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# Defense Report

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## **Housing for Soldiers and Their Families—The Army Must Take Care of its Own**

One of the minor surprises to emerge from the shift to the all-volunteer military force is the recognition that our volunteer Army is a *married* Army. In today's Army, more than 60 percent of our soldiers are married, and when they move, they are accompanied by more than a million dependent spouses and children whose basic needs demand immediate attention.

The quality of life the Army provides for soldiers and their families can either build or tear down morale. The Army readily acknowledges that living conditions for soldiers' families are directly related to retention of the best and brightest young people: it is making a determined effort to ensure that adequate standards prevail. Proof of this determination is the nearly \$1.5 billion of the 1985 Army budget allotted to the construction, improvement and maintenance of family housing.

Recent congressional support of the family housing program has enabled the Army to reduce the enormous backlog of repair projects and to keep the present housing inventory livable.

In the Republic of Korea, for example, there is now under way a large renovation and construction program which will eventually improve or replace most of the older, deteriorating structures in use by Army families there. Unfortunately, this program is not expected to be completed until 1990, so that many military families must still compete for off-post housing which is expensive and usually falls far short of accepted standards.

Similarly, there is major concern over the shortage of housing for Army personnel in Europe. The shortfall of 9,400 family housing units there results in an estimated 5,400 married soldiers serving unaccompanied tours. Thanks again to recent congressional support, funds for maintenance and repair have increased dramatically, and U.S. Army Europe authorities have begun to correct many of the worst facility conditions.

The answers to this problem are, of course, money and the determination to use a reasonable portion of the Army's budget to ensure that we never again revert to the misguided frugality which, if continued, could seriously impair the readiness and effectiveness of our fighting forces.