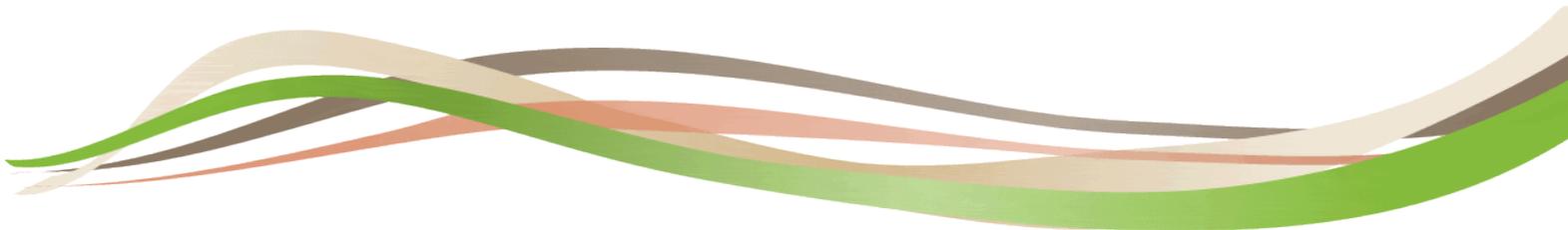




Working Hours Survey
Final Report



‘There is strong evidence that work demands can have powerful negative effects on health, relationships and job performance. More than 70% of soldiers surveyed in this study reported that their working hours had increased considerably and the majority are working more than 10 hours a day. Long working hours, attendance at compulsory social events and the need to work at home will undoubtedly have a negative impact on family life and will also reduce opportunities for soldiers to recover fully from the psychological and physical demands of their work. My own research and that of others indicates that a lack of respite from job demands will impair health, satisfaction with family life and job performance over the longer term. The financial costs of long working hours are also highlighted by the findings of this study, whereby partners have been forced to quit work and childcare costs have risen due to rising work hours. The findings also indicate that soldiers are commonly unable to take their full leave entitlement. Holidays are an important time to recover from job demands and reconnect with family and friends - this will have negative effects for health, personal relationships and job performance over the longer term. It is important to acknowledge that the EU Working Time Directive stipulates a maximum of 48 hours per week. Whilst of course, the Armed Forces will be exempt from this Directive, it does indicate that current working hours are not healthy or sustainable in the long term.’

Dr. Gail Kinman, CPsychol CSci AFBPS
Professor of Occupational Health Psychology
Director of the Research Centre for Applied Psychology
University of Bedford

Introduction

During 2012 and 2013 AFF received substantial anecdotal evidence from families that their soldier's working hours had increased and that it was having a detrimental effect on family life.

To establish the extent of the problem we focused on working hours in our annual survey. Of particular importance was the need to capture perceived 'working cultures' in order to inform the aspirations of the New Employment Model (NEM); not least two of its core goals of increasing home ownership and facilitating spouse employment.

There is also a need to manage expectations of 'sustainability'. The Army has a proud tradition of delivering against whatever is asked of them, at any cost. However every organisation, and every person, has a breaking point and AFF's concern was that significant numbers of soldiers and their families are at that point now.

AFF limited its research to a study of working hours and a specific set of potential impacts. We used qualitative information that came through our co-ordinators and social media to determine a focus on the impact on family life and the spouse's career. The study did not look at the cause of increased working hours and as such the research does not make any recommendations in this area.

Impact on family life

Relationships. Numerous quotes from families stated that longer working hours were affecting relationships within the family. This included spouse relationships and parent child relationships. The majority of comments acknowledged that separation and time away were part of the conditions of service but that the loss of family time between absences is having a significantly detrimental impact.

AFF Recommendation: A review of the culture of long working hours. It is possible that 10 years of campaigning has normalised extremely long working days and a sense that everything is delivered as an essential within 'immediate' timeframes. Although this is a matter for command, the impact is very tangible for the families and in that sense becomes an AFF issue. 3 UK Division have recently put measures in place to ensure that Wednesday afternoon is reserved for sports and physical training. Whilst applauding this move, it remains important that the working day is not extended at other times to compensate.

