

## 'Total Army Strong' to succeed Army Family Covenant

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*In a Warrior's Corner presentation during the AUSA Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C., Robert Hansgen of the Soldier and Family Readiness Division of IMCOM explains the Total Army Strong commitment of senior leaders to continue quality of life programs. Total Army Strong replaces the Army Family Covenant, and allows installation commanders instead of Washington headquarters to determine what programs work best for their Soldiers, families and civilians.*

WASHINGTON (Army News Service, Oct. 15, 2014) -- Total Army Strong, successor to the Army Family Covenant, was explained this week at the Association of the U.S. Army's Annual Meeting and Exposition, here.

Rather than having a prescribed list of what programs stay and go, Total Army Strong will give installation commanders the authority to determine what Soldier and family

quality-of-life programs work best in their particular geographic communities, because needs differ from Georgia to Washington state, to Korea.

In 2007, under the Army Family Covenant, Army leaders undertook a long-term commitment to resource and standardize critical support programs for Soldiers, their families and civilians. While the covenant was focused on specific programs which commanders couldn't control, Total Army Strong will be a tailorable platform and commanders will decide what programs best suit their communities.

"Total Army Strong is our continued commitment to Soldiers, families and civilians," said Lt. Gen. David D. Halverson, assistant chief of staff for installation management and commanding general, Installation Management Command. "Through Total Army Strong we will sustain a system of programs and services to mitigate the unique demands of military life, foster life skills, strengthen resilience and promote a strong and ready Army."

During fiscal years 2007 through 2010, the Army doubled its investment in funding for Soldier and family programs and improved the quality-of-life portfolio by building new youth and child development centers and creating Survivor Outreach Services, to help the families of lost Soldiers. The covenant also built upon Family Assistance Centers for the National Guard and Army Reserve, improved Army housing and increased the accessibility to health care.

"Throughout that period, there was a lot of building and growing of programs, but then we hit 2010, 2011, and we started going to the sustain mode, the improvement mode a bit and that really helped us standardize and get things in order for the Army," said Robert E. Hansgen of the Soldier and Family Readiness Division of IMCOM.

In 2013, with the Defense Department facing sequestration and major slashes in the budget, Army Chief of Staff Gen. Ray Odierno reached out to IMCOM to explore how to be more efficient with Soldier and family quality-of-life programs, while keeping the Army's commitment to its force.

Hansgen said IMCOM, the Army staff and a variety of commands collectively put together a bucket list of programs, which were categorized from high, medium to low risk, based on how the loss or diminishment of a particular program would affect families and Soldier readiness.

"The reason we did that was because it's difficult from a headquarters level to say which program is more important than another, which is why commanders will now be able to determine what is best and then do some rebalancing," he said.