

TRANSCRIPT

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THIS IS A RUSH TRANSCRIPT AND MAY CONTAIN ERRORS. USERS ARE ADVISED TO CONSULT THEIR OWN TAPES OR NOTES OF THE SESSION IF ABSOLUTE VERIFICATION OF WORDING IS NEEDED.

Q: Welcome to everyone and welcome to General Blum, Lieutenant General, H. Steven with a V., B-L-U-M, in case anyone needs to know that. Welcome back. I think it's your fourth time through isn't it? At least three.

A: About three times, yeah. I enjoy these.

Q: Let's talk a little bit about, because there is a war going on, the readiness condition of the forces at this point. They've been through a lot, especially the land forces.

A: I'll talk about the Army Guard and the Air Guard. We've been at war for six years. There are three things that really produce readiness that we measure them by. One is people, one is the equipment, and one is the training.

The good news story is the people. We're doing remarkably well on raising the force. We actually have attained our end strength, and two years ago as you all well know, we were not at our end strength, our authorized end strength. Conventional wisdom thought we wouldn't and couldn't and I assured them we could if we were resourced properly. We were resourced properly in the last two years for bonuses and enlistment options and things like that, and we did achieve our end strength.

So now what we have is the most experienced, youngest, probably highest quality force that this nation has ever had in its Army and Air National Guard. That's people wise.

Training wise, the same. It's never been better. So training is a very excellent good news story as well. The Army and Air Force are investing significant money in training our force. It's the best trained force we've ever had in 374 years of existence of the Guard.

What's left is the equipment. The equipment in theater, as any of you that have been over there know, is superb. It changes every day. We're sending out equipment every day to deal with the threat, this new mine resistant, ambush protected MRAP vehicles that are being fielded now, as you're well aware of. But here's my challenge. We were not fully equipped before 9/11. We've been at a constant state of war since 9/11, that's six years for us. And we have cross-leveled, that means borrowed equipment, robbed Peter to pay Paul, so that we do have the finest equipment humanly possible in the hands of our troops overseas. That has created a challenge for me at home in having equipment to train with and equipment to respond to the Governors with.

Now the Army honestly, in my assessment, under General Speaks, is working in sincere earnest to try to identify exactly what the requirements are and what the funding will be necessary to bring us up to an appropriate level of equipment that mitigates the risk back here in the homeland and our ability to respond.

I think that's going to take a couple of years. There are people that would like to take longer than that. I don't think we can afford to take longer than that. In fact I have a greater sense of urgency for equipping that force right now than may exist in some other places. So that's my challenge. That's my readiness challenge right now.

It's a long answer, I'm sorry.

Q: That's okay. But other places like what? Like OSD?

A: There's competition for the defense dollar, there's no question about it. And the Army and the Air Force, the Department of Defense have heretofore not placed that as a number one priority. I think we've seen the realignment of that and the recognition that that is something that seriously must be addressed today by senior leadership in DoD and senior leadership in the Army and the Air Force.

Q: You mentioned Steve Speaks. What about Craig McKinley in the Air Guard? Is he--

A: The Air Guard has much less challenge in this area because the Air Force made a business decision almost 30 years ago to adequately equip their reserve component, the Air Force and the Air Guard. So the worst case scenario in the Air Guard is about 85 percent. That would be a dream come true for the Army Guard, 85 percent.

So we're dealing with much different--one is apples and one is pineapples. It's much much different. The Air National Guard is very well resourced by the Air Force and the Army National Guard has historically been under-resourced by the Army, and frankly the United States Army has been under-equipped to be a fighting force and it is running to catch up in that regard right now too.

Q: I wanted to see if what I think I'm seeing is true, but the Guard is doing some interesting things in coming up with units that can fight the war without leaving home.

For instance the UAV organizations, but I also think when I called to talk to someone in Cyber Command, the guy that's the spokesman now for it in the Pentagon is a Guard general. Is that also going to become an area of heavy Guard investment? It seems to make sense.

I'd like you to answer that, and then extrapolate a little bit on that into the Light Cargo Aircraft. It seems like that would be kind of a perfect role for the Guard as well. I see that happening with F-22 a lot.

A: That's a lot of questions. Let me try to take them one at a time.

The first thing is absolutely, the Air Force in particular and the Air National Guard is finding itself fighting the war from home. And for those of you who don't know what we're talking about--if you do know, that's great, but if you don't, the Predators, the UAVs that we fly in Iraq and Afghanistan and other places are not, they're flown in Afghanistan and Iraq but they're controlled from the United States. The actual person that is seeing what they're seeing and making the decisions to act on whatever the system is able to do, whether it's able to collect information and disseminate it, or whether it's able to do that and also deliver a weapons system, those kinds of decisions are actually flown from ground control stations in remote locations in the Air Force. In the Army they're flown from forward locations because there are different levels of UAVs. One is an operational and strategic level target acquisition vehicle and it interdicts strategic and operational level targets. And in theater the operational and tactical level, lower level decisions made by ground commanders, they need to have unmanned aerial vehicles that can do these things and they control them. So the tactical level operations will be done in theater traditionally.

But you're exactly correct, Dave, we are moving more and more to being able to literally stay at home--not literally--but stay in the United States, and in fact fly missions in the warfight.