Childcare. Reflected in these working hours there is an implicit assumption that the serving soldier has no childcare responsibilities as very little childcare provision extends beyond 10 hours. Spousal employment aside, the Army has a significant number of single parents of both genders and an increasing number of dual 'serving soldier' parents. The lack of flexibility and predictability of working hours makes being a parent of either gender increasingly difficult and it appears that the Army is going against the trend by becoming less family friendly. A report by Working Families and Lancaster University School of Management identified that 'fathers who work flexibly have a better work/life balance and are able to deal with work overload more efficiently than those with no flexibility'¹.

AFF Recommendation: The routine working day needs to be less than 10 hours in order to make conventional childcare options viable. It is important that any commute is planned into that working day which highlights the advantages of housing personnel next to their place of work. If living 'on site' is not viable in the future then it will be key to plan for the provision of appropriate childcare next to their place of work. Exceptions to a routine day of 10 hours or less need to be planned well in advance so that alternative childcare cover can be put in place e.g. support from extended family.

Findings

Health. Established research identifies that long working hours impact on health. This usually presents itself as anxiety and stress in the individual but not surprisingly this pervades through to family wellbeing.

A Mental Health Foundation survey on the general public² found that:

- When working long hours more than a quarter of employees feel depressed, one third feel anxious and more than half feel irritable.
- The more hours you spend at work, the more hours outside of work you are likely to spend thinking or worrying about it.
- Nearly two thirds of employees have experienced a negative effect on their personal life including lack of personal development, physical and mental health problems and poor relationships and home life.

AFF Recommendation: The Army invite the Mental Health Foundation to survey its soldiers and their families to establish the extent of this issue for the Army. AFF is particularly concerned that soldiers and families already stressed from experiences of war face no extended 'recuperation' when back at home. This could create obstacles to any recovery process and may exacerbate existing conditions.

Impact on the New Employment Model (NEM)

Spouse employment. Spouse employment is currently a cornerstone of the NEM. Firstly it is seen as a retention issue and secondly it is seen as key to increasing home ownership. The findings of this survey will undoubtedly alarm those working on the NEM in that 10% of spouses have recently given up work due to the increase in their partner's working hours. Spousal employment is trending inversely to the aspirations of NEM and it will be difficult to reverse without immediate and drastic changes to working hours. Nearly 20% had to seek extra support from their extended family and/or 20% saw an increase to their childcare costs. Again these experiences present serious obstacles to any plan to promote spouse employment. Childcare costs are already prohibitive for many. A scheme to subsidise childcare would be a key facilitator for spouse employment.

AFF Recommendation: Subsidised childcare provision would be a realistic measure for breaking down barriers for employment. There are various means of delivering this policy. It could include an employer contribution e.g. £12 per day worked or it could be the provision of childcare facilities in MOD buildings that are run as not for profit organisations. TINBUL³ garrison provides such a service with seven childcare settings, managed by professionals but governed by a Board of Trustees and chaired by Garrison DCOS.

2 Mental Health Foundation - www.mentalhealth.org.uk/help-information/mental-health-a-z/W/work-

3 Tidworth, Netheravon and Bulford Garrison

Findings

Home ownership. Increased home ownership is an aspiration of the NEM as a result of Service personnel being surveyed stating that they wished to buy and live in their own homes. The AFF survey highlights two key obstacles to making increased home ownership viable. Whilst working days exceed 10 hours for 64% and over 11 hours for 29%, additional commuting time is highly unattractive. The Army has benefitted greatly by housing its personnel on site and has been able to exploit this to secure flexible and long working hours. Note that our survey revealed that over half had less than a 15 minute commute and only 17% commuted more than 30 minutes. Is the Army in a position to lose this advantage?

AFF Recommendation: The NEM projections for home ownership should be revised to reflect the practical implications of putting into effect the aspiration for home ownership. Army 2020 needs to continue to plan for accompanied service in military accommodation at the soldier's place of work. When or indeed if, the Army is able to revise the terms and conditions of service to ensure that the working day is routine, predictable and less than 10 hours then it can look to plan for a significant increase in home ownership.

