

TRANSCRIPT

Defense Writers Group

A Project of the Center for Media & Security
New York and Washington, D.C.

General David McKiernan
Commanding General, US Army in Europe and 7th Army
October 11, 2007

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 General David McKiernan. He is the commanding general of the US Army in Europe, and the 7th Army. You've got an alliance title, too, but I'm not sure I know what that is.

A: Commander of the US Army, NATO.

Q: Okay, Commander of the US Army, NATO. Okay, we're on the record, as we always are. I thought we would start off this morning asking you to update us on the Army's transformation in process in Europe. I know that when this was planned, there were a lot of forces that were going to be coming back stateside and different kinds of forces coming over there. So, where do we stand?

A: The context of Army transformation in Europe is still the change--the transformation from a US Army in Europe that was there for the Cold War to what do we want for the present in Europe for the 21st century. So in my first couple of tours in Germany, we had a quarter of a million soldiers there. When I took command almost two years ago, we had about 62,000 soldiers. Today we have about 43,000 soldiers in Germany, so we have returned in the last two years 19,000 soldiers and some unit flags to other places back in the Army.

What we want to achieve in the next, I would say, four or five years is to get to a point where we have the right capabilities at the right geographic locations in Europe to be relevant as a leader of NATO, to be relevant in the EUCOM area of responsibility,

perhaps to provide support to AFRICOM in the AFRICOM area of responsibility, and to provide the right capabilities that are available globally.

So what's in Europe is not just for Europe. It is available for global deployment and expeditionary, meaning leaves Europe to go conduct operations and returns to Europe. That's a big difference than the Cold War. So that's the process we're in.

Why does it take four or five years? Resources. There are certain funding requirements that go along with that to make sure that we get the right stance at the end of that time. I say stance as military capabilities at the right geographical locations. So that's what we're all about.

Q: What flags have come back?

A: In the last two years we've returned the 1st Infantry Division to Fort Riley, Kansas; and we have returned the 1st Brigade of the 1st Armored Division to Fort Bliss, Texas; and then several other smaller units. Probably the other large one is the 3rd Corps Support Command, and that has come back to the United States.

Q: And you were expecting a Stryker Brigade to come back over? Has that--

A: We have a Stryker Brigade that has come from Fort Lewis, Washington and is now in Baghdad as a matter of fact. So it not only moved as a unit from Fort Lewis to Germany, but within its first year it was missioned to go to Iraq and is sitting and been in the fight in Baghdad for about a month.

Q: You say you're down to about 40K.

A: We're down to, right today, about 43,000 soldiers assigned to Europe.

Q: Is that pretty much the bottom or--

A: No, the plan is, the current plan would reduce additional force structure out of Europe to take us down into the neighborhood of 28,000 soldiers; however, there is an initiative that has been started--myself and General Craddock as the Commander in Europe, have requested that we have additional capabilities that remain in Europe. In the Army's case we say we need four combat brigades and the associated combat support and combat service support to remain in Europe. That's somewhere in the neighborhood of 40,000 soldiers. And we think that gives us the right capabilities for what we need to do, not only today but in the future in that part of the world.

Q: So, this is an increase from the plan. Has that been--

A: It's a change from the plan that would minimize further reductions of force structure in Europe.

Q: And that has been approved?

A: No, it has not been approved. That will be, obviously, a political decision so it is working through the decision process here in this city. Of course that involves the services, it involves the Joint Staff, and it certainly involves the Secretary of Defense.

Q: You say you want to get to four brigades. You've got the 173rd in Italy and you've--

A: We actually have four brigades there today. So, what we'd really like to do, what I'd really like to do is keep those four brigades.

Q: Would that include the 12th Aviation Brigade.

A: No, it doesn't. The brigades we're talking about--there is an Airborne Brigade in Italy, the 173rd, which is currently deployed to Afghanistan. The 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, which is in Vilseck, Germany, currently deployed to Baghdad. Today, what's called the 2nd Brigade of the 1st Infantry Division, which is in Schweinfurt, Germany, currently in Iraq. And the fourth brigade is another heavy brigade, the 2nd Brigade of the 1st Armored Division, currently in Baumholder, preparing to return to Iraq.

Now, the unit designations of those units might change, but the capability that I am seeking to retain in Europe is four combat brigades.

Q: Well, just to tie that up, what is currently scheduled to come back that you want to keep there?

A: Currently both heavy brigades, the brigade in Schweinfurt and the brigade in Baumholder, are scheduled at some time in the future--not earlier than three or four years from now--to come back to the United States, or come to the United States. I won't say come back, come to the United States.

Q: Well, obviously Iraq has a pretty strong gravitational pull on--

A: I guess I could follow up. You might say, well, so what's changed from the original reason to go down to 28,000 and just two brigades.

What's changed is we're in a longer war. We feel we have, in this era of persistent conflict, we have some fault lines that are there in the European Command AOR that

we've got to pay attention to. We don't know what is going to happen in terms of a resurgent Russia. These forces are positioned forward, they're globally available. They're not dedicated just to Europe. We feel that that geographic positioning gives us advantage. They can get to certain places in the world faster.