The same thing happens with our strategic bomber force. It leaves CONUS, flies in theater, drops their ordnance, and then comes home.

Q: Cyber Command is one thing that really hooked me.

A: Cyber Command is a new initiative. We're working with STRATCOM where the Army and the Air National Guard, the citizen soldiers and airmen that have cutting edge computer skills, the ability to protect systems, to attack systems. These capabilities are found in citizen soldiers and airmen that do this in industry every day and yet can be called upon in the service of our nation to protect our computer systems and if necessary interrupt or attack computer systems of our adversaries.

We are leveraging that capability and we are seeing more and more utilization of the National Guard in both protecting our computer systems in DoD and in state

government, and being able to make them less vulnerable to attack and more robust and able to deliver capabilities because we constantly experience probing attacks from organizations and people in states that would like to have the ability to interrupt our--

Q: Do you see a heavier, increasingly, Guard component type command?

A: Absolutely. I'm almost a little surprised that you're this much attuned to it because this is a new area that we actually are engaged in right now. So it's good that you know about it and I think it's good that we're doing--

Q: Air Guardsmen you were talking about--

Q: Yeah, Guardsmen.

Finally, the Light Cargo Aircraft.

A: The Light Cargo Aircraft or the Future Cargo Aircraft were the original names of the initiatives that the Air Force and the Army came up with. We have, I think, Department of Defense has wisely decided to make it a Joint Cargo Aircraft that will be acquired and flown by both the Army and the Air National Guard in DoD. It is a magnificent capability for the overseas warfight and expeditionary capability that our land and air forces need, and it's very appropriate that we would put these systems in the Army and Air Guard because they'd be exactly the type of aircraft you would need if we had to respond to another Katrina-like event.

Q: Let me ask you about the Guard's mission on the border with Mexico. Can you explain why the 3,000 Guardsmen are being pulled out at a time when the Governors and folks down there say it's too soon, that not enough fencing and barriers have been built? Secondly, what do you see about the [inaudible] 3,000? When do you think they will be pulled out?

A: The Guard's customer on this operation is CBP. CBP asked for 6,000 initially. We put in 6,000. We kept them there for a year at about that level. Sometimes it was slightly higher and sometimes it was slightly lower, but it averaged 6,000 soldiers for that year. The plan was always to bring it down to 3,000 the second year, work our way down. The CBP has not complained that bringing the numbers down is inappropriate. What allows those numbers to come down is the hiring and training of additional Border Patrol agents. That's one of the factors that allows the number to come down.

The other factor that allows it to come down is the superb success we had in infrastructure--roads, lights, fencing, barriers, vehicle barriers. What we call tactical infrastructure that allows a reduced number of Border Patrol agents to in fact have better situational awareness through cameras and sensors and fences and lighting and an access road that allows them greater mobility laterally along the border that the Guard has provided for them.

All we're doing is executing the plan that was developed by the Department of Defense and Department of Homeland Security, approved by the President and funded. We were funded for 6,000 the first year; we are funded for 3,000 this year. We will ultimately work ourselves out of a job by the end of next year. When I say work ourselves out, I don't know if we'll be to zero, but we'll be into very low numbers by the end of the year. That's not a sign of failure, it's actually a sign of success. The Guard was in support of the Border Patrol so that we could buy them time to develop their own robust, their own capabilities, and to assist them with this installation of tactical infrastructure.

Q: I believe Arizona lawmakers in particular have complained that it is too soon.

A: Well, I have talked to the sector chiefs and myself, and the Border Patrol and myself, and I've talked to Governor Palitano as well. I have an Adjutant General in Arizona also. They are still the main effort and they still have the greatest number of soldiers in their state. They have two corridors that we're very concerned about right now that come through Arizona. So they still are our main effort in this. I don't want to get into too much more detail than that in your publication because then the information may be too detailed and useful to our competitors that we're down there trying to stop.

But we are flexible. We're not rigid on this. This 3,000 can move. If Arizona really truly needs more troops we can move them from neighboring states to Arizona. We can weight the effort there if it's necessary. Right now the sector border chiefs, David Agular, Chief Agular of the Border Patrol, and my Adjutants General tell me we've got this just about right.

I'm not going to tell you that Governor Palitano has it wrong. I'm trying to fulfill a national mission that we've been asked to do. We're doing the best we can. We have three other Governors--Governor Schwarzenegger, Governor Perry, and Governor Richards--all four of them see their border issues a little bit differently. But my ultimate customer is the federal law enforcement agency charged to secure the border and that's CBP and they're telling us this is what they want.

Q: So it will go down to 3,000 no matter what?

A: The plan always was to be 6,000 down to 3,000, ultimately down to nothing. Right now we're on plan and no one from Department of Homeland Security or DoD has urged me to alter the plan.

Q: General, some of us traveled in May to [Indiana] with you. You talked about needing 17 [inaudible] risk down to a level that you thought would be acceptable.

A: In the Army National Guard, in the equipping area alone. That's not my total need, but to get the equipment to a level where I think it would be acceptable risk. What does that mean? That means 90 percent filled.

