

## SUPPORTING STATEMENT - PART A

2023 Status of Forces Survey of Active Duty Members – OMB Control Number 0704-0624

Summary of Changes from 2022 Status of the Forces Survey of Active Duty Members (SOFA):

1. No paper survey option in 2023 – We did not receive many returns via paper, given the costs of paper surveys, we decided to remove.
2. Suicide section has been revised by the policy office (Defense Suicide Prevention Office) in order to reduce the number of question as well as directly align with the Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale
3. One open ended question was added to the Food Security Section at the request of the policy office (Military Community & Family Policy) and the USDA in order to provide qualitative data on food security
4. Food security questions were removed per the request of Personnel and Readiness (P&R) leadership. The removal of these questions did not have a significant impact on the burden.

### 1. Need for the Information Collection

The purpose of the Status of the Forces Survey of Active Duty Members (SOFA) is to assess the attitudes and opinions of active duty members and to provide key metrics to the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (OUSD(P&R)). Results of this and subsequent surveys are used to provide direct feedback on key strategic indicators such as satisfaction and retention. These indicators provide primary data on personnel career plans, retention decisions, morale, commitment, and quality of life and historically provide the ability to evaluate the impact of policies and programs with regard to readiness and retention. The surveys are benchmarks by which senior DoD officials can track trends over time.

Data from the surveys will be presented to the OSD(P&R), Military Departments, Congress, and DoD policy and program offices. Analysis will include OPA's standard products: a tabulation volume (a set of relative frequency distributions of each question, and cross-tabulations of survey questions by key stratifying variables), briefing slides and reports highlighting key findings, and a statistical methodology report. Ad hoc analyses requested by the policy office sponsors and other approved organizations may be conducted as needed and based on available staff. These projects take approximately one year to complete, including assessment design and development, fielding and administration, and data analysis and reporting.

In addition, as mandated by the FY2016 NDAA, Title VI, Subtitle F, Subpart 661, the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC), now OPA, fields a financial literacy and preparedness survey within the SOFS annually. Results will be used by the Service Secretaries to evaluate and update financial literacy training and will be submitted in a report to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives.

## 2. Use of the Information

The population of interest consists of approximately 125,000 active duty members who are in the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, or Coast Guard and whose paygrade is up to and including pay grade O-6. This survey provides members with a chance to be heard on issues that directly affect them, including policies and programs for deployments, retention, and financial well-being. This may result in improved policies, programs, services, and benefits for active duty members and their families.

The web survey will be hosted on the operations contractor's secure website. Respondents enter the survey through a .mil site (<https://www.dodsurveys.mil>). This site will state the source of the survey's certification and invite sample members to enter a personal ticket number (one secure ticket number is assigned to each sample member and remain linked to that member for the duration of the project. That ticket number will be printed [along with the survey URL] in each letter, and email sent to that individual) and click "Continue." The sample members will be redirected to the operations contractor's secure website (<https://www.surveysdrc.com>). Sample members next will see a welcome page, which provides a brief survey description and give them access to the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ). The next two pages will request the respondent create a Personal Identification Number (PIN) and provided the Privacy Advisory. If the sample members agreed to do the survey, they will click "Continue" to begin the survey. Respondents complete the survey via the secure website and there are no paper survey instruments used for this data collection. Respondents complete the survey by hitting "submit" on the survey web site. Respondents are sent communications to participate in the survey, which includes a postal announcement and email/postal reminders for members who have not submitted a survey. We will send up to 10 communications. Those documents are attached to this package. Once surveys are submitted, our survey contractor, DRC, handles and processes the surveys. Specifically, once a respondent completes an online survey, data are stored in an indexed file on the web (data) server. Prior to providing each dataset to OPA, the operations contractor copied the indexed file to their internal network using File Transfer Protocol (FTP), converted the data to a sequential format, and processed the validate program to read and load the data to the dataset. The data were then converted to SAS and processed according to OPA-approved administration plans and coding schemes.

Data from this survey will be presented to the OSD(P&R), Military Departments, Congress, and DoD policy and program offices. Analysis will include OPA's standard

products: a tabulation volume (a set of relative frequency distributions of each question, and cross-tabulations of survey questions by key stratifying variables), briefing slides and reports highlighting key findings, and a statistical methodology report. Ad hoc analyses requested by the policy office sponsors and other approved organizations may be conducted as needed and based on available staff.

