

RECORD VERSION

STATEMENT BY

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FORT HOOD, TEXAS
UNITED STATES ARMY**

BEFORE THE

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Lieutenant General Leon J. LaPorte
Commanding General
III Corps and Fort Hood

Lieutenant General Leon J. LaPorte comes from Providence, Rhode Island. A graduate from the University of Rhode Island in 1968, he was commissioned a Second Lieutenant of Armor. He served as a Platoon Leader and Motor Officer in Alpha Company, 3d Battalion, 64th Armor. From 1969 to 1970, he also served as the S3 Air, 1st Brigade, 3d Infantry Division. In 1971, he served as a Platoon Commander and Company Executive Officer in the 238th Aerial Weapons Company in the Republic of Vietnam. He served as a G3 Operations Officer in the 4th Infantry Division (Mechanized) until 1973, when he assumed command of Bravo Company, 6th Battalion, 32d Armor, Fort Carson, Colorado.

Following completion of the Armor Officer Advanced Course in 1975, he received his Master's Degree in Administration from the University of California. From 1977 to 1980, he served as an instructor and Assistant Professor at the United States Military Academy. Following the Command and General Staff College, he was assigned as the Executive Officer, 2d Squadron, 9th Cavalry, 24th Infantry Division (Mechanized), Fort Stewart, Georgia. In 1983, he served as the S3, 2d Brigade, 24th Infantry Division (Mechanized). From 1984 to 1986, He served as the Armor Colonel's Assignment Officer, Military Personnel Center, Alexandria, Virginia. From 1986 to 1988, he commanded the 3d Battalion, 64th Armor, 3d Infantry Division in Schweinfurt, Germany. Following the Army War College, he served as the G3, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood, Texas, from June 1989 to September 1990. On 17 September 1990, he became the Chief of Staff of the 1st Cavalry Division and still in that capacity in October 1990, he deployed with the division to Southwest Asia during Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm. He commanded the 3d (Greywolf) Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, from October

1991 to May 1993. From May 1993 to April 1994, he served as Chief of Staff, III Corps and Fort Hood. From April 1994 to July 1995, he served as the Commander, National Training Center, Fort Irwin, California. In 1995, he returned to Fort Hood where he commanded the 1st Cavalry Division until July 1997. His next assignment was as Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Plans, Headquarters, Department of the Army, Washington, D.C. He took command of III Corps and Fort Hood, Texas in August 1998.

Lieutenant General LaPorte's awards include: the Distinguished Service Medal, Legion of Merit (two oak leaf clusters), Distinguished Flying Cross, Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal (three oak leaf clusters), Air Medal ("V" device), Army Commendation Medal ("V" device), Vietnamese Cross of Galantry (with Palm), Kuwait Liberation Medal, Aviator Badge, Parachutist Badge, and Ranger Tab.

He is married to the former Judy Conca. They have two married sons: Ryan and Robbie.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the Senate Armed Services Committee, thank you for this opportunity to appear before you. I am pleased to report to you today on the readiness of III Corps, the world's most powerful Armored Corps.

Let me say up front that we are trained, equipped and ready to execute our wartime contingency missions. More importantly, we are demonstrating our readiness on a daily basis in world-wide deployments.

III Corps has over 75,000 soldiers and 24,000 combat vehicles and aircraft stationed at Ft Hood, Ft Carson, Ft Riley, Ft Sill, Ft Bliss and forward-stationed in Korea. Together they represent over 35% of all United States Army active component ground combat power. 12,438 (over 16%) of these great soldiers are deployed today. Our two divisions and 14 brigades that make up III Corps are prepared to fulfill their National Security Strategy combat commitments. Warfighting readiness is the heart of our mission. We are prepared to deploy anywhere at anytime. Major rail spurs provide quick access to deep water ports of Beaumont, Houston and Corpus Christi. This, combined with ready access to deployment airfields, make III Corps installations extremely valuable power projection platforms.

Since assuming command, I have visited and observed the training and operations of each of these major units. I am confident they are trained and ready. We see readiness as a function of training, infrastructure and quality of life. In III Corps, we pursue a balanced readiness approach and are able to meet our training and warfighting requirements; however, we run the risk of long-term readiness shortfalls if we do not place additional emphasis on infrastructure and quality of life.

TRAINING

Over the past 9 months, III Corps has executed an aggressive training program that ensures we remain trained and ready across the spectrum of conflict. This continues today with soldiers of III Corps deployed in 14 countries.

Last summer the Corps rapidly deployed its Forward Command Post on two C5As to South Korea and participated with Combined Forces Command and the Third Republic of Korea Army in Exercise Ulchi Focus Lens. The Corps and 4th Infantry Division continued refining their warfighting competencies in the Korean Theater through the fall, culminating with a corps and division Warfighter Exercise in December. Earlier this month, the Corps staff and commanders participated in a Joint Task Force training seminar taught by representatives from US Atlantic Command (USACOM). This valuable training helped us prepare for an upcoming USACOM and FORSCOM exercise, Roving Sands '99, in which the Corps will be a Joint Task Force Headquarters.