Here's my piece of paper. Let me just give it to her so she's got it and can get it right. It's 13.1 to get it up to 90 percent. If anybody else wants one of these we've got plenty of them.

Q: How many years is that?

A: That would be to fully equip the Guard by 2013. At 90 percent of what they're required.

Q: Over the FYDP?

A: Over the POM, over the FYDP. It would be \$13.1 billion to take the Army National Guard equipment level up to 90 percent, which mitigates the risk that we are assuming right now, or accepting.

Q: Can you talk a little bit about your [inaudible] and how you determine that it's 90 percent [inaudible] versus increased cooperation among the states? I got a feeling after that trip that there was a little bit of disagreement between the Guard and Northern Command as to what that [inaudible].

A: I don't know whether there's a disagreement between the Guard and Northern Command. I'm not certain I can agree with that. I'm not sure that we don't disagree but I'm not aware that we have a disagreement.

I know in order to be able to respond to a no-notice event or several near simultaneous no-notice events, whether they're man-made or acts of nature, you're still going to have to do the same kind of activities. Then if you throw a terrorist act in there, it requires the National Guard to be able to respond in minutes and hours, which means they must have the equipment in their hands when the event happens so that they can immediately respond. There's no time to start moving it from neighboring states and drawing it from consolidated sites as some people have suggested.

I will tell you that on a predictable event like a hurricane, you can do that. A hurricane is a terrible thing, but in some regards it's the easiest thing we deal with because we know it's coming. We can pre-position equipment, and you can go borrow trucks and generators and special pieces of equipment and move it into proximity so it could respond when the hurricane clears.

My problem is not with the predictable events. My problem is how do we get the Guard ready for the no-notice events that will happen like an earthquake or a tornado or a terrorist event or a combination of all three at the same time. That's where I think we, by having an under-equipped National Guard we're assuming some significant risk in that area. More than I think is prudent.

**Q: Jumping off what you were talking about with Hurricane Katrina, Rand recently came out with a report analyzing the Guard response and suggesting some National Guard troops be more focused on homeland security. Do you think that's possible given the Guard's role abroad? Can you speak a little bit about balancing homeland security versus your role abroad?**

**A: I think it's entirely possible because we have been doing it for over three centuries. That's exactly what the Guard does. That's why we're unique in the Department of Defense. We're the only dual mission force, we're the only force in the Department of Defense that can be called out by the Governors to do homeland defense, homeland security type missions, Katrina response operations. All of that response was ordered by the Governors of this nation for the National Guard. For Katrina, even though it was the largest, fastest military response to a natural disaster in the history of the world, frankly, we had 50,000 citizen soldiers and airmen from every single state and territory responded to Katrina, that was ordered by the Governors. That was done through an Emergency Management Assistance Compact, EMAC arrangement that the Governors have where they can borrow manpower and equipment from one another. Governor Barber was the recipient of about 25,000 soldiers from that arrangement. Governor Blanco had about 25,000 soldiers that ultimately grew to about 35,000 soldiers in Louisiana by that agreement.**

**The Guard has, any forces that are not overseas, that are not currently in Iraq or Afghanistan are available to our nation's Governors to be called upon for exactly that purpose.**

**The way we source who goes and when they go overseas is done very very carefully so that any state maintains at least the critical essential capabilities they need for that Governor in their National Guard to respond here at home.**

**So we're very careful when we send a unit to Iraq, that sending that unit to Iraq or Afghanistan does not completely strip the capability of the Governor here at home to protect our citizens if something untoward would occur.**

**Q: General, General Casey and the active duty Army made it pretty clear that they were bumping up against their ceiling on deployments in terms of sustaining the surge beyond next April. How much slack is there in the Guard and Reserve if that were necessary? Are you guys totally maxed out? Can you fill that role if need be?**

**A: I never say we're totally maxed out because we never have committed the entire force at any one time. We are a very balanced force in combat, combat support, combat service support. We are a very agile and adaptable force. Right now I have rough order of magnitude about 18 percent of the troops on the ground in Iraq are Guard. It's a little heavier in Afghanistan. It's almost 100 percent in the Balkans, in the Sinai, in the Horn of Africa. So we are making a very significant contribution.**

Are you asking me could we do more? If the nation requires us to do more, we will do more. Are you asking me are we in our comfort zone? No, we're not. Are we stretched? Absolutely. Are we broken? No. Will we break? No, I don't think so.

The combat units that I'm sending back to Iraq now are going back sooner than we would all like. Sooner than Secretary Gates would like on his goal of one in five years. We're going back really in some cases one in three years, in some cases a little less. Is that having some effect on our retention? Yeah, it is.

If we could get to one in five I think we could sustain about 60,000 deployed indefinitely at a fairly comfortable level. Doing it more frequently than one in five puts us at a little discomfort, but it's far from breaking. The Guard is a very resilient, it's a tough, tough group of citizen soldiers that we've got serving now.

I've been in uniform 40 years and I've never seen commitment and dedication and the talent getting any better than the young men and women that are coming in now. It's extraordinary.

Q: Is it stable? Has it been stable for the six years? Is it getting better? Is it--

A: What do you mean, stable? I'm not trying to be cute.

Q: How good these people are.

A: The quality of our force continues to get better and better. That is counter-intuitive.

