

TRANSCRIPT

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[Joined in progress]

A: We are only now seeing that all volunteer force stressed and tested in a protracted war. I was sharing with Harry that I have a very good friend who's a PhD historian, a brigadier general retired that I served with before, and I'm having him go back and take a look at the only other example we have of this, which quite candidly is the Revolutionary War. The only other time that we fought a war of this duration with an all volunteer, unscripted, partially scripted or totally scripted force.

Q: But we were the insurgents then. [Laughter].

A: Well, I would leave that to Reuters to take that point of view. [Laughter].

Let me just say seriously, though, this is challenging and as our Chief of Staff of the Army and the Secretary of the Army, Pete Geren have said, our Army is clearly stressed right now. And as the Chief describes it, very much out of balance as well, which simply means the demands exceed the available assets, time, people, and to a lesser degree, resources.

The last thing I would say is that the Congress has been extraordinarily supportive. Extraordinarily supportive, both in terms of resourcing and authorities to vary our practices to meet changing demands and changing realities in sustaining the force.

And truly the last thing is, before I take your questions, is that we have also invested in an area where I'm thrilled we are making a huge investment now, and that's in our families. I was in Kuwait recently and had the opportunity to enlist a young staff sergeant. After the reenlistment, administering the oath, he chose to make a couple of comments to his assembled buddies and teammates. He said I love what I'm doing. I absolutely enjoy this and I would do it forever, or at least I'll do it until my wife tells me that's enough.

That's a very telling statement, and it is precisely why this Chief of Staff and the Secretary have invested as heavily, and I can give you the figures if you wish, in our families. Because that is one of the critical lynch pins to sustaining this all volunteer force. Again, thank you for this opportunity.

Q: General, it seems to me that in all the variables you have to play around with in terms of keeping and expanding the size of the Army, that the variables that count the most in terms of helping out that soldier you were referring to, cost a lot of money. You're talking about keeping mama happy, you're talking about good housing, good education, good child care, all really expensive. I wanted to ask you about the costs of doing those kinds of things. Are they rising faster than the Army's budget in general, and do you see personnel costs as taking an ever larger portion of the budget?

A: Indeed they have. Personnel costs have risen. Let me relate it to the cost of enlistments. Just a few short years ago, I'd say four or five years ago, the cost of every enlistment was in the neighborhood of fifteen thousand dollars per individual. This is just what we would call the accessions cost, but I'm trying to keep it in the common vernacular, if you will.

Today our recruitment costs, accessions costs, are twenty-one thousand dollars. That reflects rising incentives, it reflects the necessity to put an increasing number of recruiters and U.S. Army Recruiting Command to actually accomplish that enlistment goal and the cost of maintaining those recruiters, as well.

So, yes, it is rising. To your point, though, which was more on the infrastructure side, also more on the sustainment of the soldier and the family side, indeed they are.

One of the things that a gentleman by the name of Goldberg, Dr. Goldberg, who produces a report that OSD uses fairly heavily, is the correlation between the ease of enlistment--and by enlistment in OSD terms, that's not just numbers, but it's quality young men and women who reach the upper mental categories and tiers. And there's a striking correlation between the difficulty of enlistment, volunteer enlistment, and unemployment rates. And we are, as you know, at about 4.2 percent unemployment

today, so it's quite challenging. And all of that contributes to the cost at which is to your point, sir.

Q: I wondered if you could talk a little bit about accelerating the expansion of the Army and kind of going along with that question, the costs of that, also potential risks of accelerating, do you have what you need in terms of resources to do that?

A: Let me take the first part of your question. You said risk. I see the risk in quite a different way. I personally see the risk to not accelerate the Army as far greater than the risk of accelerating the Army in the environment and the climate that we're attempting to do it in.

What we're attempting to do for the nation is ensure that we have, if you will, a bit of a strategic head for the unknown, the unpredictable. I don't have to tell anyone around this table how many of our forces, ground forces in particular, what percentage are tied up today in the global war on terror. What we are attempting to do, and yes it is challenging, yes it is high risk because of the answers that I gave to the situation of recruiting an all volunteer force and sustaining it in this economic climate. But the risk is far greater to do otherwise.

