



PERSONNEL AND  
READINESS

OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

MAY 23 2018

The Honorable Rodney P. Frelinghuysen  
Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

As required by section 736 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018 (Public Law 115-91), the enclosed report addresses the implementation by the Department of Defense (DoD) of the recommendations from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) report entitled "Actions Needed to Ensure Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury Are Considered in Misconduct Separations" and published May 16, 2017. GAO stipulated five recommendations for action by the DoD to increase its assurance that Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury are appropriately considered prior to separating certain Service members from the military for misconduct.

The enclosure presents each of the five GAO recommendations and the status of corrective actions implemented by the Services and DoD's Office of Military Personnel Policy. DoD is committed to establishing ongoing multiyear compliance reporting to monitor adherence to the policies identified in the GAO's recommendations. The Department does not have any recommendations requiring legislative or administrative action.

Thank you for your interest in the health and well-being of our Service members, veterans, and their families. A similar letter is being sent to the other Congressional defense committees.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephanie Barna".

Stephanie Barna  
Performing the Duties of the Under Secretary of  
Defense for Personnel and Readiness

Enclosure:  
As stated

cc:  
The Honorable Nita M. Lowey  
Ranking Member

**Implementation by the Department of Defense of the Recommendations from the  
Government Accountability Office Report Entitled “Actions Needed to Ensure  
Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury Are Considered in Misconduct  
Separations” and Published May 16, 2017**

**Issue**

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) report entitled “Actions Needed to Ensure Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury Are Considered in Misconduct Separations” published May 16, 2017, established five recommendations for action by the Department of Defense (DoD) to increase its assurance that Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injury (TBI) are appropriately considered prior to separating certain Service members from the military for misconduct.

**Discussion**

This report includes: a description of the corrective actions implemented for each recommendation, and the March 5, 2018 Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs Memorandum to the Washington Headquarters Services (WHS) GAO Office containing recommendations for submission to the GAO for the closure of GAO’s recommendations. Based on discussions with GAO, the DoD anticipates that recommendations for closure of all but Recommendation #2 will be formally accepted by GAO. Completion of Recommendation #2 by the Navy pends publication of internal Service policy, anticipated to be complete in October 2018.

**Implementation of GAO Recommendations**

DoD worked quickly to implement actions in response to the GAO recommendations. Three recommendations relating to administrative separation policy (GAO Recommendations #1, #3, and #5) resulted in the September 20, 2017 issuance of a memorandum from the Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs (ASD(M&RA)), requiring: (1) the Air Force and Navy to address inconsistencies in their policies relating to screening certain Service members for PTSD and TBI prior to separation for misconduct; and (2) institution of a multiyear compliance reporting requirement for the Services to routinely monitor adherence to policy as outlined in GAO’s recommendations.

The five GAO recommendations and status of actions taken by the DoD are:

- **Recommendation #1:** Direct the Air Force and Navy to address inconsistencies in their policies with DoD policy related to screening certain Service members for PTSD/TBI, including Service members separating in lieu of trial by court-martial.

Corrective Actions: In October 2017, the ASD(M&RA) confirmed – from responses received from the Air Force and Navy to the September 2017 Memorandum – that the Air Force and Navy had taken actions to reconcile inconsistencies in their Service policies with DoD policy pertaining to screening for PTSD and TBI at the time of separation for misconduct.

- **Recommendation #2:** Direct the Air Force and Navy to address inconsistencies between Air Force and Navy policies and DoD policy related to training Service members, including officers, on how to identify mild TBI symptoms in the deployed setting.

Corrective Actions: The Air Force satisfactorily demonstrated implementation of key corrective actions to address inconsistencies between DoD policy and Service policies related to training Service members, including officers, on how to identify mild traumatic brain injury symptoms in the deployed setting; the Navy anticipates that its policy reconciliation will be published by October 2018.

- **Recommendations #3:** Ensure that the military services routinely monitor adherence to policies related to screening certain Service members for PTSD and TBI prior to separation for misconduct.