Q: Is that because they have gotten more experience?

A: It's a combination of things.

They have gotten more experience and they're staying with us. So our NCOs and our non-commissioned officers and our leaders are recent combat veterans with contemporary experience, very relevant and very essential for what we're being asked to do today. So we've never had a cadre of such experienced people.

Our overall age has actually lowered. It's the youngest force we've ever had. It's the most experienced force we've ever had. And it's the highest quality force we've ever had. The people that we have enlisted in the last year are of the very highest caliber that we've experienced since the beginning of the volunteer force back in the '70s, back in the early '70s, which is all counter-intuitive.

Q: Is it the youngest force because the old guys are all leaving and they don't want to be redeployed?

A: That probably has something to do with it.

Q: Can it be too young?

A: No, it's not too young. It's not in a problem area. I view it as very positive. Our force mix right now is probably the best it's ever been. And I think that the demands of mobilization and the demands of combat have had a very unintended positive effect of professionalizing the National Guard and making it more competent and more essential to the Army and the Air Force than it had been perhaps when it was a strategic reserve.

Q: Can you run us through some of the equipment levels right now? On average, [inaudible] equipment that [inaudible] right now?

A: I'm working very closely with the United States Army so that we don't talk past each other, so that when you go interview them they give you a different answer than I give you. I think we're at the place finally where we're working together on this, so let me put it to you this way.

We have agreed with the Army to basically, to articulate our case in terms of dollars that we actually need. In rough order of magnitude I have nationwide--overseas I have 100 percent of the equipment I need. Make no mistake about that. Any troops that are deployed overseas have everything that they are individually supposed to have and their unit has every truck they're supposed to have and every radio they're supposed to have, any piece of equipment they're supposed to have.

Back here at home, on the average, I've got about half of the equipment that I need. And everybody doesn't have half. Nationally we have half. Nobody has more than about 65 or 70 percent. Some have as little as 33 percent. My job is to try to get everybody as well as we possibly can get them.

Now every single day that gets better, but it's not getting better as fast as I'd like. It will take some time.

Q: What are the key pieces of equipment?

A: It depends on who you are. If you're the Governor the key pieces of equipment, if you're in a hurricane state you want your engineers to have bulldozers and graders and dump trucks and loaders and engineer equipment. If you're a Governor in a hurricane or a flood state you want them to have helicopters that can lift people and bring people out of danger and bring troops and equipment and commodities like blankets and food and medical supplies to a place where you can't otherwise. So helicopters are very important to Governors. Trucks are very important to Governors. Engineer equipment is very important to Governors. Medical units are very important to Governors.

Anybody that watched Katrina knows communications is essential. We were literally deaf, dumb and blind for the first early hours of Katrina. We're not going to be that way

if a Katrina were to happen again. Since Katrina we've gone out and used money that the Congress appropriated and authorized for us to go and improve our communications and now we have 72 deployable stand-alone communications capability units that can operate whether there is an electrical grid in place or a cellular system in place or not. In other words, if we were to go to some desolate place with no electricity and no infrastructure whatsoever, we can stand communications up. Not for everyone, but at least for the people that have to have communications to respond.

Q: You mentioned the Army, you guys are working closer now. But there has been talk about maybe Congress giving you your own pot of money [inaudible] equipment. Is that something you're still pushing or--

A: I'm not pushing it, but if Congress wants to push it, that's their prerogative.

If I'm adequately resourced--and I'm talking about if the Army National Guard is adequately resourced by the Army, that would not be necessary. If the Air Force adequately resourced the Air National Guard, that wouldn't be necessary. If they don't, then that is a method of curing the problem.

Q: The Senate today is going to be debating [inaudible] again [inaudible]. Secretary Gates has said [inaudible]. I wanted to see what your thoughts were on that language and what kind of effect do you see that having [inaudible]?

A: I see it exactly the same way Secretary Gates sees it, and I don't mean that in a humorous way whatsoever. Secretary Gates clearly accepts, his legislation is well intended. The intent of the legislation is good, but the effect of doing it creates some other problems and issues that would be unintended and unhelpful, frankly, for the Secretary to be able to manage the department.

So I agree. While I think it is fantastic and I really appreciate the fact that our elected lawmakers are sensitive to the sacrifice and the hardship that our soldiers are facing on these frequent, recurring deployments, I also agree that prescribing in law the dwell time really does tie the hands of our military leadership and may put us in a worse situation, frankly, than if we were not bound by law and proscriptive dwell times. I frankly don't, as a military person, there's no one in the Army or Air National Guard that I represent and speak for who would be unwilling to go do whatever this nation really needed it to do whenever it needed it done. And while they appreciate having the ability to rest and recover between deployments, if it were to become absolutely necessary for the survival of our nation or in our national interest, they would do whatever is necessary to defend this country. If it meant going more often or less frequently or more frequently, they would do that.

I think that's where Secretary Gates is on this, and I think, frankly, that's where all the military leaders are on that. I frankly applaud the fact that our elected representatives are looking for ways to assist the soldier. They have been very supportive of the troops.

Q: Can you quantify, though, in any real sense what percentage of the Army Guard [inaudible] has deployed more than once in three years? [Inaudible].

