be.” But, if soldiers believe leaders are doing everything within their power to ensure they and their families are living in a decent and safe neighborhood, they’ll give their hearts and souls to accomplish the Army’s mission.

We must remember that family and home are the primary reasons soldiers lay their lives on the line during combat. Therefore, the Army’s vision for housing in the 21st Century is affordable, comfortable, convenient housing that promotes a sense of pride and loyalty.

We’re moving from forward deployed forces to CONUS-based Power Projection Platforms and from a larger to a significantly smaller force. We’re facing

smaller, more diverse threats as opposed to a single large threat. This will change Army installations into deployment platforms from which we launch our forces. These installations must be able to project, sustain and reconstitute a ready and capable force anywhere in the world. Further, they must provide soldiers and their families and civilians a living and working environment equal to the mainstream of society.

Today’s soldiers (more than half of whom are married junior enlisted) and their families expect more in housing.

The family structure and needs of today and tomorrow require Army leaders and planners to use ingenuity and creativity in building, renovating and managing housing in the future. ■

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the left sleeves of a soldier’s uniform are facing out of a wall locker. NCOs can learn to inspect soldiers and equipment outside of the barracks. Pre-combat checks, when done to standard, do more for teaching attention to detail, and have a much greater impact on readiness than could any room inspection.

The OPTEMPO of today’s Army provides ample chances for NCOs and officers to train their team, develop discipline and camaraderie, and nurture unit integrity and morale. Good NCOs can identify soldiers with problems by appearance, attention to detail, and execution of tasks, as well as the normal day-to-day conversation that takes place in small units.

*A unit isn’t a building—it’s a formation of men and women.* Requiring every member of the unit to be at a prescribed place, in a prescribed uniform, at a prescribed time, prepared mentally and physically to execute the day’s events is the real measure of discipline and readiness. Our standards of conduct on and off duty apply to everyone and the latitude for each soldier to exercise individual responsibility should be applied equally, without regard to marital status or place of residence.

Soldiers not residing in the barracks are accorded the opportunity to go “home,” get out of their uniform and relax in privacy. This is not as true for soldiers in the unit area. I submit that we

have the ability to move the focus of attention from company area to training area and never lose our edge.

We can no longer support the traditional concept of housing single soldiers and monitoring their private lives. It’s time to demonstrate to our soldiers that we mean it when we tell the public that our soldiers are the most dependable, reliable and capable soldiers ever. Let the chips fall where they may and deal with the offenders rather than the mass. I think the naysayers will be amazed at the results. ■

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