Summary

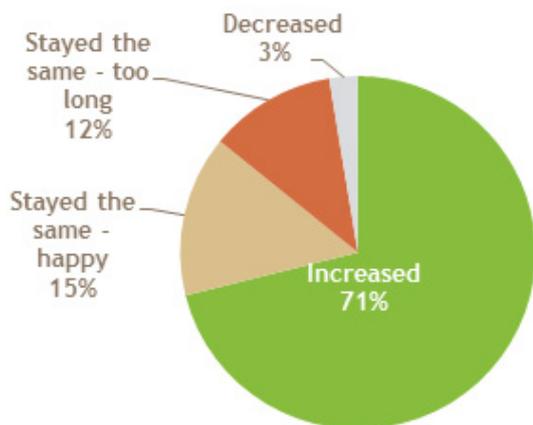
Service families have served their soldier well over these last 10 years of intensive operations but it has come at a cost. The very tangible impact on the family of high tempo working conditions needs to be recognised. Now is the time to look forward and plan a sustainable future with resources to match commitments or indeed commitments to match resources.

Detailed Results

Gauging perception of working hours and work-life balance

Question 1

In the last two years, have your soldier's working hours increased?

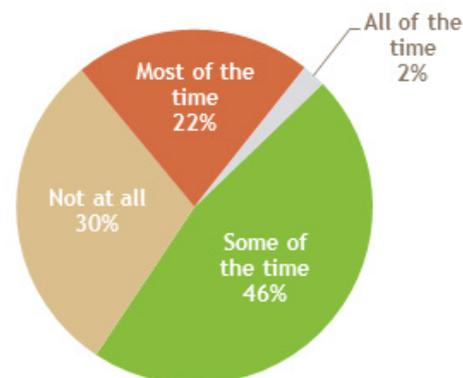


AFF Comment: The increase in working hours has affected Officers and other ranks (ORs) in equal measure. The only marked difference was that more Officers, 16%, felt that their hours had stayed the same but were too long compared with 10% ORs. There is a clear perception that working hours over an extended period have increased. Results indicate the Officers' hours have been 'too long' for some time but the recent trend is a substantial increase in OR's hours. It is possible that these figures reflect a 'self-imposed' culture of high intensity working as the trend indicates working practices beginning with senior management prior to filtering down to the more junior staff.

Question 2

Do you think that your soldier has a good work-life balance?

AFF Comment: Only 24% of respondents felt that they had a good work-life balance. The key statistic is the 46% that believe that they only have a good work life balance some of the time. This is indicative that long hours are taking their toll on the morale of the soldier and the family. There is a chance that this 46% of 'waverers' will vote with their feet if there is no long term improvement on the combined effects of hours versus reward. There were some regional discrepancies with Wales 33% and Cyprus 31% having the highest number of respondents stating that they felt their soldier had a good work/life balance most of the time. This indicates that postings to Wales and Cyprus are perceived more positively and a further exercise might be to ascertain why. In contrast Germany 32% and Northern Ireland 31% had the highest number of respondents stating that they felt that their soldier had no work-life balance. Again there are likely to be key factors pertinent to the posting that create this perception. Further exploration of regional difference could prove valid in isolating cause of good and poor work-life balances.



Detailed Results

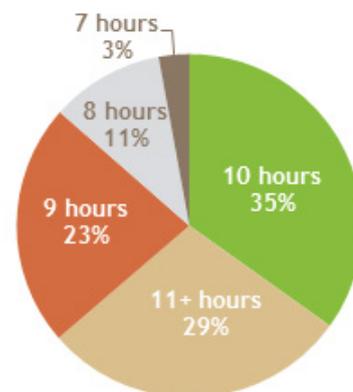
Ascertaining detailed working patterns

Question 3

On average, how many hours a day does your soldier work for? (Not including travel time to work)

There were some significant differences between the working hours of Other Ranks and Officers:

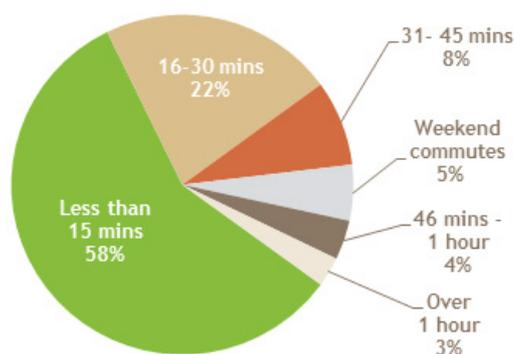
	Other Ranks	Officers
7 hours	4%	1%
8 hours	13%	4%
9 hours	26%	14%
10 hours	34%	38%
11 hours+	23%	44%