And then probably the most important reason is that what we are doing in terms of training with other nations in the EUCOM AOR builds tomorrow's coalitions. And you can't do that without forces, and you can't do it from back in the United States very well. So units that are forward based in Germany or Italy are very--geographically and timewise--are in a great position to go train with those countries that are our coalition partners today: the Polands, the Rumanias, the Bulgarias, Ukraine--all those countries--and will probably be our coalition partners tomorrow. So that's kind of in 25 words or less why I think it's important to keep the right capabilities in Europe.

Q: Okay, well you said some magic words there. You said "resurgent Russia," so I'll ask you to elaborate on that. [Laughter]. I mean, what is the view of that particular situation, that problem right now? Is it, obviously when you say resurgent you think it's a growing problem.

A: Well, I guess I would leave, I mean a lot of that's a political appreciation of what Russia will be in the next few years. From a military leader's perspective, I want to engage the Russian military. I want to train with the Russian military. I want to have personal contacts with their leaders. I want my units in Germany and Italy to develop interoperable tactics and procedures with the Russians so that if we have the opportunity to serve together again, and we have in the past by the way, in Bosnia. If we have the chance to serve again in a coalition effort with the Russians, we're ready to do it. So I guess when I say resurgent Russia, I'll leave the political perspective up to the political leaders, but from a military perspective I don't want to discourage working with the Russian military. I want to work with the Russian military.

Q: Let me try a political question, and I know it will be tough for you as a--

A: A political question? Oh golly.

Q: --military guy. The difference, the change in atmosphere post Rumsfeld. As a senior Army commander can you say, do you feel you're listened to better? Are your priorities better listened to? Do you think, from your judgment as a military man, that your priorities are being addressed better now, or that your voice is heard better?

A: I'm not really in a great position to answer that. I think that the question could be asked of somebody that works in the city. I feel my military advice and my recommendations are listened to very well within European Command, within NATO,

and within the United States Army.

Q: But I'm asking about the change between the Rumsfeld era and the era now.

A: It appears to me, now I'm a little bit on the outside. I don't speak directly with the Secretary of Defense, but it appears to me that there is perhaps some more openness and teamwork, let's say, that's going on.

Q: Okay. One other thing though, in your role as the European Commander, how about the technical mismatch between the European forces and the US forces that they're going to have to work? Is that getting better or is it getting worse, and what are the most critical areas in your judgment?

A: I think it is something that is of particular concern to our potential allies, that when they come to a campaign with us, whether it's a combat operation, a peacekeeping operation, a humanitarian relief operation, there is a growing concern that they are technologically mismatched with us. I think that's something NATO has to pay attention to.

And then, you asked me what's the most important thing. I think it's not necessarily weapons systems and platforms. I think a lot of it is in terms of command and control, communications, and computer network capabilities. We've got to be able to talk to each other, and we have to work on common situational awareness of conditions, and I think I would say that's probably the most important pieces in terms of technology that we need to work on. We need to have common systems. NATO probably needs to invest, in a NATO environment, in common systems for battle command.

A: But is the mismatch getting wider, or is it narrowing any?

Q: I think that on the surface the mismatch is probably even getting wider because of investment strategies, but on the other hand when our coalition partners come to operate with us, there are certain technologies that we are providing to them as part of that coalition. Counter-IED technology is an example. I think there is an expectation that the United States will provide some technology and some assistance to our coalition partners when they come to operate with us.

Q: Okay, we'll come back to you, Dave. I know you want a second question. All right, Kristin, you're up next, and then Lisa.

Q: General, I'd like to go back to some of the things you touched on in the beginning and try to flesh you out a little bit more on what you think the future of US forces in Europe really is, what role they're going to play. Because there has been this feeling developing

over the last let's say five years that forces in Europe, that EUCOM, for example, was just becoming a force provider. And with, as you call it, resurgent Russia, we're all looking at it, we're all watching them rebuild their army and start to flex their muscles again. What does that say about the view that EUCOM forces [inaudible] CENTCOM?

A: I think it is certainly a fact that as we sit here today, that the main effort of our military, not just the Army but all our services, is in the CENTCOM area of responsibility. It's Afghanistan and Iraq, and that's, so we're providing globally, capabilities to go to that main effort. Not just out of EUCOM, out of Pacific Command, everywhere, certainly out of the continental United States.

But my point is there are potentially dangerous places and conditions in the European area of responsibility, not just to do with what happens maybe down the road with Russia, but we still have forces in Kosovo. We still don't have the final political settlement of what is going to happen in Kosovo. So what happens if that turns violent? Who has to respond to that? Well it's NATO and the European Command for the United States capabilities.

There are places down in the Caspian Sea basin that are very dangerous places that are not resolved. So I'm not sure that I would subscribe that peace has broken out everywhere and everybody needs to come home to the United States. There are still, I think, very valid reasons to have capabilities and forward presence.

And the other thing, oh by the way, is if you want to have an army that is expeditionary, if you want to have an army that is culturally aware of other places in the world, if you want to have an army whose leadership--sergeants and officers--are used to working with other nations, that develop language skills, that develop cultural appreciation of other countries, sometimes that is very hard to do from back in the continental United States. So to have those capabilities living with their families in other countries, I think, it's hard to quantify it, but I think it pays great dividends for capabilities that we want in our Army for the future.

Q: You also said that forces in Europe would be supporting the new AFRICOM mission, how do you see--

A: I said potentially.

Q: Potentially supporting.