Corrective Actions: The Services confirmed that they will submit, to the point of contact designated in the September 20, 2017 Acting ASD(M&RA) Memorandum, an annual compliance report to demonstrate monitoring adherence to policies related to screening certain Service members for PTSD and TBI. The first reporting cycle is due in 2018. Services found to have deficiencies less than 90 percent for either metric will be required by the ASD(M&RA) to submit a corrective action plan.

- **Recommendations #4:** Ensure that the military services routinely monitor adherence to policies related to training Service members, including officers on how to identify mild TBI symptoms in the deployed setting.

Corrective Actions: All Services have demonstrated implementation of the requirement for routinely monitoring adherence to the TBI training requirements. The aforementioned multi-year compliance reporting requirement will ensure that the Services routinely monitor adherence to these policies. If deficiencies are identified, the Department will expand compliance monitoring to ensure the Services are meeting the intent of the GAO recommendations.

- **Recommendations #5:** Ensure that the military services routinely monitor adherence to policies related to counseling about Veterans Administration benefits and services during the process of separating certain Service members for misconduct.

Corrective Actions: The Services confirmed that they will submit, to the point of contact designated in the September 20, 2017 Acting ASD(M&RA) Memorandum, annual compliance reporting, to demonstrate that they are monitoring adherence to policies related to counseling about Veterans Administration benefits and services prior to and during separation for misconduct. The first reporting cycle is due in 2018. Services found to have deficiencies less than 90 percent for either metric will be required by the ASD(M&RA) to submit a corrective action plan.

The Department has determined that there are no recommendations for legislative or administrative action, until the ongoing compliance monitoring and policy adjustments are complete.



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OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

The Honorable William M. "Mac" Thornberry  
Chairman  
Committee on Armed Services  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

MAY 23 2018

Dear Mr. Chairman:

As required by section 736 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018 (Public Law 115-91 ), the enclosed report addresses the implementation by the Department of Defense (DoD) of the recommendations from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) report entitled "Actions Needed to Ensure Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury Are Considered in Misconduct Separations" and published May 16, 2017. GAO stipulated five recommendations for action by the DoD to increase its assurance that Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury are appropriately considered prior to separating certain Service members from the military for misconduct.

The enclosure presents each of the five GAO recommendations and the status of corrective actions implemented by the Services and DoD's Office of Military Personnel Policy. DoD is committed to establishing ongoing multiyear compliance reporting to monitor adherence to the policies identified in the GAO's recommendations. The Department does not have any recommendations requiring legislative or administrative action.

Thank you for your interest in the health and well-being of our Service members, veterans, and their families. A similar letter is being sent to the other Congressional defense committees.

Sincerely,

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Stephanie Barna  
Performing the Duties of the Under Secretary of  
Defense for Personnel and Readiness

Enclosure:  
As stated

cc:  
The Honorable Adam Smith  
Ranking Member

## **Implementation by the Department of Defense of the Recommendations from the Government Accountability Office Report Entitled “Actions Needed to Ensure Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury Are Considered in Misconduct Separations” and Published May 16, 2017**

### **Issue**

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) report entitled “Actions Needed to Ensure Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury Are Considered in Misconduct Separations” published May 16, 2017, established five recommendations for action by the Department of Defense (DoD) to increase its assurance that Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injury (TBI) are appropriately considered prior to separating certain Service members from the military for misconduct.

### **Discussion**

This report includes: a description of the corrective actions implemented for each recommendation, and the March 5, 2018 Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs Memorandum to the Washington Headquarters Services (WHS) GAO Office containing recommendations for submission to the GAO for the closure of GAO’s recommendations. Based on discussions with GAO, the DoD anticipates that recommendations for closure of all but Recommendation #2 will be formally accepted by GAO. Completion of Recommendation #2 by the Navy pends publication of internal Service policy, anticipated to be complete in October 2018.

