

Military Families Report ‘Negative’ Experiences With Base Housing

A survey last year showed there are problems with the military’s housing program and some military families have resorted to testifying to Congress about the issue

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A nonprofit organization’s survey conducted last year shows families living in military housing built by private developers are reporting unsafe conditions at many housing installations across the country.

The Military Family Advisor Network talked to 14,558 individuals who live or have lived within the past three years in privatized housing. The organization found that more than 55 percent of respondents had “negative” or “very negative” experiences with their property’s management. Families of enlisted service members made up about 75 percent of the respondents and were heavily concentrated in California, North Carolina, Texas, Virginia and Hawaii.

Some of the issues reported in the survey included problems with maintenance, repairs and structural concerns of the homes, as well as mold and filth being present. Many survey participants cited concerns with the poor quality of materials used in their homes, as well as plumbing and leaking issues.

The Military Family Advisory Network also interviewed 40 of the respondents. Some of the concerns families had included the amount of basic allowance the military provides for housing (BAH) and lack of options outside of military housing. They also said their concerns have gone ignored by housing management and, in some cases, families have had to threaten legal action in order for a company to act on complaints.

In December, military families attended a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on the military’s privatized housing. Officials from the Defense Department and service chiefs were

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present to hear from current and former military housing residents about some of the issues that happened while living in housing run by private housing companies.

During Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy's testimony, he said that the Army is responsible for providing quality housing to the service's families.

"We must fix the current housing crisis using a house-to-house approach," McCarthy said. "We must also fix the governance model and address underlying issues to ensure systematic change."

After the committee hearing on Capitol Hill, President Donald Trump signed the *National Defense Authorization Act of 2020* on Dec. 20. The new law included a so-called "tenant's bill of rights" for base housing residents. The law puts base and regional commanders in charge of settling disputes between tenants and landlords.

This article is featured in the March 2020 issue of [VFW magazine](#), and was written by [Dave Spiwa](#), associate editor for VFW magazine.