A: I don't think we have sorted that out yet. I think that AFRICOM is now in the developmental stage of now figuring out exactly how they are going to operate, what are going to be the capabilities from all of the services that go to support AFRICOM. How is

all that going to work? Where is the headquarters going to be located ultimately? But the point is that if there are requirements for land forces to support operations in Africa, whether it's a training mission, whether it's a noncombatant evacuation, whether it's a humanitarian assistance mission, where do those forces come from? I would tell you that if you're positioned in Europe, you're a little closer to respond than if you're positioned in Kansas.

Q: General, if I could try to ask you a little bit more detail about the 1st ID and the 1st AD. I understand it's in the political process, but if you could say where is it, about how long do you think it will be before a decision is made, and can you give any more detail about this initiative? When did it start, and any detail at all about these two units in particular?

Q: I think, first of all the decision is not necessarily tied to these two units. The decision is tied to having the right capabilities at the end of it, and the right capabilities, in my mind, are four brigade combat teams. Whether they're these two or some other two, you know, that's negotiable. The idea though is that we need four brigade combat teams.

When did this start? When I took command of US Army Europe and sort of did my mission analysis and looked at what I thought today's mission was and what tomorrow's conditions would be, I said that we don't have enough stuff over here. [Laughter]. We just flat don't have enough stuff at the end of the day to do what I think we need to do.

And so, I made that known to Com Europe. He agrees with that. It's not just an Army issue. He is looking across all the joint components. And so we have sent the request in really to relook earlier basing decisions. And again, there has been no decision on that, and that will ultimately not be a military decision; it will be a political decision. And we're certainly not going to change anything that was agreed to in BRAC. I mean the 1st Armored Division in BRAC is to go to Fort Bliss, Texas, and that will still happen. You know, the unit designations are not the issue. The issue is to have the right capabilities over there forward.

A: Do you think it's something that might happen with the fiscal '08 or '09?

Q: No, I think this is well beyond that. I mean, they're not scheduled, these two brigades are not scheduled to return to the United States until FY10 and 11 at the earliest. They are both going to do another rotation, by the way. They are planned to do another rotation to OIF, so they're not going to restation until after that.

Q: Oh, another beyond the one they're doing now?

A: That's true.

Q: I want to follow up to one [inaudible] question. You mentioned planning requirements for the new plan? Could you expand on that a little bit?

A: In order to get the right capabilities at the right location, this idea of stance. In some cases, we have to make certain investments.

Example: We are nearing completion of what was originally called Efficient Basing-Grafenw)hr, where we invested in military construction. I don't know the exact number, but it's somewhere in the neighborhood of a billion dollars in construction in Grafenw)hr, so that we could position the right forces there.

There are future military construction requirements, one of which is to consolidate the airborne brigade in Vincenzi, Italy. Today, we have two battalions there; its other four battalions are up in Germany, so we want to get all that brigade consolidated in Italy but it takes military construction dollars to do that with. Some day we're going to move our headquarters of US Army Europe, 7th Army, out of Heidelberg, Germany, to another location. It's going to take dollars to do that, so these dollars have to be programmed and that's why I say it's going to take a few years.

Q: Is there a difference in cost between the previous plan, with the lower number of brigades versus the higher number?

A: Well if we retain two more brigades over there, certainly the costs will be higher; however, those brigades that are there today live in very good quality of life infrastructure, so we don't have to make a new investment for military construction dollars. In other words, we don't have to buy new barracks, new motor pools, new housing; that exists there already. And the training and readiness infrastructure exists there already. So to me, that's a pretty compelling argument for business efficiencies in keeping those capabilities there.

Q: Under your new hat, what do you see that US military or government can give you requirements-wise, equipment, to help you with the mission in Afghanistan?

A: To help the US with the mission, or with NATO?

Q: NATO.

A: Okay, I think NATO is still, there are still force capabilities that NATO has not provided to the fight, to ISAF. I mean, there are still requirements that nations have not signed up to fill. I think that the United States is filling their requirements. Will those stay the same in the future? I don't know. The warfighting commanders there have to

figure that out.

But I would say one other thing is, you know, a lot of times people talk about NATO like they're something different than the United States. You know, there's the United States and then there is NATO. Well, we are NATO. We are actually a leader, maybe the leader, in NATO. So if there's something we don't like about NATO or we want NATO to change or NATO to do, that involves the United States of America doing that.

Q: [Inaudible] of equipment or additional troops or anything you need like more helicopter [inaudible]?

A: There are force requirements that the SACEUR is still working to make sure that ISAF receives, and they're mostly in terms of enabling capabilities like aviation, engineers. I think there are some additional combat forces that have not been filled, but I know aviation is a particular issue.

Q: General, you mentioned fault lines, and I'm sure there is enough of them to keep you awake at night. I want to ask you about the Balkans. Can you bring us up to date on what the US [inaudible] has got there, and if there is some kind of [inaudible] movement there? Some kind of a collapse of the government authority? What would that look like, and what kind of military response might [inaudible] use?

A: Well, you know, first of all the Balkans, I think, has been a success story for NATO, though we've been there for awhile. You know, we went into Bosnia in '95, I guess it was, and we still have a military presence in Bosnia. It's a very small one, but we still have one there. We have about, I want to say about 3,500 US forces in Kosovo.