III Corps also received the mission last year to train and certify all FORSCOM units participating in Operation Joint Forge in Bosnia through October 2000. 1st Cavalry Division assumed its mission in Bosnia last October. In January 1999, the Corps Headquarters deployed to Ft Polk, Louisiana and conducted a Mission Rehearsal Exercise to train and certify the 2d Brigade of the 1st Cavalry Division. This month that brigade assumes the mission as part of the United States contingent and the 1st Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division returns home. 1st Brigade will then execute an intensive train-up culminating in an National Training Center rotation in January 2000. The Corps is overseeing preparation of the 10th Mountain Division from Ft Drum and other mechanized elements from Ft Riley as they prepare to assume the Multi-National Division-North mission from the 1st Cavalry Division in August 1999. This training will also culminate with a

Mission Rehearsal Exercise at Ft Polk in May conducted by the Corps with the support of the Joint Readiness Training Center and the Battle Command Training Program. Concurrently, III Corps and the 1st Cavalry Division, with the support of the 5th Army and the Office of the Texas Adjutant General, are assisting the 49th Armored Division Headquarters, Texas Army National Guard and the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment from Ft Carson as they prepare to assume their Bosnia duties in March of 2000.

Many of you have visited our soldiers and can testify to the professional manner in which they represent this country and help shape the hope for peace in that region. There may be concerns about the impact of this mission on the warfighting readiness of units conducting Peace Support Operations; we have learned that many of the tasks are very similar. The 1st Cavalry Division leadership has focused on sustaining warfighting tasks through the support of simulations, distance learning and other training technologies. Soldiers have been able to maintain a high state of individual and crew-level readiness during the deployment. The constant day-to-day planning and coordination needed to synchronize and execute the many diverse missions in this complex environment have also honed command and staff skills at the task force, brigade and division levels. Finally, Bosnia has proven to be a great leadership laboratory for our junior non-commissioned officers and company grade officers. The experience and expertise gained in Bosnia will pay extraordinary dividends for the Army in the future.

With 54 percent of the Army in the reserve components, integration of the Total Army is important. In III Corps, the Army's White Paper, *One Team, One Fight, One Future* is a reality. The Corps is executing three major AC/RC initiatives; Wartrace relationships, the Integrated Division and the Division Teaming Program.

Wartrace relationships are vital to the ability of III Corps to execute its war-time mission. They have always been strong, and we continue to work at them every day. The Corps Signal Brigade hosted a Wartrace Conference from 22-23 January with attendees from the five National Guard Signal Battalions affiliated with III Corps. In February, III Corps and the 13th COSCOM hosted our first annual Combat Service Support focused Wartrace Conference at Fort Hood, Texas. A total of 47 battalion size and larger units were present (30 Active Component and 17 Reserve Component units).

Fort Riley and Fort Carson are creating the first two integrated divisions. These divisions are made up of Army National Guard enhanced Separate Brigades under a regular Army division headquarters. The division has training readiness oversight and the goal to enhance readiness and deployability of the enhanced brigades. We have agreements with each of the states and are creating standard operating procedures under which these organizations will operate. The two divisional headquarters are well into the implementation of this program; the first phase will be completed in October 1999.

Division Teaming is an Army pilot program that pairs selected active and National Guard combat divisions. The goal is to improve proficiency in assigned missions for both organizations. The pillars of the program are operational support for global/ domestic missions and mutually benefiting training opportunities. The first units to participate in the Division Teaming Program are the 4th Infantry Division, teamed with the 40th Infantry Division, California Army National Guard and the 1st Cavalry Division, teamed with the 49th Armored Division. The 4th Infantry Division is completing a brigade rotation at the National Training Center. During this rotation, soldiers and equipment from the 40th Infantry Division participated as part of the force. The 40th Division will also participate with the Corps in Roving Sands '99 as an Army-level Headquarters.

As mentioned earlier, the teaming of the 1st Cavalry Division and the 49th Armored Division is already paying big dividends as the 49th Division begins to train for its Bosnia mission in March of 2000.

III Corps is leading the way in reshaping the Army as part of the Force XXI program. In this fiscal year alone, we will be fielding 65 new systems throughout the Corps. The 4th Infantry Division at Fort Hood is modernizing and reorganizing and will complete its conversion to the Force XXI Division structure this fiscal year. It is also conducting a comprehensive fielding and testing program to become the Army's first digital division by the end of year 2000 – all while maintaining its combat readiness. The 1st Cavalry Division will follow in 2003 with III Corps becoming the first digitized Corps in 2004.

