

RECORD VERSION

STATEMENT BY

THE HONORABLE PETE GEREN
SECRETARY OF THE ARMY

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FIRST SESSION, 110TH CONGRESS

ON THE ARMY'S STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES

SEPTEMBER 26, 2007

NOT FOR PUBLICATION
UNTIL RELEASED BY THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

STATEMENT OF SECRETARY OF THE ARMY PETE GEREN

Chairman Skelton, Congressman Hunter, and distinguished members of the House Armed Services Committee, I thank you for holding this important hearing on the future direction of the Army. After serving as a member of this committee during my time in Congress, I am especially honored to appear before you today.

I'd like to begin by thanking all of you for your unwavering support of our Soldiers and their Families. I know they appreciate your ongoing efforts to provide them not only with the ways and means to achieve the strategic objectives that our Nation demands, but also to improve their quality of life. Indeed, later in my testimony I will discuss some of the very concrete ways we have been able to address the needs of our Soldiers and their Families because of the support and generosity of the Congress.

I have recently returned from visiting Soldiers and units in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Kuwait. As you all have seen on your own Congressional delegations, our units and their leaders, and most especially our great Soldiers, continue doing a superb job under the most challenging conditions imaginable. Their courage and heroism are truly inspiring.

On October 7th, we will enter the seventh year of major combat operations in the Global War on Terror, making this the third longest war in American history, after the Revolutionary War and Vietnam. This is also the first extended conflict since the Revolution to be fought with an All Volunteer Force.

To be sure, our Army is being stretched to meet the demands of the current conflict. The Army has approximately 150,000 Soldiers in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Kuwait. Since the beginning of combat operations, over 550,000 Soldiers have served in combat zones; over 200,000 have been deployed multiple times. Our All Volunteer Force is a national treasure, but as we move into the seventh year of major combat operations we are in uncharted waters as an All Volunteer Force. We are adapting our policies, programs, and investments to reflect the realities of this era of persistent conflict.

The All Volunteer Force is 34-years-old. Some of you may recall that in its very first decade its success was threatened by a cap on military pay that led to serious retention shortfalls. President Reagan and Congress increased pay a total of 26 percent in 1981 and 1982, restoring military pay to levels “reasonably comparable” with the private sector, probably saving the All Volunteer Force in the process. Today, the strain of multiple deployments on Soldiers requires us likewise to work together to adapt in a way that ensures the health and wellbeing of the All Volunteer Force.

Despite our many challenges, our Soldiers remain the best trained, best led, and best equipped force we have ever put in the field. Today’s Army is the pre-eminent land force on the face of the earth – and we will keep it that way. And Army Families are standing with our Soldiers and shouldering the responsibility of selfless service.

Our Soldiers count on their Army leadership to provide them the training, equipment, and leadership to take the fight to the enemy. They also count on Army leadership to make sure their Families receive the support they need to stay Army strong.

On the wall in one of the Army conference rooms there is this quote by former Army Chief of Staff General Creighton Abrams: “People are not *in* the Army, they *are* the Army.”

The people who “are” the Army extend to more than just the Soldiers. Spouses and children are as much a part of the Army as the Soldiers they love. Everyone in Army leadership recognizes the role of the family in the All Volunteer Force and is committed to improving support to our Army Families; and I am proud to partner with General Casey in working to improve the quality of life for Soldiers and their Families.

As you know, we are asking a great deal of our Soldiers and Army Families and we cannot expect that these demands will diminish in the foreseeable future. Organizational and institutional changes will continue for years and we must expect and plan for a future typified by persistent conflict and continuing deployments.

In order to sustain our All Volunteer Force, we will work to bring our Army into balance and do more to provide Soldiers and Families a quality of life equal to the quality of their service. Family support systems – health care, housing, childcare, and education – designed for the pre-9/11 peacetime Army must be adapted to sustain an Army at war.

Furthermore, the demographics of today's Army are markedly different from any Army that has fought an extended conflict in our Nation's history, posing previously unknown challenges. Over half of our Soldiers are married and a majority of Army spouses are employed. Army Families include over 700,000 children – a number greater than the entire population of the capital city where we meet today.

When a married mother or father deploys, he or she leaves behind a single parent household and all the challenges associated with that family dynamic. Soldiers who are single parents must leave their children in the care of others. With multiple deployments and dwell time filled with training for the next deployment, the stress on the Family increases. General Casey and I are committed to addressing these challenges.

Support for Soldiers and Families

The Army has recognized the strain on Soldier and Families and for several years has been taking steps to address many of these issues, often with Congress playing a leading role, and always a strong partner in the service of our Army. For example, the Army continues to improve Soldier and Family Housing, bolstered by legislation enacted by Congress in 1996 allowing the military services to leverage their government housing assets to include private sector participation in military housing. This Residential Community Initiative (RCI) has allowed the Army to construct, improve, and sustain Army family housing in the U.S. at a greatly reduced cost to the Army. As of the beginning of this month, the Army had privatized almost 79,000 homes on 36 installations. The total cost to date is estimated at \$10.4 billion of which the Army share is only \$1.3 billion. The quality of the homes and neighborhoods built under the RCI has improved

dramatically the quality of life for our Army Families. Again, the Congress can take a great deal of the credit for this achievement.

