
Defense Report

AUSA



Solving the Army's Housing Problems —Some Steps in the Right Direction

In the transition to today's all-volunteer Army, one old saw that fell by the wayside is the one that said: "If the Army thought it necessary for a soldier to have a wife, they'd issue him one." Presently more soldiers are married than ever before, and the Army has been quick to learn that if it is to field a ready, disciplined and deployable landpower force, it is crucial that the quality of life for soldiers and their families be a subject of the highest priority.

Nothing tears at the heart of military morale and readiness like forcing soldiers and their families to live in substandard houses or to demand repeated unaccompanied foreign tours because there is no decent place overseas for the soldier's family to live.

The Army currently has a worldwide family housing deficit of nearly 30,000 units below that which is required to house eligible soldiers and their families adequately. Realizing the potential impact on readiness, the Army has embarked on the greatest expansion in family housing facilities since before World War II.

In Europe, soldiers and families have lived under scandalously inadequate conditions for far too long. The persistent efforts of the most recent succession of U.S. Army, Europe, commanders are now beginning to bear fruit with the construction and leasing of new housing to meet the 9,000 unit shortfall there. Still, more than 5,000 married soldiers are compelled to serve unaccompanied tours in Europe because of a lack of family quarters.

While Korea remains primarily an unaccompanied tour, the few soldiers who are allowed to take their families with them are now witness to a sweeping program of renovation and new construction that is expected to upgrade or replace the aging facilities there by the end of this decade. In the interim, many of them must compete for expensive housing in Korean cities.

Soldiers do not expect to live in luxury. But they have every right to expect their government to provide them and their families with the basics of life. It is essential now that Congress continue to fund these housing improvements if we are to provide our bright young soldiers with the quality of life they deserve.