### **Implementation of GAO Recommendations**

DoD worked quickly to implement actions in response to the GAO recommendations. Three recommendations relating to administrative separation policy (GAO Recommendations #1, #3, and #5) resulted in the September 20, 2017 issuance of a memorandum from the Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs (ASD(M&RA)), requiring: (1) the Air Force and Navy to address inconsistencies in their policies relating to screening certain Service members for PTSD and TBI prior to separation for misconduct; and (2) institution of a multiyear compliance reporting requirement for the Services to routinely monitor adherence to policy as outlined in GAO’s recommendations.

The five GAO recommendations and status of actions taken by the DoD are:

- **Recommendation #1:** Direct the Air Force and Navy to address inconsistencies in their policies with DoD policy related to screening certain Service members for PTSD/TBI, including Service members separating in lieu of trial by court-martial.

**Corrective Actions:** In October 2017, the ASD(M&RA) confirmed – from responses received from the Air Force and Navy to the September 2017 Memorandum – that the Air Force and Navy had taken actions to reconcile inconsistencies in their Service policies with DoD policy pertaining to screening for PTSD and TBI at the time of separation for misconduct.

- **Recommendation #2:** Direct the Air Force and Navy to address inconsistencies between Air Force and Navy policies and DoD policy related to training Service members, including officers, on how to identify mild TBI symptoms in the deployed setting.

Corrective Actions: The Air Force satisfactorily demonstrated implementation of key corrective actions to address inconsistencies between DoD policy and Service policies related to training Service members, including officers, on how to identify mild traumatic brain injury symptoms in the deployed setting; the Navy anticipates that its policy reconciliation will be published by October 2018.

- **Recommendations #3:** Ensure that the military services routinely monitor adherence to policies related to screening certain Service members for PTSD and TBI prior to separation for misconduct.

Corrective Actions: The Services confirmed that they will submit, to the point of contact designated in the September 20, 2017 Acting ASD(M&RA) Memorandum, an annual compliance report to demonstrate monitoring adherence to policies related to screening certain Service members for PTSD and TBI. The first reporting cycle is due in 2018. Services found to have deficiencies less than 90 percent for either metric will be required by the ASD(M&RA) to submit a corrective action plan.

- **Recommendations #4:** Ensure that the military services routinely monitor adherence to policies related to training Service members, including officers on how to identify mild TBI symptoms in the deployed setting.

Corrective Actions: All Services have demonstrated implementation of the requirement for routinely monitoring adherence to the TBI training requirements. The aforementioned multi-year compliance reporting requirement will ensure that the Services routinely monitor adherence to these policies. If deficiencies are identified, the Department will expand compliance monitoring to ensure the Services are meeting the intent of the GAO recommendations.

- **Recommendations #5:** Ensure that the military services routinely monitor adherence to policies related to counseling about Veterans Administration benefits and services during the process of separating certain Service members for misconduct.

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MAY 23 2018

The Honorable Richard C. Shelby  
Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

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Thank you for your interest in the health and well-being of our Service members, veterans, and their families. A similar letter is being sent to the other Congressional defense committees.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Barna  
Performing the Duties of the Under Secretary of  
Defense for Personnel and Readiness

Enclosure:  
As stated

cc:  
The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy  
Vice Chairman

**Implementation by the Department of Defense of the Recommendations from the Government Accountability Office Report Entitled “Actions Needed to Ensure Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury Are Considered in Misconduct Separations” and Published May 16, 2017**

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**Implementation of GAO Recommendations**

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Corrective Actions: In October 2017, the ASD(M&RA) confirmed – from responses received from the Air Force and Navy to the September 2017 Memorandum – that the Air Force and Navy had taken actions to reconcile inconsistencies in their Service policies with DoD policy pertaining to screening for PTSD and TBI at the time of separation for misconduct.



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MAY 23 2018

The Honorable John McCain  
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United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

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Stephanie Barna  
Performing the Duties of the Under Secretary of  
Defense for Personnel and Readiness

Enclosure:  
As stated

cc:  
The Honorable Jack Reed  
Ranking Member

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