AFF Comment: 64% are consistently working over 10 hours a day. Officers are working marginally more 10 hour days than ORs and they are working significantly more 11 hour days than ORs. However, the percentage of ORs working long days is still very high, with 34% 10 hours per day and 23% 11+. Whilst it is accepted that executive management equivalents in the corporate sector work longer than 10 hours, there are two counter arguments to be acknowledged. Firstly, executive management positions in the corporate sector rarely work extended hours on top of 6-12 month operational tours of 24/7 working, in environmentally primitive and dangerous conditions. Secondly, despite a very good military pension, the total remuneration package of senior executives (Senior Vice President and Managing Directors) exceed that of nearly every Officer rank in the military. Perhaps most concerning is the evidence that the long working hours are not isolated to senior officers. We have ORs earning between £18 - £38k working hours which are more similar to senior management hours in the corporate sector. This is on top of high intensity operations and a demanding exercise and training programme.

Question 4

What is the average time of your soldier's daily commute (one way)?



AFF Comment: Due to the tradition of accommodating Service personnel on or near to camp, many continue to have a very short commute to work. It is assessed that this has aided the ability to work long and flexible (for the employer) hours. The concern is that if we move away from a model of housing soldiers on site we will add significantly to an already extended working day. A mere 30 minute one way commute could see the number of personnel working over an 11 hour day rising to over 50% (if they included the commute) and only 15% doing less than 10 hours a day.

Detailed Results

Question 5

Does your soldier work regularly at weekends?

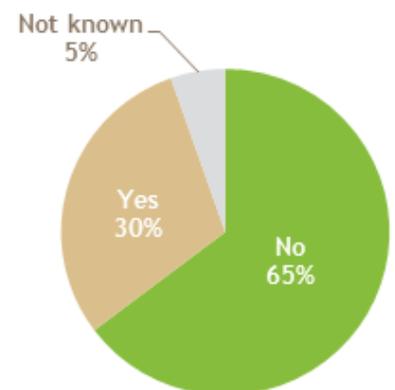
Yes 48% (1253) No 52% (1334)

AFF Comment: More Officers (56%) worked weekends than ORs (46%). However, although there is a difference in weekend working based on ranks, the percentages for all ranks is very high. Weekend working is to be expected as part of the terms and conditions of service but, once again, this confirms the Army as a 24/7 organisation and highlights the need to protect downtime for its personnel of all ranks. Of concern is that Northern Ireland (61%) and Scotland (57%) in particular regularly work weekends.

Question 6

Did your soldier manage to take their leave entitlement last year?

AFF Comment: Only 30% of respondents were confident that they had taken all of their annual leave entitlement last year (2012). 65% reported that they had not. Failure to take leave entitlement is particularly marked in Officers with 75% saying they did not take their leave entitlement. The systemic failure to take leave is indicative of unsustainable working practices. Comments made by respondents revealed that this failure was despite concerted efforts to take leave. It is also clear that personnel are falling significantly short of their leave entitlement. There is a contrived discrepancy with the AFCAS findings which demonstrated that just over half of Officers and ORs were content with the amount of leave taken in the last 12 months. However, AFCAS did not measure actual leave taken against entitlement and there is not a direct correlation between the two sets of statistics.

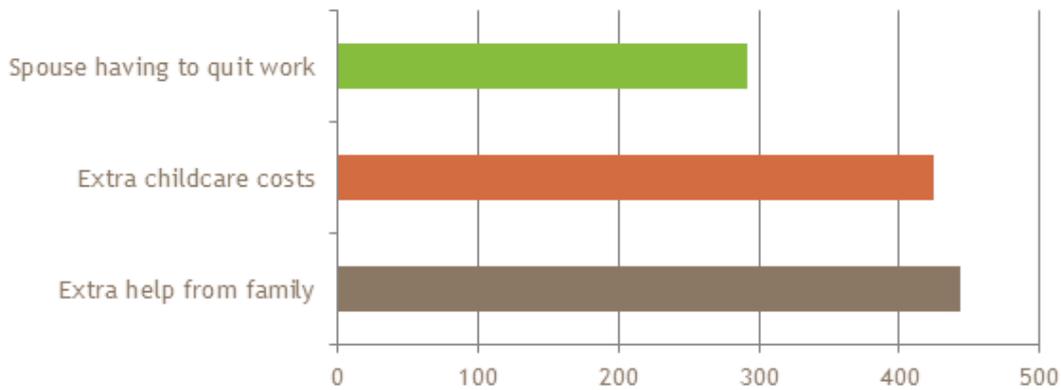


Detailed Results

Exploring the impact on the family and spouse employment

Question 7

If the hours have increased, has it resulted in any of the following:



Of all those who replied to the question, the breakdown between Other Ranks and Officers was:

	Other Ranks	Officers
Spouse had to quit work	259	74
Extra childcare costs	336	132
Extra help from family	341	151

AFF Comment: Under NEM, spouse employment is key to removing the dependency on military housing. However, the results of this survey are alarming. 292 spouses (over 10%) have had to quit work to manage their soldier's increased hours. The hardest hit are the ORs where the need for two incomes to support a mortgage is greatest. 468 families have had to meet extra childcare costs, which are themselves an obstacle to work. A key burden for dual parent working families was the unpredictability of the soldiers' hours and absences. AFF is keen to highlight that critical to supporting spousal working is reliability and predictability of the soldier's hours. We recognise that this figure does not capture those partners 'who do not work'.

Detailed Results

Question 8

An open question on the impact of the increase of soldiers' hours on family life.

The following is a resume of the key themes drawn out of the written responses:

- These long working hours are on top of deployments, exercises and training - the family is already stretched and there is no-longer any recovery time.

'His constant absence is causing big problems in our marriage and family life. Constantly being stuck at home with a 3 year old and 2 year old is taking its toll ... feeling completely trapped... if the usual commitments like deployment (he's done 3 tours), exercises and courses aren't enough now he is also working late and going in at weekends to try and catch up with work'

- There is an impact on children as the soldier leaves before children are awake and returns after they are asleep. This is when the soldier is in barracks, a time traditionally used to build backup parent - child relationships weakened and strained through extended absences.

'We have been married 4 years. In that time he has done 3 operational tours and now leaves home at 6am, works to 8pm and works at home for a further 3 or 4 hours, plus being called in at weekends ... Our children miss him and the youngest has no opportunity to even bond with his father as he hardly sees him'

- Even when the soldier is home, they often need to undertake further work, so working hours are not limited to the 'office'. Work is being undertaken in a soldier's own time and families are concerned that it is not managed or acknowledged.

'We have dinner every night at 6pm, and most nights he goes back to work after that or spends hours in the evening answering emails from his work Blackberry'

Detailed Results

‘Even when he is at home he receives phone calls from work and feels he can never really switch off’

- Relationship strain - spouses feel like a single parent as soldier is working long hours or away. They have little time together as a couple and often when the soldier is home, they are too tired to have any quality time together.

‘We as a family are utterly fed up with the increasing demands placed upon my husband by the Army. In particular, the time required to attend evening and weekend social events’

- Although not the focus of the survey, we received several responses highlighting the impact of families being housed away from the unit due to lack of appropriate housing. This was perceived as detrimental due to the extra commuting, on top of long working hours and additional costs to pay for a second car.

- Even when at home, the soldier is tired and distracted due to the long working hours or work still to complete. There is no down time and again this is on top of operational tours and exercises.

‘I feel more and more like a supporting role in the story of my husband’s life’

- There are a significant number of families that feel increasingly aggrieved about enforced social events taking up decreasing spare time.

AFF Comment: This is a qualitative view of the challenges facing families due to the increase in working hours. The poignancy is in the number of replies and the strength of feeling demonstrated by the respondents. This is not an unhappy individual but a significant percentage of families, well attuned to Service life, and often long serving, that are at breaking point.

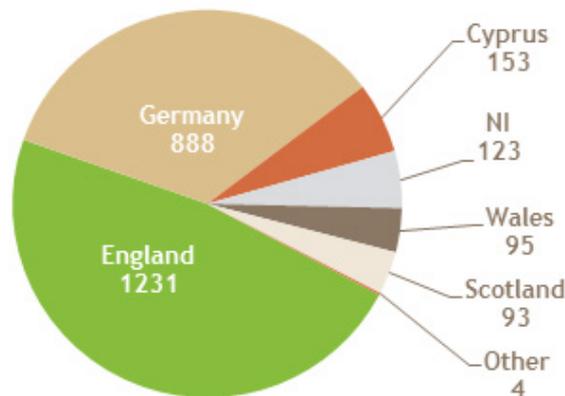
Method

A short survey was developed and SurveyMonkey was used to administrate it. Survey Monkey provides an excellent vehicle from which to monitor live data sets, dynamically exploit full data sets, and track preferred means of accessing the survey. The latter being whether someone accesses the survey through Twitter, our Facebook page, our webpage or an email. This enables us to evaluate the online behaviours and preferences of our Army families with the intent of using this information to make our communications more effective.