The Corps' focus on maintaining a trained and ready force is all encompassing. In August 1998, an Armor Task Force returned from Kuwait where it trained as part of CENTCOM's Exercise Intrinsic Action. Earlier this month, the 68th Engineer Company from Fort Hood and the 55th Engineer Battalion from Ft Riley returned from Honduras and Nicaragua where they provided humanitarian relief to people who were devastated by Hurricane Mitch. These units performed extremely well in very primitive conditions and brought relief and stability to that region. In February and March, brigades from the Corps Artillery supported both the 3rd Infantry Division Warfighter in Georgia and the V Corps Warfighter in Europe. The 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment is also participating in the V Corps Warfighter exercise. 3-2 Air Defense Artillery, a Patriot Battalion from the Corps Air Defense Brigade at Ft Bliss, deploys this month to Southwest Asia in support of Operation Southern Watch. In the last nine months, the Corps has had 4 brigade rotations to the National Training Center and provided support to 2 brigade rotations at the Joint Readiness Training Center at Ft Polk. The recent receipt of the FY99 readiness supplemental from Congress and proposed

budgets will allow us to conduct home station training at the battalion task force level.

As you can see, III Corps units are very active. The increased OPTEMPO that the Corps has experienced over the last few years comes with a cost. Today 7,593 III Corps soldiers are deployed in 14 countries around the world in support of our National Military Strategy. An additional 4,845 III Corps soldiers are deployed away from their home stations within the continental United States conducting training. Our training programs support our readiness objectives; however, personnel shortages provide significant challenges to our commanders. The greatest challenge is the shortage of both junior non-commissioned officers and junior commissioned officers. Multiple deployments for both training and operational missions cause soldiers to be away from their homes and families at an ever-increasing rate.

Civilian employees are a significant part of a ready force. Programmatic and commercial activity related cuts are breaking an already stretched civilian workforce. These reductions have caused us to lose considerable flexibility; we are now no more than one deep in many areas. Additional decrements will have an even greater impact on installation readiness and our ability to mobilize, deploy and sustain our combat ready units.

Historically, to alleviate some of the civilian shortfalls, soldiers have performed base support duties on a borrowed military manpower basis. However, the force structure can no longer support diverting soldiers without risking readiness degradation in combat units. Therefore, borrowed military manpower is not a practical option to supplement or replace civilian manpower shortages.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND QUALITY OF LIFE

The additional dollars provided by Congress in the FY99 appropriation and readiness supplemental allow us to maintain trained and ready units. However, we still need help on the installation operations side. With OPTEMPO increasing, the stress placed upon our garrisons has also increased. Attempts to protect mission readiness from recurring budget cuts have exerted a heavy toll on infrastructure and quality of life programs. For example, for the first time at Fort Hood, dollars were reprogrammed in FY98 from infrastructure and quality of life to maintain training readiness. This fiscal year, there is no internal flexibility left to absorb shortfalls or rearrange these accounts unless I migrate dollars from the training accounts. Repair and maintenance is restricted to physical plant catastrophic failures only. There are no dollars to perform required maintenance on transformers and lines to prevent power failures, roof repairs to prevent collapses, sewer lines to prevent bursting pipes, and heating and air conditioning systems.

III Corps soldiers need to concentrate on their mission essential tasks, not return to the days of performing dining facility chores, cutting grass, and guarding fence lines. They need assurance that public works can afford to repair the toilet in their barracks room, or keep the air conditioner operating during the 100-degree summer heat. One area where we see improvement in soldier quality of life is in the FY99 increase in the Barracks Upgrade Program.

Quality of life however, is more than taking care of the single soldier today. 62% of III Corps soldiers are married. 9% of them are married to other soldiers. Soldiers must believe that the daily sacrifices they and their families are called upon to make are worth it. Family forums such as Army Family Action Plan and town hall meetings indicate a growing concern that constrained budgets will

reduce their quality of life. If we can fulfill their expectations, we keep the soldier and family in the Army.

Current funding levels do not allow us to meet their needs. Senior commanders are concerned they may not be able to meet their daily training readiness challenges if they have to migrate dollars into infrastructure and quality of life. This not only impacts readiness today, but also will have devastating consequences for the future. We must have adequate funding in these critical areas.

SUMMARY

III Corps is trained and ready to accomplish specified contingency missions. Our soldiers are men and women of character who are confident in their own abilities, the abilities of their peers, their equipment, their training and their leaders. As such, they will guarantee success on any battlefield around the globe. Warfighting readiness is our daily focus and standards and discipline are our watchwords.

One of the most important indicators of readiness is whether your soldiers have a sense of purpose. All across III Corps, from the hills of Korea and Colorado to the plains of Kansas and Texas, to the camps in Bosnia, you can see in our soldiers eyes that sense of purpose; their belief that they are serving their nation and providing a valuable contribution to their country.

High OPTEMPO, perceived decrease in quality of life and eroding infrastructure concern me, my commanders and are an issue with our soldiers and their families. Inadequate funding to properly maintain and improve installation facilities and services cannot continue indefinitely.

I thank you on behalf of all III Corps soldiers, civilians and family members for your past support and look forward to the opportunity to discuss and solve together the challenges facing us.