Besides the RCI, the Army is on a course to eventually eliminate inadequate family housing, first in CONUS, later OCONUS. Additionally, we have also been expanding housing for unmarried senior NCOs and officers at locations where off-post rentals are not available.

Our facility modernization efforts continue to focus on the long term effort to improve Unaccompanied Personnel Housing and we have delivered 200 new units in recent years with plans for another 1,200. In the past five fiscal years, the Army has invested about \$5.5 billion to fix, upgrade, and replace permanent party barracks for 72,400 Soldiers.

The Army is shifting additional resources into family programs for 2008 and beyond. In recent years, the Army has built 18 Child Development Centers with plans for 22 more. We also continue to build new fitness facilities, chapels, and youth centers.

Last summer, the Army transferred \$100 million into existing Family programs, which had an immediate and positive impact. These funds are being used to hire Family Readiness Support Assistants down to the battalion level, expand the availability and reduce the cost of child care, provide additional respite care for Family members with special needs, and enhance morale and recreational programs across the Army.

Additionally, after many months of work, the Army will soon launch the Army Soldier-Family Action Plan. This plan to support Families is based on the input of Families from across our Army – here and around the globe. ASFAP will address issues such as education, access and quality of health care, employment opportunities, improved housing, and the resourcing of existing Army programs. It will be an important step forward, but it is not the final answer to the needs of Army Families.

Keeping Faith with Wounded Warriors

As an Army, we pledge never to leave a fallen comrade – that means on the battlefield, in the hospital, in the outpatient clinic, or over a lifetime of dependency if that is what is required. I have witnessed the cost in human terms and to the institution of the Army when we break faith with that sacred pledge, as a handful did at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, and we have worked hard to make that right.

Indeed, the silver lining in the WRAMC breakdown is that it prompted the Army to make dramatic changes in the way we care for our wounded warriors and also led to a partnership between the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to overhaul our military disability system. The goal of this latter effort is as simple to identify as it will be difficult to implement: a seamless transition for our Soldiers from the Department of Defense disability system either back to service in the Army or a productive life as a veteran. We begin that task not by thinking in terms of how we can improve the current outmoded system, but instead thinking about what kind of system we would build if we could start from scratch. It is a process that involves close collaboration between DoD, the VA, and Congress.

But the Army also is moving out aggressively to change what we can on our own. I am pleased to report that we have made significant progress in the areas of infrastructure, leadership, and processes issues as part of our Army Medical Action Plan. A few examples:

- We've given wounded warriors a new mission that is codified in the Wounded Warrior Mission Statement: "I am a Warrior in Transition. My job is to heal as I transition back to duty or become a productive, responsible citizen in society. This is not a status but a mission. I will succeed in this mission because I am a Warrior."
- We've consolidated Medical Hold and Medical Holdover into single Warrior Transition Units (WTU), organized into military units that are under the command and control of the medical treatment facility commander. The WTU's mission is to focus solely on the care, treatment, and compassionate disposition of its Soldiers.

- We've institutionalized a Triad of Support for every wounded warrior to include a primary care manager, nurse case manager, and squad leader, and we've organized outpatients in a chain of command.
- We've established Soldier and Family Assistance Centers at medical centers across the entire Army. These are one-stop shops where Soldiers and Families can get the information they need regarding entitlements, benefits, and services.
- There is now a Wounded Soldier Family Hotline that provides Warriors in Transition and their Families 24-hour access to information and assistance.
- We've initiated a Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury chain teaching program for every Soldier in the Army, to not only educate and assist them in recognizing, preventing, and treating these conditions, but also to help remove the stigma associated with these injuries. We are on track to train the entire force, over 1 million Soldiers, by October 18. Similar training is being provided to Family members.

There is much more we have done as well, but there is still much more to do. President Lincoln pledged our Nation to care for those who shall have borne the battle, their widows, and now widowers, and orphans. That pledge must be constantly renewed, not with words, but with deeds. I believe that the Department of Defense, the Congress, and the Department of Veterans Affairs have an opportunity that does not come along often – overhaul the entire military disability system. Let us not squander the opportunity.

Force of the Future

Even without the Global War on Terror, we would be a busy Army, implementing the largest Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) in history. We are growing the total Army by 74,000 and completing the transformation of the Reserve Component from a strategic reserve to an operational force. We are half-way through the largest organizational change since World War II, converting our combat and enabling formations to modular formations. Our depots are operating at historical levels to reset and recapitalize our battle

damaged vehicles and equipment. And we are working to transform and modernize the force.

The purpose of the Army modernization effort is to maintain dominance in land operations – we never want to send our Soldiers into a fair fight. The goal of Army modernization is to know before the enemy does where our forces are and where the enemy is. Knowledge is power, and nowhere is that dictum more applicable than on the battlefield.