Q: How so? Can you elaborate on that?

A: Simply in the ability to respond to something that we may not be able to anticipate today. I'll leave it at that.

Q: And financial resources, do you have what you need?

A: With supplemental funding, and I go back to my opening comment about support from the Congress with supplemental funding which we don't expect to last forever or indefinitely, yes we have the resources we need.

Q: Following on to that, you quantify in terms of resources how much do you think this accelerated expansion will cost and also what strategies is the Army going to use to accelerate the recruiting efforts? Are you going to incorporate the GRAP program that's been so successful in the Army Guard?

A: Excellent question. Let me owe you the answer to the question on total resourcing, I'd like to get that right, just for the record, if I may.

The Congress, once again, has been extraordinarily helpful and supportive in giving us authorities to explore many different ways of growing the force. Among those are authorities to waive existing, in some cases, statute and policies in order to be able to be

responsive to the marketplace. GRAP, which is the Guard's Recruiter Assistance Program, is a phenomenally successful program. As some of you may know, I've spent a little bit of my life in the recruiting business.

There's an interesting phenomenon, and it may miss many people, but I'd like very much to share this with you, I was asked recently why the Guard missed its precise recruiting target and wasn't that something of an alarming fact. And I smiled and even chuckled because in point of fact what the Guard had to do was shut it off. They were recruiting at such a rate that had they continued in FY07, they would have exceeded their funded end strength.

So the model that they have adopted is one that we are going to, one we have tried, but a little bit unsuccessfully and I can explain why, to mirror. First of all, it's peer to peer recruiting. Peer to peer. It's extraordinarily successful. The second characteristic that the Guard has that we simply cannot mirror is they're ubiquitous and they can be places where it's impossible and unaffordable for regular Army recruiters or Reserve recruiters to be. It's not economically feasible, but they can be there, and they are.

The third and final point that I think is very, and it's not missed on me nor is it missed on the leadership of the Army, I can assure you, is that the aspect of homeland defense and defense service to the community in times of disaster is an appealing trait. It plays very well, very successfully. So yes, we are going to build on the GRAP. We've already launched a Reserve equivalent to the GRAP, Army Reserve, and very soon we will launch the active component piece to it.

There's one other point I would like to make and that is active first, which you may have heard a little bit about. That's a fairly novel arrangement that Lieutenant General Steve Blum, Lieutenant General Clyde Bond, myself, with the support of the Army leadership worked out that allows a young person to enlist in the Guard and first spend as little as thirty months or as much as forty-eight months in the active Army. And then the Guard gets back a well trained individual who's probably been promoted by then.

I'm pleased to report, and Clyde mentioned this yesterday, that right now we have had 25, this may seem like a small number to you, but it's not an insignificant factor, we've had 25 enlistments under active first and he reports roughly 100 total, I think, in the pipeline, just to simply quote him. I believe that by the end of fiscal '08, we will probably see as many as 2,000 or more enlistments from active first. I hope I answered your question.

Q: I wanted to follow up on Meghan's question. First, [inaudible] accelerate two years quicker?

A: Yes, that's correct.

Q: So how are you going to get these recruits? Are you going to beef up their bonuses? How are you going to do stop loss to retain [inaudible]?

A: Let me answer the last part of that question first. I'm not going to vary much from what the Secretary or the Chief have said quite recently about stop loss. Until there is some reduction in the demand we're going to have to rely, unfortunately--no one likes it--rely on stop loss. I won't say for the foreseeable future, but simply to say until the demand comes down a bit, we can't do it without it.

The second point is there's three legs to the three-legged stool analogy, if I may, that will lead to how we're going to grow the force faster. We're going to rely upon the recruiter assistance program that I mentioned to the earlier question; we're certainly going to rely on active first to help achieve those goals, that's the recruiting piece; we're going to hold a recruiting mission for U.S. Army Recruiting Command and Accessions Command at 80,000. We think that's still achievable in light of the comments I made earlier of the Goldberg methodology, which I subscribe to by the way.