A: Can I take that one for the record? I don't want to give you a statistic that ends up in a publication and I find out it's a little bit wrong.

Q: Okay.

Q: I clearly have people who are in that category. It is not as high a percentage as you might think. I sense that you think it's a high percentage. I will go out and check it and get you that answer exactly, but I think I know what ballpark that figure comes in and it's in the lower third.

Q: General, when you met with us about three years back you expressed some concern about this explosive growth in private security companies, that they were creating potential retention problems, especially for highly skilled individuals. Has this been remedied at all with bonuses, other things? Is this still an issue?

A: In certain communities of our military, special operations, and it would be best to go see Admiral Olson on that, to be honest. He can tell you better how much of, they're in competition for the same people and we're almost in a bidding war to keep their specialty skills. I have a small population of people, something like 5,000 that are in that, and they are constantly under pressure of recruitment out from our ranks to go to work for these kinds of people. That's the special operations community that mostly is affected by that. And they're one of our most needed areas right now. But I think if you want to get the macro level affect on DoD, Admiral Olson of SOCOM could give you that. I can tell you that within the Guard I have two special forces groups and they're constantly being recruited by these outside organizations.

Q: Just to follow, those two special forces--

A: And it takes years to recruit and develop those soldiers. So when you lose one of those it's not insignificant. Even one is a significant loss.

Q: Could you characterize how stretched those special forces groups are?

A: They're very busy right now. They as a community, Meghan, have already deployed twice already as a group. So in that community, in the special operations community the percentage would be very high for more than one deployment. In the high demand/low density units you will find people that have gone two and three and four times. In the high density/lower demand units, most people have not had their second tour yet. They're coming up on their second tour now.

Q: When you talk about those, you're talking about airmen as well as special forces,

right?

A: The Air Guard is totally different. The Air Guard has probably gone six or eight or ten times by now. But they go for shorter duration deployments and they do it in a much different manner than the Army does. I think you have to separate the Army Guard and the Air Guard from that, because the Air Guard may do a deployment every 18 months, but those deployments may only be for four months as opposed to 12 months boots on the ground and an 18 month mobilization, things like that.

Q: Back to Mark's question about Army Guard contribution to the Iraq--

A: Sure.

Q: Specifically on the combat brigade level, my sense, from a [inaudible] perspective, is there a steady state contribution that the Guard is supposed to make to the Army Force Generation model? I ask that because it seems to me that the problem has been a peak and value type thing with a whole bunch of Guard units at brigade level early on, and now [inaudible] we're at a pretty low level. Is there four that [inaudible] early next year. Are we trying to get to a steady state before the number [inaudible]? Can you say what the model is and how close we are to getting it back?

A: I think you have it exactly right. I think you have a very accurate picture of what we would like to have happen and what has really occurred. I would love to see a steady state contribution of perhaps five brigades or four brigades, or whatever, whatever number it is where we would consistently have those brigades at a high level of readiness and availability, and then intensively train them, knowing that they're probably going to be utilized and then send them into the warfight on a predictable model which is the ARFORGEN model.

The model has not become reality yet as the goal, the DoD goal of one in five has not become reality yet.

So if either or both of those were to occur then we get to what I described earlier as I think the National Guard could provide 50,000 to 60,000 people and X number of combat brigades indefinitely, with much less peaks and valleys than we're talking about.

Q: The four that are going to be sent, or at least the [inaudible] sent early next year, is that to [inaudible] on that steady state? Is that an effort to get on that [inaudible] or is that--

A: That is the intent. That's the first opportunity that we think, we being the Army, we being the DoD and the National Guard all working together. That's the first time we think we can finally get the requirements in line against a timeline that can meet the one year mobilization policy which [inaudible], Secretary Gates announced in January. It was long overdue. That will help us. But that will be the first group that really is in

alignment with that policy. That will be the first time we start looking like the ARFORGEN model, and that will be the first time we get somewhat close to the one in five, although those units will be one in four.

Q: Another equipment question [inaudible] Lakota. There have been some reports that it might not be able to [inaudible] it's specified to do as far as carrying wounded and so on. Have you taken delivery of any of these yet? Are you happy with what you've seen?

A: We're very happy with the Lakota. I'm not aware of what you're describing. The Lakotas that I have seen absolutely can carry casualties, absolutely can carry litters. They can carry personnel. They have two engines. Can you do everything? Of course not. No piece of equipment can do everything. That's why you have a light helicopter and a medium helicopter and a heavy helicopter. You don't want to be flying a CH-47 Chinook around. They're expensive to operate and you don't want to just use that for observation and carrying two or three people around, or one litter or two litters around. Lakota can do that. Lakota is a modern, relatively inexpensive, reliable, has a [wind] system. It can do search and rescue, it can do reconnaissance, it can do aerial surveillance, it can be outfitted with the systems that provide us real time down-link video. It's a very useful light helicopter. It's a great replacement for the old Huey that we retired. In fact it's a much more capable aircraft than the Huey because of the dual engines and the hoists and so forth.

So I am excited about its fielding in the Guard. I think it will be well received by the units that get these helicopters. I've heard nothing negative to date from the field, my aviation community, on their receipt of this.

Q: What's the timeline? Where are they going?