The Future Combat System will give our Soldiers the knowledge they need to fight and win in any battle space, day or night, whether the battle is conventional or asymmetrical. Indeed, theatre commanders are validating this effort by requesting specific operational capabilities and technologies that we are currently developing in FCS. Through spinouts, we are providing soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan FCS capabilities that are critical to their current missions and force protection.

Two good examples are the class one unmanned aerial vehicle, or UAV, and the small, unmanned ground vehicle, or SUGV. The UAV weighs about 35 pounds and is controlled at the squad level by the robotics operator. It gives Soldiers a set of eyes in the sky. The SUGV is also a squad-level asset that can see over small obstacles and can go into buildings and negotiate stairwells. These types of unmanned aerial and ground vehicles, along with robots and unattended ground sensors, will put machines in harm's way instead of Soldiers.

While we plan for the future, we must never forget that we have 150,000 in harm's way and it is our responsibility to meet their needs with the urgency their mission demands. I know Congress shares this commitment, which is why you have all done so much to advance the production and fielding of MRAPs. To update you, the JROC has approved the Army's request for 10,000 MRAP vehicles and production is now underway at several facilities. By the end of April 2008, we are projecting that we will field almost 4,100 MRAPs.

Along with mobile armor, we also have made great strides in body armor, recently introducing breakaway armor that in an emergency allows Soldiers to

shed their body armor with the pull of a tab. Force protection will continue to be a top priority.

Contracting Issues

Our recent focus has been on ensuring Soldiers are well trained, equipped, and prepared for rapid deployment into hostile environments; and for their sustainment in these expeditionary operations for as long as necessary. However, in order to best position the Army for future military operations, our warfighters also need an agile support system that includes the ability to procure timely contractor augmentation effectively, efficiently, and legally, and to measure the performance of the contractor support. Given the current force structure, we must recognize that our Soldiers do not operate alone.

Our current operations in Iraq and Afghanistan show that the deployed force in 21st century military operations will include large numbers of contractor personnel. In fact, approximately half of the personnel currently deployed in Iraq are contractor employees. This puts Army contracting (writing, negotiating, monitoring, and achieving accountability and enforcement of the contracts), along with modern (information-based) logistics support, squarely at the forefront of our challenges in supporting expeditionary operations.

To ensure that we learn from the experience of our current military engagements, and prepare for future conflicts, I have established a “Commission on Army Acquisition and Program Management in Expeditionary Operations.” I have tasked this Commission to provide forward-looking recommendations, within 45 days, on the Army’s needs for a business structure that will best enable 21st century military operations. The senior experts on the Commission are assessing process (including internal controls), personnel, organization, training, policy, regulatory, and (if necessary) legislative solutions to assure that the Army is best equipped for future expeditionary operations.

The post-Cold War cuts in the Army’s procurement budget resulted in continual cuts in the acquisition workforce, over an extended period. Today, we have an undersized acquisition workforce (military and civilian) that is resource-

challenged to accomplish its peacetime acquisition business, and stressed by ongoing wartime operations. This workforce has not been adequately expanded, trained, structured, or empowered to meet the needs of our 21st Century, deployed warfighters. We also need to do a better job in training our commanders on their responsibilities for requirements definition and contractor performance.

In working with the Commission Chairman, Dr. Jacques Gansler, it has become clear that timely and efficient contracting for services in support of expeditionary operations, and the subsequent management of the contracts, will be a key component of our achieving success in future military operations. The Commission is tasked to recommend actions that will ensure that we have a contracting, program management, and logistics workforce that is adequately staffed, trained, and prepared to deploy in support of future expeditionary operations; with full capability for procuring services, on-demand, in the field of operations; and for monitoring contractor performance thereafter.

Contracting is the nexus between our warfighters' requirements and the contractors who fulfill those requirements – whether for food service, interpreters, communications operations, or equipment repair. In support of critical military operations, contractor personnel must provide timely support to the warfighter; and Army contracting must acquire that support effectively, efficiently, and legally, while operating in a high-risk, fast-paced environment. As the Commission examines the current, in-theatre system for defining requirements, developing statements of work, awarding contracts, and managing contractor performance, they are identifying ways to ensure that the Army has the business structure, and a sufficient number of qualified and prepared people (military and civilian) that will best enable our warfighters to achieve successful 21st Century military operations.

Conclusion

The old saw, “If the Army wanted you to have a Family, it would have issued you one” is as out-dated as the smoothbore musket.

To paraphrase General Abrams, Soldiers and their Families *are* the All Volunteer Force. And we cannot have a healthy All Volunteer Force without healthy Army Families.

In today's Army, you recruit the Soldier, you retain the Family. Working with General Casey, I am confident we will do both and we will do both well. We will remain the pre-eminent land power and we will remain Army Strong!

Again, thank you for allowing me to testify. I look forward to your questions.