And then there's retention. Sixty-five thousand retention goal, just like in 2007, and we will achieve that.

Q: How?

A: Obviously incentives and maintaining the incentives that we have. You know, I'm frequently asked in testimony about the role or the impact of contractors on the battlefield and the fact that contractors are successful in luring away some of our most talented individuals and it's a truism. In order to be competitive, we simply have to be in the marketplace with them and that's both on the recruiting incentives to get the best and the brightest, as well as retention incentives.

Q: So can we expect to see the bonuses and incentives grow over the next few years and you keeping more people in the military through stop loss than you are right now?

A: No, I don't see us keeping more than we are right now, and let me frame that for you in terms of the scope. Stop loss averages between seven and, right now at the surge levels, 7,000 pre-surge; it right now averages closer to 9,000 individuals. It's not as large as many people would think in the grander scheme of the total army.

I don't see us having to increase that. Might we have to--

Q: Sorry, 7,000 [inaudible]?

A: Well, I suspect that it will come down from the 9,000 on the back end of the surge. That's a given statement concept, if you will. I think our reliance on it will also decrease. Again, it's a direct correlation to the demand. May I finish one point? And that is, we may have to offer higher incentive levels, but I don't think we will have to offer substantially higher incentives, neither for recruiting nor retention.

Q: This is a question more towards quality than quantity, I guess. Particularly on these mid-level officers, captains, and majors that Secretary Gates spoke of in his AUSA speech where he was concerned about retaining that group. There's a now sort of widely circulated memo from one of the brigade commanders, one of the 1st ID brigade commanders just coming out of Iraq, where he went out and talked to a lot of these mid-level officers and said you know what, the monetary incentives are all well and good, but that's not what these guys looking for. They're looking to have a rewarding career, to getting self-enrichment to education and that kind of thing.

Can you talk a bit about that group of officers, the high quality captains and majors, that are relatively thin right now, they're getting promoted at sort of almost 95 percent rates, and what you can do to keep that group of officers in the Army?

A: That's an excellent question and I appreciate it very much. First of all, the key is growing the Army. The key to everything in my estimation is growing the Army so that we can give not only our junior officers the opportunity to take a breather, to take a knee as some people would refer to it, and that is precisely what that brigade commander was telling us. They're looking for an opportunity to be able to develop relationships, there's just no time. They're looking for an opportunity to advance their educational acumen, right now there's no time.

The key is retaining enough of them that we grow the Army sufficiently, as a consequence of both modularity and also as a consequence of the demand that we see and to give them that time. That is the key, it's as simple as that.

Q: Is there, because it takes several years to build a major, is it purely now ramping up quickly increase the size of the Army going to meet that gap in the next three to four years as demands for advising and training and those kinds of, which again are very heavily demanded on that mid-level officer. Are you concerned at all that there's a gap as the Army ramps up because you can't build a major overnight?

A: We're challenged. The numbers that you're referring to in terms of the gap is on the order of 6,000. And that's really a consequence of modularity. When we become a completely modular force, the demand for captains and majors increases by 6,000. So our ability to retain them is key to your point, ma'am, but also our ability to bring them

in through the three sources: military academy, which we're growing by a little bit. The capacity there is not that great, but additional capacity. Army ROTC, which is showing very promising signs. Since we recently increased the percentage of total officer requirements that were offered full scholarships from about 60 percent to 80 percent. And just yesterday we were having a discussion about taking that even higher, and I suspect it will go higher.

Q: You covered most everything I was going to ask, I'll just throw another out. I was wondering about regionally, you go down the list of people who have victims in the war and they all seem to be from towns I've never--rarely you see any from New York or Chicago or Los Angeles. Is that still your base? Where are your recruits coming from, and are you having any more efforts to get more middle class?

A: There's an interesting DoD report that I would refer you to in terms of the economic distribution of the recruited force and it mirrors the society as a whole. It honestly does.

