



NATIONAL COMMISSION ON MILITARY, NATIONAL, AND
PUBLIC SERVICE
MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Subject: Military Children of Active Duty Families, Harker Heights, Texas (July 2018)

The following is a record of a meeting with high-school aged military kids at the Military Child Education Coalition Headquarters, which took place on July 20, 2018 at 1 pm. Commissioners present were Dr. Janine Davidson and Mr. Ed Allard. Eleanor Vuono took notes for the staff. This memorandum is protected by the deliberative process privilege and contains attorney-client privileged information and should be treated as For Official Use Only. This memorandum is not a verbatim transcript of the discussion.

Key Takeaway:

- The children were open about their personal experiences and comfortable sharing their family stories, but they were less opinionated about the questions the Commission is considering. The conversation was led by four of the seven participants, with a few of the children being very quiet throughout the session.

Meeting Discussion:

The meeting began in plenary session with representatives from the Military Child Education Coalition Headquarters, several other Commissioners, military spouses (including the parents of some of the children), and the military children. Vice Chair Deb Wada introduced the mission of the Commission and described the specific questions that the Commission is considering. The group then split into several subgroups of military spouses, leaving Dr. Davidson and Mr. Allard to lead discussion with the children.

Dr. Davidson asked the children to introduce themselves and discuss their backgrounds and current plans.

Two participants were siblings; one was a high school sophomore whose parents immigrated to the United States from the Philippines before joining the military, while the other was a high school junior who was born in the Philippines before her parents moved to the United States.

One student claimed he wasn't "from" anywhere, because he has moved seven times as a military kid. He just graduated from high school and will be enrolled in ROTC at a college in Georgia. Another student described a similar experience, having moved 12 times. He just graduated from high school and is leaving for Air Force basic training next month. His mom immigrated from Panama and his dad is from Texas.

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Two other participants are high school seniors. One indicated his parents immigrated to the United States from the Philippines. The other lived in Hawaii until he was 15, but they were poor and his mother joined the Army for a better economic future. His parents were also from the Philippines. Finally, one student was a sophomore in college in Texas. She was born and raised in Texas and has only moved once with the military to Germany.

Dr. Davidson asked how their experiences as a military kid influenced their post-high school plans.

Only three of the teenagers expressed a desire to join the military. One hopes to become a mechanical engineer and eventually work in the defense industry. One is joining the Air Force, and the third student plans first to go to college, then to become a Navy Corpsman.

Dr. Davidson asked about their parents' motivation to join the service.

Poverty was a driver for several of these families. For the family from Hawaii, the islands were too expensive and the public-school system wasn't good. The military was an opportunity for a better life for his mom with four kids. The other services wouldn't take her, so she joined the Army. Several of the children noted their parents were immigrants to America who had a hard time supporting their families as civilians, so they joined the Army for better opportunities. One participant said his dad was from a small town in Mississippi and wanted to escape. Two of the parents were engineers who found good career opportunities in the Army.

Mr. Allard asked the kids how well they've adjusted socially in their high school.

Generally, the children felt the high school in Harker Heights, TX has a good mix of military and non-military kids. Participants felt there wasn't a big divide among the groups, although new kids always must work to make friends.

Mr. Allard asked whether there are opportunities they wish they had?

One young man wished that the FBI and CIA would recruit directly in high school. He is doing ROTC in the Army because ultimately, he wants to serve in one of those two agencies, and he thinks being a veteran will help him.

Dr. Davidson asked the kids what they thought about a mandatory national service obligation. What about a 13th year of high school?

Two of the participants thought it was a good idea. They noted people would experience a new opportunity, and if they like their service, they will have found a professional path, and if not, they would have learned something good. In addition, they noted students need a timeout after senior year. It was noted England has a gap year, but in America, there is a strong push for either college or a job.

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One participant noted that the messaging will be important because nobody likes mandatory tasks. The student noted that talking about a draft sounds bad, but when the benefits are explained, it sounded better.

Dr. Davidson asked whether we should keep the draft and whether women should have to register.

None of the female participants expressed interest in military service but noted they might be interested in a non-military service program. One of the male students answered that the draft is a good backup to protect the country if needed, but he felt men traditionally are the ones sent to war and women need to stay behind and work the home front. This same teenager noted that his was not a politically correct opinion, but his views are based on how he was raised. He will be joining ROTC in college in Georgia. The student noted that everyone should serve their country, explaining women should be allowed to register, but shouldn't be required to serve in the military.