That, to me, is a part of the world that there are still, as you said, fault lines. There are still ethnic and political and social groups that do not like each other and have a history of fighting each other, and I think the presence of NATO or of some organization, it might be the European Union in the future, but the presence of some European organization in that area, I think, is very important for years to come.

The fault line is that if there is not an external presence that helps stabilize that region, then I think it could easily default back into ethnic bloodletting. That's my personal opinion as a military leader.

Kosovo, as I said earlier, we all know is moving towards some political solution in the future. It could well be a political solution that doesn't satisfy everybody. And so is the potential there for violence for external influences that require a military capability to be present there? Absolutely. Could that potentially mean that our forces in Kosovo have to be reinforced over the horizon by other capabilities or perhaps come out of the central

region of Europe? I think that is absolutely a potential that a military leader should be planning for.

So I don't think we've reached victory, I guess, of the final outcome of what we would want in the Balkans quite yet. I hope that answers the question.

Q: Yeah, [inaudible]. Are they getting tired of that mission or is there still, are you getting what you need from [inaudible]?

A: I think my appreciation is no, that NATO is not getting tired of that mission, that there is a consensus in NATO, in the North Atlantic Council, that Kosovo, KFOR, is a very important mission for NATO to be successful at. And I don't see any wavering of commitment to that.

Q: General, from where you sit today, how do you see the path forward for NATO enlargement in the future? I'd like to ask specifically about two countries: Ukraine, where there has been a lot of political uncertainty; and Georgia, which has been incredibly eager since Saakashvili came to power, to really present itself as a candidate for membership. They contribute a lot OIF. They've been trained up from the Train and Equip Program forward. Where do you see that going?

A: I see it going, from a military perspective, I see it as certainly potential for NATO expansion in the future to include those two countries. I mean, that ultimately, again, is a political decision made by the North Atlantic Council.

The US Army in Europe does mil-to-mil training and leader development and relations with both of those land forces, the Ukraine and Georgia. I have visited both of those countries. I know their land force commanders. They're trying to transform their militaries, and they are seeking our assistance to help them do it.

I think it is probably a little early to predict NATO membership, but I think that that's certainly in the realm of the possible in the future.

Q: Just to follow, EUCOM has been one of the leaders on this Caspian Guard initiative, although I know it's EOCOM together with CENTCOM, but what's kind of happening with that right now?

A: I am not a key player on Caspian Guard. I will tell you what the EUCOM theatre security cooperation strategy is for eastern Europe and the Caucasus area.

We are missioned by OSD to help build partner capacity. Those are the exact words. And so in order for us to do that, we train and develop leaders actively with all those

countries. We either bring them, in my case, we either bring them to train with us at places like Grafenw)hr, Germany, Hohenfels, Germany, and other places, or we go to them.

And there are some common themes across all those countries. They start from the Baltics and go down to the, let's say as far down as the Balkans. Common themes like they're all interested in transforming from what in the past has been a conscript army to a volunteer army, to a professional army. They're all interested in developing junior leaders, specifically, a non-commissioned officer corps because they don't have it. They look at ours, which is the best in the world, and they say I want that. [Laughter]. They see my Command Sergeant Major, and they say I want him, and I'd like to get that in the next two or three years. That's not quite possible. [Laughter]. It's going to take fifteen or twenty years to grow that guy, but it's got to get started now. They all want to transform how they train and how they maintain training and readiness, and they look at the United States model of how we do combat training centers, how we have professional observer/controllers, how we give after-action reviews. They soak up our training strategy.

Those three things are common across all those countries, so under EUCOM's lead, because it involves all the service components, but we engage those countries and we try to build partner capacity because those are the countries that are on the battlefield with us today in Afghanistan and Iraq and elsewhere, Kosovo. So it makes sense to, you know, my advice to my leaders always is that we build tomorrow's coalitions today. We don't build them when you start the campaign and you get buy-in from other countries. You build them today, so that five to ten years from now, when we operate together, there is some interoperability there.

Q: Back on Russia. As you look at the Russian response to [inaudible] missile defense requirements [inaudible]. Are you formulating any response of your own for US Army Europe to what you imagine the Russians might or what you expect the Russians might do?

A: My only response from US Army Europe is to continue to try to engage the Russian land forces and train with them. We have an exercise that we do annually called Torgau, that is an important event for both the Russian military and the United States Army Europe military, and I want to foster that. I don't want to say we're going to stop doing things with you. I mean, I'll let the political relationships stay in political hands. But from a military perspective, I want to engage the Russian military. I want to train with them.

Q: You realize that earlier in both our careers if you'd said I want to engage with the Russian forces, it would have had a completely different--[Laughter].

A: Yeah, right. For the first twenty years of my career I used to get ready to go face them around the Bad Hirschfeld area. The world has changed. I also, though, after that 20-year period, I remember working with a Russian airborne brigade in Bosnia in the early days of IFOR. Tomorrow there's going to be somewhere in the world where I hope we're working with the Russians, not against them.

Q: You were talking earlier about a possibility [inaudible] Russia and, obviously, they can [inaudible] missile defense plan of the Bush administration. Isn't it part of your responsibility to worst case it and look at possible force structure changes that you may need to make then if things turn sour?