3. Use of Information Technology

OPA administers the Status of the Forces Surveys via the web. All responses (100%) are collected electronically. We use proprietary software developed by OPA's operations contractor, Data Recognition Corporation (DRC) to administer the survey on the web. Digitally signed e-mails, electronic files, and web-based technology will be used for respondent communications and data collection. To reduce respondent burden, web-based surveys use "smart skip" technology to ensure respondents only answer questions that are applicable to them.

4. Non-duplication

The information obtained through this collection is unique and is not already available for use or adaptation from another cleared source.

5. Burden on Small Businesses

This information collection does not impose a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small businesses or entities.

6. Less Frequent Collection

In order to meet Congressional requirements to gather information on the financial well-being of active duty members, we need to administer the Status of the Forces Surveys of Active Duty Members annually.

7. Paperwork Reduction Act Guidelines

This collection of information does not require collection to be conducted in a manner inconsistent with the guidelines delineated in 5 CFR 1320.5(d)(2).

8. Consultation and Public Comments

Part A: PUBLIC NOTICE

A 60-Day Federal Register Notice (FRN) for the collection published on Monday, April 17, 2023. The 60-Day FRN citation is 88 FR 23412.

No comments were received during the 60-Day Comment Period.

A 30-Day Federal Register Notice for the collection published on Tuesday, July 18, 2023. The 30-Day FRN citation is 88 FR 45890.

## Part B: CONSULTATION

No additional consultation apart from soliciting public comments through the Federal Register was conducted for this submission.

### 9. Gifts or Payment

No payments or gifts are being offered to respondents as an incentive to participate in the collection.

### 10. Confidentiality

The survey website includes a Privacy Advisory/Additional Information webpage that all sample members view before taking the survey. This page will include the instruction “Click Continue if you agree to take the survey.” Informed consent is indicated by clicking the ‘Continue’ button and answering the survey questions. OPA does not expect the data collection procedures to involve any risk to participants although the survey includes some sensitive questions related to suicide prevention. Survey respondents will not experience any individual or personal direct benefit from participating in the survey. However, by participating in the survey, they will assist OSD(P&R) in evaluating programs, which may assist active duty members in the future. Participants can withdraw from the study at any time, and can also request that their data be withdrawn from the study after they’ve submitted it. Procedures for withdrawing data are provided on the survey communications.

A System of Record Notice (SORN) is not required for this collection because records are not retrievable by

A Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) is not required for this collection because PII is not being collected electronically.

Datasets containing survey responses will never contain names, addresses, or e-mail addresses; rather, they will include only randomly generated Identification (ID) numbers. The initial file constructed by OPA during the data collection process will be the “sample file” that contains a record for each individual selected at random to be in the survey. This file will contain administrative record data that will be used to create the sampling strata and will be required for planned analyses of responses. OPA will append a randomly generated ID number to the records before sending the file to OPA’s operations contractor – this number will be the permanent link that can be used to link record data to survey response data that could be required for future analyses. The sample file will contain the OPA randomly generated ID number, names, addresses, and DoDIDs that allow OPA’s operations contractor to control the mailings and obtain additional address information as required. This file will be tightly controlled at OPA and OPA’s operations contractor behind firewalls with password-protected access on a need-to-know basis.

To protect the privacy of research subjects, OPA will conduct a disclosure and confidentiality analysis with multiple combinations of demographic characteristics to ensure there are at least ten (10) respondents in any cell for any report. If there are less than ten (10) respondents in any cell, variables will be grouped until the threshold of ten (10) per cell is met.

OPA currently has an SF-115 request for disposition authority for all survey records, to include the reports, labeled DAA-0330-2021-0008. That has a temporary retention of 30 years for confidential data, permanent retention of 30 years for public use data, and permanent retention of 30 years for reports.

#### 11. Sensitive Questions

This survey includes questions regarding suicidal ideation, plans, and attempts. These data are collected for the Office of Force Resiliency (OFR) and the Defense Suicide Prevention Office (DSPO) for program evaluation and OSD metrics. The Informed Consent and Thank You web screens provide suicide resources that respondents may contact, if needed.