A: I'm not prepared to tell you that here at breakfast. I'll give you the whole fielding plan for them, though. We can hook you up with our aviation branch of the Guard Bureau that has the fielding plan for the Lakotas. I'll be happy to do that if you want it.

Q: General, I wonder, you're not only at war but you're transforming at the same time. I wondered if you could catch us up on where that process is and tell us a little bit about what's going on in this sort of rumbling groundswell at one point for another Stryker Brigade [inaudible].

A: If you have that chart with the zeroes on it, that would be the best thing to give her.

What I'm showing you here is, she's talking about transformation. When September 11th, if you see the column with all the zeroes on it--why don't you pass a few of those out. This is pretty amazing.

On September, 2001 we had none of these things. None of these things. Except for civil support teams, we had ten. That was only because Congress mandated it. The

Department of Defense said we don't need them, the Army said we don't need them, the Air Force said we don't need them, but the Congress said we needed them so thank God we had ten of them. Today, six years later, we have joint force headquarters in every state and territory--you had none on September 11th.

We have a CBRNE, you all know what that is, Chemical Biological Radiological Nuclear High Yield Conventional Explosive response force packages. We had none in the Guard, zero. Today we have 17. Twelve fully equipped, fully certified, that's why it says 12; and the slash means by the end of the year it will be 17 because we'll have those equipped and trained and ready to go.

Joint Operation Centers went from zero to 55.

Critical Infrastructure Assessment Teams. Eighty percent of the critical infrastructure of this nation is in the private sector. It's not in DoD, yet we didn't have any teams. And when I say critical infrastructure, I'm talking about critical to the Department of Defense, but it's in the private sector. Somebody needs to go out and analyze where the vulnerabilities for these things are and how do you protect them. We didn't have any capability to do that. Today we now have six fully trained teams that can go out and do this.

National Guard Reaction Forces, it was zero. Now we have 54.

Computer Emergency Response Teams, to your question earlier, these are computer emergency response teams. They can detect when we're being attacked and what to mitigate and how to defend a system.

Q: Are they involved in the attack part of it as well?

A: No. The only way they're involved in the attack part of it is recognizing an attack. These are defensive teams, damage mitigating teams. People who know what to shut down and how to protect the system once it's under attack. Fifty-four of those.

Joint Incident Site Communications Capability. I had zero of those in Katrina. We now have 40 of those, going to 72 by the end of the year.

Weapons of Mass Destruction Civil Support Teams where we only had 10 on September 11th, we have 52 trained and certified and fully equipped. By the end of the year it will be 55.

We have a joint interagency training capability where we can finally bring together DHS and the civilian community and intergovernmental and interagency people to work with the National Guard and DoD so if we do have an incident the first time they meet each other isn't exchanging business cards at the scene. You got to see some of that when you flew to Indiana.

So you talk about transformation. You've been around this town a lot longer than I have. You tell me what organization could go from zero to these kind of numbers and defying gravity of the system, frankly. I mean we've got, this has got a lot of non-concurrences all the way up the line. We pushed because it was the right thing to do. It's finally being accepted and it's finally being identified and defended in the integrated priority list for NORTHCOM. It's finally becoming items that are being taken to the JROC for resourcing. It is finally capabilities that are being recognized and supported by the Department of Defense, Department of the Army and the Air Force. So this is our report card on transformation.

You asked me about a second Stryker. If the Army wants more Strykers in the Guard, we will field them. But that will be a decision that needs to be made by General Casey and the Army Staff.

Q: The best and brightest thing they have these days is the MRAP. [Inaudible] that rush to get those MRAPs built and to Iraq and Afghanistan, is that having any impact on reset? And also what do you see as the training strategy for your folks to get training on MRAP before they show up in the theater?

A: On the first part, no, I don't see it impacting in a negative way. At least not to date, it has not.

The second piece, it's absolutely essential, the National Guard soldiers that I saw in Iraq on my last visit over there just a few weeks ago were from the Puerto Rico National Guard, an engineering unit commanded by a female lieutenant colonel who every day went out looking for and finding IEDs. I was pleased to see that every single one of those soldiers drove around in an MRAP vehicle. They were already fielded completely with MRAP vehicles. That is fast, fast fielding, movement and equipment issuance. That's almost lightning speed for Department of the Army and Department of Defense to make that happen that fast. I am very pleased to see that the Puerto Rican National Guard engineer unit was already operating with MRAP vehicles.

To your point, we need to have some of those--It's a little bit of a contest here, you have to understand. We want to get everybody that needs an MRAP in theater to have an MRAP first, but you're exactly correct. We soon need to start having a couple of MRAP vehicles so we can train on them in this country so that we don't have to spend time training on them once we get there. But the priority right now is to get the MRAPs in theater and the soldiers that are at risk in riding these MRAPs, and that's the right priority. There's no question. But you're exactly right, ultimately those things will have to be in our training base so that we're training our troops how to maintain them and how to operate them and techniques and procedures that are employed with them.

Q: Don't you fear, though that the MRAP, the resources being pushed to MRAP is going to starve off or take away money that--

A: It is a very real fear, but I haven't seen evidence of it to date. It's certainly worthy of watching. I know General Speaks is watching that. He and I have discussed that. We're concerned about it. But to date I haven't seen that.

