



SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
1000 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

JUN 23 2020

MEMORANDUM FOR ALL DOD PERSONNEL

SUBJECT: Message to the Force – Feedback on Diversity and Inclusion in the Military

Our United States Military is an institution that embraces diversity and inclusion, and rejects hate and prejudice in all forms. We have led on these issues throughout our history but know that we as a military are also susceptible to the forces of bias and prejudice, whether seen or unseen, deliberate or unintentional. These things have no place in our military because they can degrade the morale, cohesion, and readiness of our force. This is why we must keep working to do better.

In the past few weeks, I have personally engaged with our senior civilian and military leadership – both officer and enlisted – on the topic of racial diversity, and met with service members to hear their views and concerns about race in the military. They all agree that we must continue to lead on these issues as America's most respected institution, end bias and prejudice in all its forms, and ensure equal opportunity, dignity, and respect for all.

Last week, I launched three new initiatives aimed at improving diversity and inclusion across the force. First, I directed our civilian and uniformed leadership in the Pentagon to bring me ideas by the end of June that we can begin implementing now, such as removing photos from selection boards. Second, I stood up an internal Department of Defense Board on Diversity and Inclusion, which will report back to me by the end of the year to address how we can increase racial diversity and ensure equal opportunity across all ranks, and especially in the officer corps. Finally, I began the process of standing up a Defense Advisory Committee on Diversity and Inclusion in the Armed Services that will be a permanent structure, comprised of an independent and diverse group of Americans committed to building upon the work of the Defense Board.

These are the first steps to drive a cultural shift and create lasting change in the DoD, from recruiting, career track selection, and retention; to accessions, assignments, schools, and promotions; to military justice, and everything in between and beyond. However, the solutions to these issues will not be identified and implemented from the Pentagon alone. It will take open and honest dialogue from all of you, and between all of you.

In the coming weeks and months, I will be seeking your feedback on these initiatives to find out where I can focus my efforts. To do so, I ask each and every one of you to have the hard conversations with your leadership, peers, and subordinates in discussing the issues of race, bias, and inequality in our ranks. And I expect leaders at all levels to give the issue of diversity and inclusion the attention and priority it deserves.

While we tackle these issues head-on, I want you to take pride in being an integral part of the greatest military force in the world and know that we will continue to strive to build a better force; one that is diverse, inclusive, and representative of the American people that we serve. Together, we can lead on these important issues, and uphold our oath to protect and defend the rights and freedoms of all Americans.

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