A: Elaine, I don't think I'm there yet, to start figuring out what we'd need for World War III against Russia. I don't think that's the future.

Q: Something short of that?

A: I want to make sure that I have the right force structure in Europe to react to several contingencies, but that's short of--I'm not looking at something like a major combat operation vis-à-vis the Russians. I think that is looking at the past, not at the future.

Q: And one more [inaudible]. Could you give us some idea about force structure changes you might be looking at making in US Army Europe for whatever contingencies?

A: Okay, now, if you had joined us at the beginning of breakfast, you'd have heard all that. [Laughter].

Q: I apologize.

A: But I'll let you get, I'm sure somebody taped it here, but I'm looking for four ground maneuver brigades and the right enablers on top of that.

Q: Just to tag on to that a little bit. You have your view, but you also talk extensively, I would imagine, with your partners in Eastern Europe--Poland, Romania--places that have had some fairly recent unpleasant experiences with Russian forces. What do they say when you talk about Russia? Are they as willing to see what comes as you seem to be here, or are they more nervous and anxious about it.

A: I think, given history and proximity, they're certainly a little more nervous and anxious to see what, how this relationship plays out and what the role of Russia is vis-à-vis Europe in the future. Countries like Poland and the Ukraine are certainly very conscious of that.

Q: Good morning, General, please excuse me also for being late. I hope you haven't gone over this, but I was really interested in what's going on [inaudible]. We've had quite a bunch of activity over there, and I wondered if you could sort of say what you think about it now, what's going to be coming up next [inaudible].

A: I'm really excited about what we're doing with Romania and Bulgaria, and it's a rotational training opportunity called Joint Task Force East, and what it's really about is the opportunity to train in a joint--meaning air force, land forces, potentially in the future naval forces, and special operations forces--in a coalition environment.

So what we're doing right now is what we call a proof of principle rotation, where we've sent a battalion task force--that's about 600 soldiers, 800 soldiers, out of Europe. I'd like to make it bigger, but I have this little problem that's called providing forces to Iraq and Afghanistan. [Laughter]. But we did send an artillery battalion task force there, and we're training, predominantly this year in Romania, but a little bit in Bulgaria, and we want to have a training rotation.

It's a recurring training opportunity to go to those countries, train with their land forces, and, in the future, perhaps train with more countries in that region. But this is the start, and so we're making some investments to provide ourselves a forward basing--on their bases, not US bases, on their bases--infrastructure that we can house our soldiers in, train with them on their maneuver areas and their training ranges.

It has been a great success so far. The soldiers from both Romania and Bulgaria are delighted to be training with US soldiers and our US soldiers are delighted to be training with them. There are cultural exchanges. This is all, again, part of this business about understanding how to work with other nations and other militaries. So it's off to a good start this year. It's on the low scale in terms of size because we're fairly well committed elsewhere in the world, but it has the potential. Our plan is it has the potential where we can rotate up to a brigade combat team with the capabilities to remain in Bulgaria.

Q: How long do they stay there?

A: This time they're only staying there a couple of months, but what we've planned for the future is a training rotation for up to six months.

Again, we want it to be in a joint context, so US Air Forces Europe, Navy Europe, we have Seabees down there from the US Navy that are doing construction projects. We've had air capabilities down there from USAFE in Europe. We don't have special operations forces at this time, but that is a potential in the future. So we want to make it a joint training opportunity.

Q: Can I just follow on, [inaudible] talking about [inaudible]. What are you doing to address those in your area?

A: In my area, I did talk about, everybody talks about stressors on the United States Army. Stressors from this, call it the long war, call it persistent conflict, call it whatever you want, but it's putting a great strain on soldiers, on families, with the repetitive deployments.

So what I do as Commander of US Army Europe, I'm a force provider. I'm not the war fighter. I'm the force provider. But what I'm responsible for, and accountable for, is to make sure that the families that remain in Europe while their spouse is deployed are taken care of. So I put a lot of personal effort, as well as my wife and my chain of command, into making sure that we spend time in these communities where units are deployed from and that they have the right medical care, they have the right educational support for their children, they have the right housing quality standards, barracks and motor pools are getting maintained while formations are deployed, services, people services are to standard, and that they feel that the Army is taking care of the Army family while those units are deployed. So that's probably the main way I can mitigate--I can't erase stress, but I can mitigate it on those families in Europe.

The other thing I can do is make sure that those forces are trained and ready before they go, and when they come back I have a good reintegration process so that they're reintegrated with their communities, with their families, they're reorganized, and so that at some point they are ready to start training again.

Q: I have a question for you on AFRICOM. Now that it's looking like [inaudible] not be in Africa, [inaudible] update on the Congo [inaudible] conversations now about the stand-up and organization of the command, and also what effects that would have [inaudible].

A: Yeah, I'm really not in the know on what the location is going to be. I know that initially Headquarters AFRICOM will be stood up in Stuttgart. It will be a sub-unified command initially under EUCOM, much the same as US Forces Korea is a sub-unified command under PACOM, much the same arrangement. And that's the initial position of it.

I know that the long-range goal is to have it as its own separate combatant command, perhaps located on the continent of Africa. I don't know. What my role in it is, what's the Army requirement to support AFRICOM, and we're looking at various options. It's too early to say what the Army bill is to support AFRICOM, but we're looking at whether the various options provide the right Army capabilities to support it.