Q: General, back to something you said [inaudible]. There has been an effort to move to one year deployment from the Guard by squeezing some of the training into a shorter period of time. There are people recently who seem to have suggested it's going to take a little longer for that to come into effect. Can you tell us whether the units are going to go, have been able to get a lot of their training done and will be able to deploy for just that one year? For those units going over next year. And secondarily, are the units going over there going to be impacted at all by General Patraeus' recent announcement about the drawdown?

A: Let me take that one at a time.

Secretary Gates has been absolutely clear that he wants to mobilize the Guard and Reserve for one year. I think he has it exactly right. I don't think there is any need to deviate from that policy. Will some units need additional training in addition to that one year? Absolutely. Should that be tacked on to the mobilization time? Absolutely not. How that should be done should be determined by the state, by the unit, and how they best utilize their pre-mobilization training time is really their business, in my judgment.

Every state will not do it exactly the same, but I will assure you that every state will have it done to the standard prior to mobilization. Some states have magnificent resources and very compressed geography and it's easy to do. You can do the training and still be at home, which reduces a lot of the strain on the citizen soldier if they can do training locally and then go home in the evening or on the weekend or something like that rather than be warehoused and moved across the country to sit and wait for a few weeks to get their hands on a piece of equipment.

I think the Secretary made a courageous and right call when he changed the mobilization policy and it will force the Department of the Army to make their mobilization system far more efficient than it has been and it currently is. That's about as far as I want to go with that.

Q: So you cannot say whether or not that has absolutely happened?

A: Oh, I can say it's going to happen. As long as it's this Secretary, it's going to happen.

Q: And the announcement that General Patraeus made about the expected drawdown. Is that going to have any impact at all? Any of your units--

A: I'm not being coy here. It's too early to tell. I don't have the detail on the drawdown to be able to tell you that. You could make the logical assumption that if forces were drawn

down that National Guard forces would be drawn down proportionately. That could happen. What also might happen is as the numbers come down, because of the composition of the specialties in the units that would be required to be there, the percentage of the Guard that's in theater could literally go up. Or it could remain the same. I'm not ready to tell you what the effect will be yet until we analyze that.

Q: General, given the news that Blackwater apparently is being expelled, I just wanted to ask you about these independent contractors. One of the problems is they're not in the military chain of command or accountable to the military and they're also not accountable to the Iraqi government. There have been complaints from the military that they may interfere with their mission or have an adverse impact on your mission. Based on your knowledge of the Guard's experience in Iraq and Afghanistan, what are you hearing? Are they creating problems for you? And are there any changes or reforms you think need to be made? Finally, what impact do you think, what would happen if Blackwater entirely had to leave Iraq? What kind of impact would that have on security and what you're doing?

A: I'm not going to answer all of that because I don't think I'm qualified to give you the expert answer you're looking for on that. I will tell you that I've been to Iraq 14 or 16 times. I've seen National Guard units that have operated in and around not only Blackwater but many other contractor units that are over there. What these contract services are providing is some relief from military members doing those jobs. If they didn't perform those jobs, many of those jobs would have to be, if those jobs were to continue to be performed, deemed essential, then they would have to be shifted to additional requirements for military members to do those jobs. You asked me do I have any experience with them interfering with the work of the Guard units that are in theater, and I'm trying to think, and I cannot remember one comment in any of my visits over to Afghanistan or to Iraq where any of the soldiers or unit commanders complained to me about the presence of these contractors. That's about all I'd want to say on that issue. Beyond that, you'd have to probably talk to somebody in theater to find out what exactly, what the impact would be. I don't even know how many contractors are in both of those places. There are significant numbers.

Q: But you've heard no complaints?

A: No, I haven't.

Q: I want to ask you about employer support for the Guard and Reserve. It's a sacrifice for people going over there. Businessmen [inaudible], a guy deploys for up to five years he's got to return him back to his old job.

Are you seeing any groundswell or any building momentum from employers to relieve [inaudible] given the new realities that Guardsmen are deploying a lot more than they were before this law was passed?

A: No. One of the magnificent things that have unintendedly come about because of the war and our activities since 9/11, the American employers have been amazingly resilient and supportive of what we're asking their citizen soldier employees to do. They have, I would say the great preponderance of them are immensely supportive of the employees, and many of them go above and beyond what is required by the law.

A very very few number of them fail to comply with the federal law, and usually once they're made aware of the law they comply immediately. A lot of it's just ignorance of the law.

There are a few, and a very few, that have been problematic and they've been dealt with successfully, the USGR Committee will intervene, Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve will intervene on behalf of the employee with the employer and work out an equitable or satisfactory solution to the problem. But to state it as a huge problem would I think misstate the problem. I think it's just the opposite. I think the employers of America ought to be applauded for their continued resiliency and flexibility and absolute staunch support for these young men and women that are willing to stand up and serve our nation when it's needed, and yet be valuable employees to that company.

Q: Just one follow-up, do you ever find yourself involved in the corporate level leaning on some of these more stubborn companies?

