



REPLY TO  
ATTENTION OF

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE  
UNITED STATES SOUTHERN COMMAND  
OFFICE OF THE COMMANDER  
9301 NW 33<sup>RD</sup> STREET  
DORAL, FL 33172-1202

SC-CC

27 July 2021

MEMORANDUM THRU Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army, ATTN: Installations, Energy, & Environment (IE&E)

FOR Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Sustainment) (ASD(S))

SUBJECT: USSOUTHCOM Critical Housing Challenges Pose Severe Mission Impact

1. A shortage of affordable, safe housing within proximity (20 miles) of USSOUTHCOM Headquarters (HQ) negatively impacts our ability to execute our national security missions.
2. Background: Lack of affordable, adequate, and proximate housing drives wide dispersion of USSOUTHCOM personnel across South Florida. 81% of personnel assigned to USSOUTHCOM live outside Doral where our HQ is located. Miami is experiencing a perfect storm between an inflating real estate market and increasing number of severe weather events that present multiple operational challenges for our Servicemembers.
  - **Operational Impacts:** USSOUTHCOM has responsibility for planning and overseeing U.S. military operations in support of humanitarian assistance efforts, noncombatant evacuation, and defense of critical infrastructure in 31 partner nations throughout the Caribbean, Central and South America. Our ability to immediately deflect the impacts of global and regional aggressive nations, combat violent extremists and transnational organizations is placed at risk by a lack of affordable housing in reasonable proximity to our HQ. Long commutes by key Servicemembers assigned to USSOUTHCOM, coupled with increasing number of severe weather events, is placing the ability to lean forward and timely attack problems occurring within our area of responsibility (AOR) at risk.
  - **Safety and Resiliency:** Climate change has “grounded” more frequent violent weather events in both the AOR and metro Miami area, substantially increasing the amount of 24-7 shift work required at our HQ. Heightened stress that this increased operational tempo places on our workforce is further heightened by the fact that all Servicemembers, including key and essential individuals, must frequently drive long distances through violent storms and flooded roads to travel because of inadequate affordable housing near the HQ.
  - **Financial hardship:** Housing conditions are creating a significant financial burden for Servicemembers and negatively impacting morale. Housing in Miami is amongst the most expensive in the country. It is common for landlords in Miami to require three months' worth of rent at lease signing, forcing Servicemember to spend up to \$10,000 in

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advanced deposits and fees. Landlords will typically lease properties for a year at a time so they can take advantage of the lucrative real estate market. Last week alone, our USAG-Miami Garrison issued five emergency relief loans to Servicemembers who were forced to execute and pay "out of pocket" for mid-tour moves because their landlord had sold or rented the unit they were living to others.

- **Quality of Life and Retention:** Our Servicemembers are at the mercy of unresponsive civilian landlords who do not act in a timely manner to address quality of life, health, and safety issues such as mold and insects. This increase in stress levels for Servicemembers and families places a direct impact on mental health. Studies indicate that the percentage of personnel remaining in service from bases with high quality housing is 15% higher than places with low quality housing. The lack of stable housing degrades USSOUTHCOM's ability to retain our personnel and enable them to perform at the highest level.

3. In summary: Servicemembers stationed at USSOUTHCOM are subjected to:

- Stressors due to mission focus conflicting with distracting domicile conditions;
- Unsafe conditions as they are forced to drive untenable distances in more frequent unsafe conditions driven by our global climate crisis;
- Financial burdens from high upfront down payments and expensive mid-tour moves because of skyrocketing market conditions; and
- Quality of life, health, and safety concerns that are not timely addressed.

4. The Impact – National security requires that USSOUTHCOM always be mission ready and responsive to the diverse array of fast paced challenges that exist within its AOR. Accordingly, USSOUTHCOM strives to be a location where high achievers *want* to serve. Our recent command climate survey and our own self-initiated housing survey, however, indicate that lack of proximate, secure, safe, affordable housing detracts from making USSOUTHCOM an assignment of choice. I request that you take action to facilitate development of housing close to USSOUTHCOM. Doing so will greatly enhance our ongoing efforts to take care of our most important resource – our Servicemembers.

5. The point of contact for this memorandum is COL David Noble, USSOUTHCOM Command Engineer, at (305) 437-1151, or [david.w.noble14.mil@mail.mil](mailto:david.w.noble14.mil@mail.mil)



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