Q: You mentioned capabilities, do you mean personnel as well or--

A: I mean personnel, equipment, force structure that is available to support AFRICOM. What does the Army do as a service? You know, we have certain Army responsibilities no matter what geographic area it is. For example, we deliver the mail. So how do you deliver the mail in Africa? We have to sort our way through that for all those responsibilities.

Q: General, I wanted to drill down into your equipment needs a little bit more. You talked about evolving into a more expeditionary force in Europe. Where do you need to make equipment investments to realize that decision?

A: In a macro context, we used to deploy to Europe, to Germany, to fight along the, in the general defense plan, against a Soviet threat. So that led you to one solution for equipment. Now with an expeditionary mindset that you live in Central Europe but you deploy outside there, you need to have a different mindset or a different context of equipment requirements. So I suppose, when you ask what's the equipment requirements, it's those that are associated with rapid deployment of capabilities to other areas. So it's C4ISR, it's whatever transportation requirements are necessary to go, as well as the capabilities of the units. We're in, actually, very good shape in Europe on equipment. Europe has been expeditionary for the last dozen years, through experiences like the Balkans. So when we look at the capability to rapidly project forces and force capabilities to other places with transportation, with logistics, with signal, with intelligence, we're pretty experienced and robust over in Europe to do that.

Q: Do you consider yourself pretty well network enabled?

A: I think so. I think so.

Q: What about investments in unmanned systems. Would you be making more of those?

A: The unmanned systems, of course, are still a big developmental area, and if you ask me a lot of technical questions, you'll lose me real quick. Do we have a requirement for them tactically with our units? Yes. The challenge I have over there is, in Europe, coordinating how to train with these systems because they are systems that introduce some spectrum management challenges with aviation, with host nation aviation, and so we have to develop some strategies on where and how we're going to train with those systems.

Q: So has that held you back--

A: No, because I think we're still down the road in fielding with some of these.

Q: But it's something that has to be--

A: Something that has to be addressed as well as, you know, the countries we live in. Germany, for example. The German Army has unmanned systems too. They have the same challenge. So there's probably some opportunities for us to partner with some of our host nations on how we look at the training strategies for these.

Q: Back to NATO for a moment. Does NATO have any role to play in helping Turkey defend itself?

A: Defend itself from?

Q: From PKK.

A: Oh, that's a hard question. [Laughter]. NATO, certainly Turkey is a member of NATO, and NATO certainly has a collective security Article 5 requirement.

The PKK is historically a great threat to the Turks. I think, as I recall, that my Turkish counterparts have told me that somewhere in the neighborhood of 35,000 Turks have died because of PKK or KDP or whatever the naming convention is of terrorist activities over the years. Does NATO have a role in that? That's kind of, does NATO have the counter-terrorist mission? I'm not trying to dodge your question, but I think that's more of a political issue that NATO has to answer than a military issue.

Q: Is NATO capable of conducting a counter-terrorism [inaudible]?

A: Sure.

Q: They're not doing much of that in Afghanistan, right?

A: They're not.

Q: [Inaudible].

A: That's true. But you asked me are they capable, are they militarily--if the question is are they militarily capable of conducting counter-terrorist missions, my answer would be yes.

Q: Is non-US NATO capable?

A: Yes. To varying degrees, but yes. They have special operations capabilities, they have intelligence capabilities, varying degrees of capability.

Q: We're going to go to Dave, but let me ask, you mentioned Article 5 there. I'd like to talk to you about Article 5 in the context of another new NATO member, Estonia.

Last April Estonia was subjected to a massive cyber attack from somewhere. It essentially shut the country down for, large parts of the country, for long periods of time. The Estonian Defense Minister referred to it as, I think he called it Web War I, and it was very clear that the Estonians believe that Russian fingerprints were all over this. It had to do with the removal of the bronze statue in Tallinn.

So from where you sat, were you getting any kind of reporting, any kind of intelligence on this? If so, what was the conclusion? Was Russia behind it, or behind a lot of it? And I guess the final part of it is, if another nation like Russia or anyone else launched a massive cyber attack on a NATO ally, is that an Article 5 situation?

A: You know, let me take that last question. I don't know. I don't know if that's an Article 5 situation. I'm not sure NATO has addressed that question. I'm not really familiar with the Estonian cyber attack. And we didn't have, US Army Europe didn't have any reactionary role in that. I will say, though, that our systems, our joint and our Army systems, we are constantly on the alert for signs of cyber attack, for intrusions, and I consider that certainly as dangerous an area of conflict as a kinetic threat. But I really can't, I'm not that familiar with the background and the follow-on analysis of what happened with Estonia.

Q: Well actually, that was going to be my question as well. When I talked to the Israelis last, they said they're starting to back away from over-reliance on network centric because of that very reason, and they said that what they're looking at is wrapping their forces around local area networks that you can regenerate quickly so you can start collecting intelligence and generating missions, and I was just curious if that threat had become large enough for you that you're starting to look at similar tactics to, you know--

A: I would hesitate to say we're backing away from developing a network capability. Quite frankly, I tell people if you put any traffic on an unclassified network it has a potential to be hacked into and known by anybody. So if you want to protect your information, you have to put it on a classified system.