A: Leaning on them, no. I wouldn't use that term. I have had discussions with employers. The great preponderance of them, it's a very satisfactory outcome. It's very very rare we meet an employer with a legitimate employee/employer complaint that can't be resolved.

Having said that, some of the ones that are issues are the making of the employee. The employee can sometimes work both ends on this thing and it's not always the employer that's in the wrong. So when you investigate these cases you find most of the time the employers are doing the right thing.

Q: What's the quality of support you get out of Silicone Valley?

A: I can't comment on that. I don't have any anecdotal data or experience with Silicone Valley per se. If you're talking about the IT industry, it's pretty good. I think some of the things we talked about earlier is making that even better, because we're now able to apply the expertise and the cutting edge experiences they get in the civilian world and apply it for the defense of our nation here at home. I think that's a win/win for both the civilian employers as well as our federal government.

Q: Sir, on the Air Guard side [inaudible] jumps out to me is the 350 million for [inaudible] maintenance and flying hours. What's the tactical effect of that [inaudible] the Air Guard at the same readiness level as the active duty?

A: The practical effect of that is that we'll probably have to get some funds restored to those areas if we're going to deliver the operational readiness that we've delivered in the last 25 years. I'm optimistic that that will occur. The demand on the Air National Guard is significant and they have to maintain their readiness.

Q: Are there [inaudible] that really jumps out? Is it going on across the board? Is [inaudible]? Where is it coming from?

A: The flying hour program is the most glaring one, as you point out, but that was a conscious decision where we would accept some risk in the budget, and because we thought we could adjust that risk over the course of the budget and I remain confident that we can.

Q: I'd like to just wrap up with a question of my own. Focusing on the relationship between the National Guard Bureau and the Air National Guard and the regular Air Force, starting in I think 2005 with BRAC there's been quite a bit of tension in that relationship, even you could say mistrust. Last spring General Moseley made some recommendations regarding the Guard, said some things that created quite a bit more tension. Take a few minutes here and talk to us about your relationship with the leadership of the Air Force right now. How would you characterize it? Is it good? Is it not good? And I guess more importantly, how does it affect the transformation of the Air National Guard or the plans for the transformation of the Air National Guard out of fighters and into some of these newer types of missions?

A: Everything you said was true, but we're in a different place right now. We're looking forward rather than looking backward. A lot of things that could have been done better in the past, we hope that next year if I come back here that I can tell you what has transpired since my last visit is good.

The relationship that I have with Secretary Wynne and with General Moseley and with General Corley and General McNab coming on board is excellent. The relationship I have with my Director of the Air National Guard, Craig McKinley, is very open and excellent.

We have some tough, tough challenges remaining before us, meaning the Air Guard and the Air Force Reserve and the Air Force post-BRAC. Some of them were well-aimed shots, some of them were imposed by good intentions, legislation, and the work of the commission. Every one is not going to be totally satisfied and ecstatic with the outcome. We're going to have to make some tough choices. We're going to have to transition from some missions that we have habitually done over the years to new missions. We're going to have to divest of some old aircraft that are near and dear to a lot of people and a lot of communities and have a lot of tradition attached to them.

But what we're involved in is a very dangerous world where the Air Force is a very key player and our ability to project power and to protect our soldiers deployed overseas,

and they're going to shoulder a greater responsibility here in homeland defense and homeland security. That means we're going to have to do some transformational type things. Change is always difficult, but it's necessary and we just have to make sure we're not changing for the sake of change; we're changing to literally deliver an improved capability that's more relevant or more essential to what the country really needs today and in the next ten years than what we needed ten years ago.

Q: Who do you think needs to do the most backing up at this point? The Governors and the TAGs, or the active duty Air Force leadership?

A: I don't think anybody's got to do any backing up, I think we've all got to move forward together, to be honest with you. And I don't mean that to be a cute answer. That's actually what has to happen. And I'm seeing that happen. I've watched, we've had a very successful, we took the oldest F-16s out of the Air National Guard in North Dakota. We've moved them to a Predator unit, ground control station Predator unit. We put them in the C-21s as a bridge mission until Joint Cargo Aircraft become available. They'll fly the C-21s. They're very happy in that mission. It's a legitimate, necessary day-to-day mission where they can be value-added to the Air Force. They'll stay in that mission until the Joint Cargo Aircraft is purchased and fielded. Ultimately that will be fielded in North Dakota as well.

So the Governor, the congressional delegation, the Adjutant General, the Air Force, everybody is kind of walking forward together. They would be a great model for how we need to do it in some other places. Just saying no is not the answer. You've got to figure out what the nation really needs, what the Governor really needs--you need a balance there. And there is some balance that can be achieved. It's not going to be easy, but I'm committed to doing it and so is General McKinley and so is the senior leadership of the Air Force. I think if we're sincere and work together on it we can accomplish this.

Q: So you think it's more a relationship of trust now? Or is it still more mistrust?

A: There's always going to be some element of mistrust in any relationship. The good strong relationships, it's minimal or non-existent. The strained relationships, there's more. I trust Secretary Wynne. I trust General McNab and General Corley and General Moseley. I trust General McKinley and my Adjutants General to come together and work on this thing and take this to a much more positive outcome than where we were a year and a half ago

Q: We're out of time. Thank you. We appreciate it.

END TEXT