

**Statement of Mr. John M. Molino  
Deputy Under Secretary of Defense  
(Military Community and Family Policy)**

**Before The  
Subcommittee on Benefits  
Of The  
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
House of Representatives  
On the "Service members Overseas Outreach Act"  
June 11, 2003**

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Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee thank you for the opportunity to discuss the Department of Defense's views on the "Service members Overseas Outreach Act", H. R. 2285. This bill authorizes the Secretary of Labor to staff overseas installations to provide employment counseling to military personnel separating from active duty – an authority that already exists in law. Thus there is no need for enactment of H. R. 2285, but we welcome continued congressional support under existing law for employment counseling for military personnel separating from active duty.

The Department agrees with establishing a Department of Labor overseas employment counseling presence. Department of Labor's presence overseas would provide valuable support not only to our separating Service members but also to our own transition staff.

We have had an excellent relationship with our Department of Labor partner since the inception of the Transition Assistance Program in 1991. Last July we told the committee that Department of Labor has provided outstanding support to our continental United States installations. It is important to note that Service members overseas are receiving transition assistance by our Service's transition staff, but I would add that we welcome full implementation with Department of Labor for our overseas installations.

Department of Labor has been reviewing several overseas implementation approaches with us. The Department and our military Services stand committed to help our partner implement the same outstanding services overseas that they have provided in the continental United States. Presently, our respective staffs are developing overseas implementation plans.

Due to Operation Enduring/Iraqi Freedom and the implementation of policies that precluded separations at the expiration of one's term of service, 2003 has simply not been the optimum year to implement transition assistance overseas. As the world situation settles down somewhat and when long-term basing

decisions are made, implementation of transition assistance overseas during the next fiscal year will be a far less complex enterprise.

We are grateful that the Committee's leadership recognizes the important role that the transition assistance program plays in assisting our newest veterans to make a successful transition to civilian life. We share the Committee's commitment and that of the Department of Labor to the establishment of a high quality transition program overseas that will prove beneficial to current and future Service members.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to testify on this important issue.