As I said earlier, the threat is certainly real. We're watching it all the time. I wouldn't begin to go into any details of it. But I don't think it's causing us to shy away from developing networks that we think we need for our military capabilities. But I will tell you that network-centric operations does not equal command and control. It enables

command and control, but it doesn't equal command and control. There are lots of other ways that you need to exercise command and control of land forces besides just network-centric operations.

Q: Because you're so dependent on airlift, how--

A: And sealift, too, by the way.

Q: [Laughter]. Where do you stand on the JCA and the C-17? Do you need more? Are you an advocate, a supporter? How do you get the additional airlift that you're going to need to stay as mobile as you want to be?

A: I am a great fan of the C-17. We are, as an expeditionary army, dependent on airlift and maybe even more so on sealift, but I am a fan on having the right, for the air component to have the right intra- and inter-theater airlift requirements.

Like I said, I'm a fan of the C-17. How many do we need in Europe? If that's the question, I don't know. I'll leave that up to my Air Force compadre. But they don't all have to be stationed in Europe, as I see it.

Q: How big does the JCA loom in your future, on your horizon?

A: I don't really know. I think we've got to tie that to what the future combat system platforms are for the United States Army and the United States Marine Corps. So I probably don't know enough to answer that question intelligently.

Q: Okay, down here. Dave Wood, you're up next.

Q: General, what kind of engagement are you doing at the moment with the Russian ground forces, and what do you have in mind [inaudible] specifically. And what's the [inaudible] pushback from the General Staff and politicians [inaudible] temperature [inaudible]?

A: I think that certainly the political temperature is lukewarm to cold. And I think that probably inhibits what the Russian military is capable of doing with us. What we do today, quite frankly, is very limited. We have this one exercise called Torgau that--

Q: Tell us how you spell it.

A: Torgau, T-O-R-G-A-U, that we run annually. It's a combination of a command post exercise and a very small field training exercise, and it is meant to just show interoperability, to develop interoperability between our two land forces.

I would like to do more in the future. I would like to have larger training opportunities. I'd like to have, at both the non-commissioned officer and officer level, military to military leader exchanges, professional development opportunities. Because I do believe in my heart that there is going to be an operation some time in the future where we're going to be on the same side in the same campaign with Russian forces.

If I could take just another minute here, about a year ago the Russian military sent I believe it was six Russian military non-commissioned officers to our Warrior Leader Course which is our non-commissioned officer education system kind of first course, where we try to train soldiers on how to be non-commissioned officers, how to be sergeants. And the Russians sent six NCOs to this course, all with interpreters. They're the only country we allow to come to it with an interpreter; the rest have to have English skills to get through the course on their own. But they came and they trained at Grafenw)hr, Germany, with us.

Their general, from the district in Russia that they came from came to visit them towards the end of the course, and he asked them, "So how's this course?" He got these six NCOs together around the table at lunch. "How's the training with the Americans?" And these six NCOs had a colonel with them, their handler in the course, kind of the old, almost a carryover from the political officer. [Laughter].

Q: Commissar.

A: Commissar. And the colonel started to answer the questions. Well, the Americans really didn't have anything to offer us. [Laughter]. We can do all this. And then one of the sergeants, one of the Russian sergeants said, "Excuse me, General." And here I'm paraphrasing what he said, and I wasn't in the room. He said, "Well, it might be true that tactically, you know, we really didn't learn anything new, what this course taught us was about leadership and about what a non-commissioned officer, a sergeant, is responsible to do."

The general started to ask another question. The colonel started to give the next answer. The general said, "Sit down." The colonel never spoke the rest of the hour. And it was all the sergeants talking to a Russian three-star general. That is unheard of in the Russian Army, that you would have six sergeants sitting around a table talking with a Russian general about their experience of going through the Warrior Leader Course with Americans.

I've got to tell you that's a small step with a powerful future potential of military to military relationships within the American Army and the Russian Army. And so you ask me, what do I want to do in the future? I want to do that. I want to do that times a

hundred.

Q: The value you see in that is a more powerful, more capable Russian military?

A: And a more powerful and a more capable US military, but more importantly, a more powerful and potentially more capable coalition partnership in a future operation. That's what I see.

Q: General, if the United States does manage to establish these missile defense sites in the Czech Republic and Poland, is that going to change the calculus at all for US Army forces requirements in Europe? Because, presumably, some of them might be manned by Army units?

A: No, they won't be manned by Army units. I don't know what the Army's role will be in supporting these sites. I don't know that yet. I think it is too early to say, to ask, to answer the question, "Will that mean something different in force structure?" I don't, at this point, I don't think I would say yes, but I think it's too early.

Q: One quick question about the Army Family Covenant. Is there anything that you will be doing differently over the next several months in Europe relating to that? Any new programs that you can talk about [inaudible]?

A: Really the intent is not to develop a bunch of new programs. The intent really is to resource, with dollars and people, the current programs.

We have some pretty good programs in the Army, but what we've got to do now is put our money where our mouth is. And so this Army Family Covenant, which I think is a wonderful initiative by General Casey, is meant to make the leadership of the United States Army responsible and accountable, and then give them the right resource authorities to take care of the families in the Army.

It has never been more important than it is today to do that, with the stress on the force. And so this Army Family Covenant is, I think, it's symbolic, but behind it has got to be the dollars and the people that go into child development centers, Army community services, education systems, warrior transition units, all those programs that mean so much to our families.