#### 12. Respondent Burden and its Labor Costs

##### Part A: ESTIMATION OF RESPONDENT BURDEN

###### 1) Collection Instrument(s)

###### Status of Forces Survey of Active Duty Members

- a) Number of Respondents: Approximately 16,500
- b) Number of Responses Per Respondent: 1
- c) Number of Total Annual Responses: 16,500
- d) Response Time: 0.25 hours
- e) Respondent Burden Hours: 4,125 hours

###### 2) Total Submission Burden (Summation or average based on collection)

- a) Total Number of Respondents: 16,500
- b) Total Number of Annual Responses: 16,500
- c) Total Respondent Burden Hours: 4,125 hours

##### Part B: LABOR COST OF RESPONDENT BURDEN

###### 1) Collection Instrument(s)

###### Status of Forces Survey of Active Duty Members

- a) Number of Total Annual Responses: 16,500
- b) Response Time: 0.25 hours
- c) Respondent Hourly Wage: \$55.13
- d) Labor Burden per Response: \$13.78
- e) Total Labor Burden: \$227,370

###### 2) Overall Labor Burden

- a) Total Number of Annual Responses: 16,500
- b) Total Labor Burden: \$227,370

Source for average military wage:

<https://militarypay.defense.gov/Portals/3/Documents/2023%20Pay%20Table.pdf>

13. Respondent Costs Other Than Burden Hour Costs

There are no annualized costs to respondents other than the labor burden costs addressed in Section 12 of this document to complete this collection.

14. Cost to the Federal Government

Part A: LABOR COST TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

- 1) Collection Instrument(s) 2023 Status of Forces Active Duty Survey
  - a) Number of Total Annual Responses: 16,500
  - b) Processing Time per Response: .238 hours
  - c) Hourly Wage of Worker(s) Processing Responses: \$78.50
  - d) Cost to Process Each Response: \$18.63
  - e) Total Cost to Process Responses: \$308,270
  
- 2) Overall Labor Burden to the Federal Government
  - a) Total Number of Annual Responses: 16,500
  - b) Total Labor Burden: \$308,270

Government Costs

- 3) Collection Instrument(s) 2023 Status of Forces Active Duty Survey
  - a) Number of Total Annual Responses: 16,500
  - b) Processing Time per Response: .05 hours
  - c) Hourly Wage of Worker(s) Processing Responses: \$117.95
  - d) Cost to Process Each Response: \$5.90
  - e) Total Cost to Process Responses: \$97,439
  
- 4) Overall Labor Burden to the Federal Government
  - a) Total Number of Annual Responses: 16,500
  - b) Total Labor Burden: \$405,709

Part B: OPERATIONAL AND MAINTENANCE COSTS

- 1) Cost Categories
  - a) Equipment: \$0
  - b) Printing: \$ (See f)
  - c) Postage: \$101,403
  - d) Software Purchases: \$0
  - e) Licensing Costs: \$ (see f)
  - f) Other (printing, paper, etc.): \$48,340

- 2) Total Operational and Maintenance Cost: (P: Add a) through f) in this section)  
\$149,743

Part C: TOTAL COST TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

- 1) Total Labor Cost to the Federal Government: \$405,709
- 2) Total Operational and Maintenance Costs: \$149,743
- 3) Total Cost to the Federal Government (P: Add 1 and 2 in this section): \$555,452

15. Reasons for Change in Burden

The operations costs are less, due to no longer including a paper survey (printing, postage).

16. Publication of Results

The 2023 Status of Forces Survey of Active Duty Members will field in the fall for approximately 10 weeks. Data analysis and reporting will occur from the time the survey is closed through a year later. After the survey quality assurance review is completed, tabulation volumes, briefings, and reports are created. The financial well-being items, which are Congressionally mandated, are reported to the Financial Readiness Office in early fall to be included in their report to Congress. Data may still be analyzed after the mandatory report date for further analyses to support research.

17. Non-Display of OMB Expiration Date

We are not seeking approval to omit the display of the expiration date of the OMB approval on the collection instrument.

18. Exceptions to "Certification for Paperwork Reduction Submissions"

We are not requesting any exemptions to the provisions stated in 5 CFR 1320.9.