Although we did conduct surveys face to face with families, our main effort was online. The AFF has a comprehensive social media and online presence with a good reach. Therefore we launched the survey with a concerted and joined up media campaign. We were supported by BFBS who ran a radio campaign on our behalf.

We utilised 4 key search fields as a basis to exploit our data. We wanted to be able to determine if region, rank, terms of service and whether a soldier was accompanied or unaccompanied created variances.

Search Field 1: Where is your soldier based?



Search Field 2: Is your soldier an Other Rank or Officer?

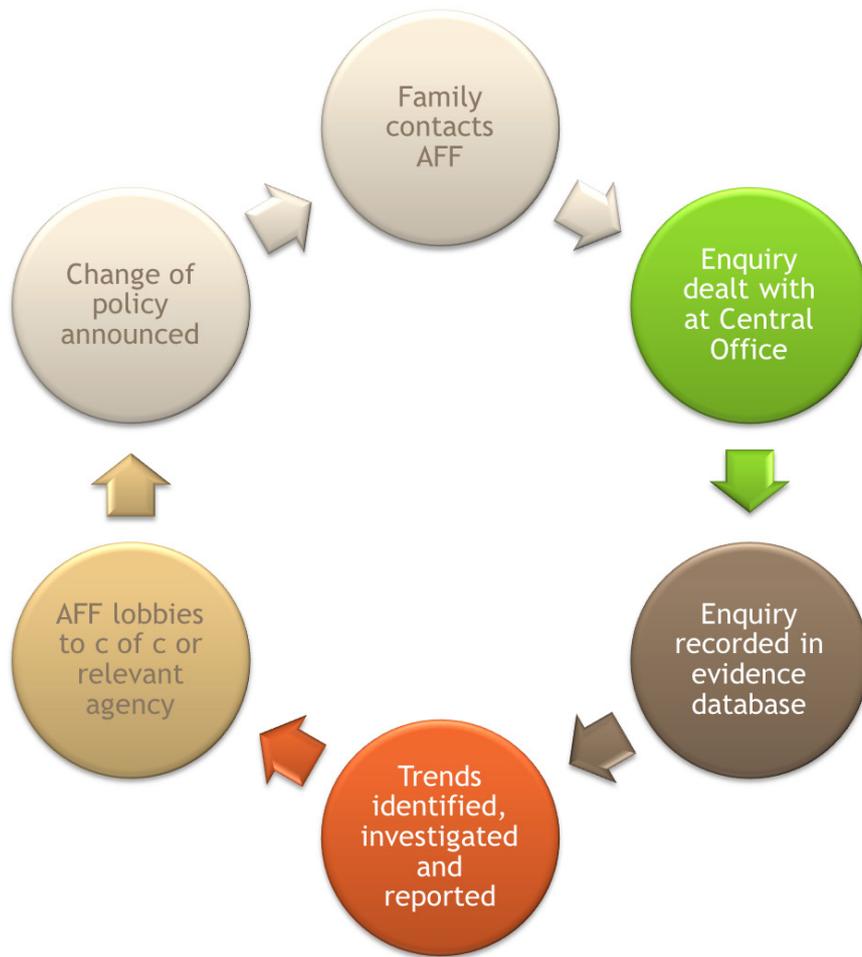
Other Rank 72% (1874) Officer 28% (713)

Search Field 3: Is your soldier serving as a Regular or TA/Reserve?

Regular 99% (2133) TA/Reserve 1% (29)

Search Field 4: Is your soldier serving accompanied or unaccompanied?

Accompanied 88% (2267) Unaccompanied 12% (320)



AFF is the voice of the Army family.

It empowers, acts as an advocate and an expert witness to promote a quality of life, which reflects the Armed Forces Covenant.

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