Q: Sir, I wondered if you could address and sort of give us a snapshot in time of how you perceive the terrorist threat in your area, and whether there's been some activity there. And I know you often mention that it's an area that needs to bear, that it has borne watching, and I wonder if you could give us just a little snapshot of--

A: My personal appreciation is that the threat of radical fundamentalism involves all of our coalition partners in the West. It is not an American problem. It's a Western problem. It's a threat to the Western countries. We recently had a very, very real threat in Germany, which you've seen what you've seen about it so I'm not going to go further than that, but that's a very real threat that could exist in any of the coalition partners that are engaged with us in Iraq or Afghanistan, and so I think that the threat of terrorist activity is transnational.

It's networked. You talk about network-centric operations, it's networked. It's well financed. There are force providers for it. There are training camps that are become, in effect, force providers. They don't have a recruiting problem nor a retention problem. [Laughter]. And they have adaptive tactics, and so I see it as a very, very real problem. It's a problem that's not going to go away any time soon, and it is a persistent global problem.

Q: Do you see it rising at this point in time, or is it sort of static today?

A: That's a hard question to answer. I think the potential, I'm not sure I'd say it's rising, but I think the potential is as it becomes more networked, it becomes more transnational, more global. Now whether that means it's rising or staying the same in terms of scope and scale, that's hard to say.

Q: [Inaudible].

Q: I'd just like more of a question of clarification than anything else. Going to back to the question about the Family Covenant Program. DoD levels from Secretary Gates, senior defense officials, talking about, in some sense, that the paradigm has changed in this war, how we have to look at family situations. Is there any review of what is being offered for families and how do you support the warrior for the long term, and has that changed at all? You had mentioned that it's more about funding the programs that are already there. Is there also review going on--

A: Sure.

Q: --that would lead to new things that we need to offer--

A: Absolutely. Absolutely, and it's one of the initiatives that General Casey has set for his time as the Chief of Staff of the Army. One of his initiatives, specifically, is focused on how do we take care of the Army family. And so all the programs are constantly under review.

Let me give you an example of something that has changed in the past year of how we

take care of the Army family. And that is the whole system of what we do for wounded warriors.

If you looked at a year ago and what we're doing today and what we plan to do tomorrow, that is changing. And the idea of these warrior transition units where we take soldiers that have medical problems and we take them into a very special care program, where in the past they would have stayed in their unit and gone to appointments, now we're taking them and putting them into a different unit with a different focus on medical care advisors. I think that's an example of something that's, you know, we've reviewed and said we need to do this perfectly, and so now we're going to put the resources behind doing that.

Q: Is there a consideration of more mundane things like station location and even things like education values where--

A: Absolutely.

Q: --you talk about not just the soldier but also families--

A: Absolutely. Housing standards let's take. In Europe, you know, what we've seen is our need, you know, our families, families are generally a little bit larger now. So we don't need, for example, this is really, you say, asked mundane, this might be mundane. But we don't need as many two-bedroom housing units as we had in the past. So in a lot of cases we're taking money, knocking down walls, and creating four- and five-bedroom housing units. Increased child care center hours provided to Army families. Recently, we went from funding it to 55 hours a week to 70-80 hours a week at these child development centers. Increasing the number of child development centers at new locations. So all of these things, you know, when I talk to families in Europe and I say what's important to you, to the spouses, especially the spouses where their husbands or wives are deployed, what's important to you. It's generally one of four things: it's housing, it's medical care, it's education for themselves and their children, and--If I can think of the fourth one here. Well, housing, child care, schools, medical. Those are the four. You might say those are mundane programs, but those are important.

Q: I'd like to just kind of finish up here, backing you up a little bit to Russia again. There are still a few of us around here that, you know, went to Reforger--

A: I probably made a mistake using the term "resurgent Russia". [Laughter].

Q: Yeah, you probably did, but it's too late now. [Laughter].

Q: You know, there were Reforgers and the Fulda Gap and follow-on forces attack and

all of these things. I take your point that we're not, we're a long way from those days, but can you talk to us a little bit about what might start to change your mind with respect to Russia. Something that might, in your mind, you go "Oops, okay, now we've got a problem." Is it statements coming out of the Kremlin? Is it deployment of forces in certain ways nearer to NATO? Is it a buildup of equipment or end strength? What would it be?

A: Well I think we have to keep our eyes on certain indicators of things, some of it we've seen already. There may be a little bit of a renewal of long-range reconnaissance missions, aerial reconnaissance missions, arms sales, capabilities provided to nation states that we have difficulties with, actions in the region, keeping an eye on what happens with the border with Georgia, Azerbaijan, influences in countries like we mentioned earlier, the Ukraine. I think all those things are, not from just a military perspective, but more importantly from a political perspective, we have to keep an eye on it and see how that plays out.

Q: But from a military point of view, is there any particular kind of deployment, or if you see them starting to rebuild a heavy armored capability, is it something like that?

A: Yeah, I think that would be important to monitor, but I think what would be troublesome is if there were overt military actions outside the borders of Russia to influence things. That would be troubling.

Q: Okay, I think we're out of time. We'll have to leave it. Thanks very much.

A: I enjoyed being with you.

Q: We really appreciate you coming in.

END TEXT