On a regional basis, there's no mystery to the fact that if you were to plot--I'm speaking Army now--if you were to plot the larger locations from which we are successful in recruiting, it would look like a crescent that would flow from Nevada, southern California, through Texas, up through Virginia, and maybe into Maryland.

Interesting point. In 1988, I took command of the, in November of 1988, I took command of the U.S. Army recruiting battalion in Brunswick, Maine. Responsible for recruiting in Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts, inside the beltway, and I call that, and I frequently refer to it as recruiting in the people's republic of New England. [Laughter]. And that's only become more a truism as time has gone on.

The truth of the matter is, this gets to the issue of why I have such high confidence in active first and why I have such high confidence in the Guards GRAP program. They're ubiquitous. I'm being repetitive, but it's for a purpose.

Q: Talk about the impact of [inaudible]. You mentioned that you have to compete with the directors for the [inaudible]. How big is that? [Inaudible]? How many are you losing, with what effect? Why are they leaving? Is it because of money or is it the shorter time they have with their families? Talk about the [inaudible].

A: I would think that the reasons for leaving vary widely, but there can be no mistaking the economic incentives that contractors are able to offer our most talented individuals, those who have very high tech computer and surveillance skills, communication skills, special operators, and you asked a question about building a major. It takes decades to build a highly competent, it takes about ten years to build a major. Eight, nine, ten years. But it takes decades to build these highly, highly skilled special operators and

those are the ones who are most the attractive to the contractors.

Have we tracked it? Yes. Are we competitive? It's almost impossible to be fully competitive, and so we're pleased with the rate at which our special operators are staying with us because it speaks to other than the monetary incentives as their reasons.

Q: Can you, if you track it are you getting [inaudible] how many people you're losing?

A: I can't give it to you off the top of my head, sir, but if I can owe you that, I will.

Q: Can I follow up? Secretary Gates has mentioned a non-compete clause for some of these contractors who actually do contract for DoD security. Is that something you proposed that he's signed off on or--

A: No. Thank you for the question, but no. In fact, I'm not familiar with his statements regarding a non-compete clause. I don't recall hearing that either in his AUSA speech, and I was listening pretty intently.

[Laughter].

Q: He was actually, it was at a press conference with a group of us. He raised your same concerns that we're getting guys go out to Iraq and all of a sudden went to private contractors and are getting recruited away. He was thinking about saying if you are a DoD private security contractor, you must sign a non-compete clause that prevents you from actually recruiting our guys. I don't know if that's something you can comment on now, having not really thought about it.

A: I would prefer not to comment. On the surface it sounds attractive to me, but I'd kind of like to know more about it.

Q: You said that growing personnel costs are being supported by supplemental budgets?

A: Largely.

Q: Sooner or later, perhaps, the war is going to end and these budgets are going to go away, but the institutional pay raises, healthcare benefits, end strength, it's going to remain. What's your plan with dealing with these, what some people call entitlements, after the supplementals go away?

A: Well, we're migrating more and more of those into the base budget, but that's competing, of course, with other items that we'll also have to migrate into the base as supplementals go down. We fully expect that they will. So that's the plan, to migrate

those costs. Certainly recruiting and sustaining the Army are primary missions for us. We have to do that.

Q: So how do you fit all of those things into what sacrifice, if you're going to--

A: That's going to be the challenge for Army leadership moving into the future.

Q: We also hear a lot of numbers bandied about about the total costs of fielding a soldier in Iraq. Some people put it anywhere from eighty to a hundred to a hundred and fifty thousand. You, you just give us what is your best guess at the total cost and benefits, you know, long term, training, everything, fielding a soldier for one year deployed in--

A: No, you're adding costs. Your question adds costs that I don't typically track. The question about the cost of an accession, I can give it to you day and night any time, but I can't answer that other one. But I will owe you the answer to that question. The total cost of fielding a soldier in Iraq. Because there's RFI costs, rapid fielding initiative costs, that I don't typically track.

Q: General, going back to the issue of contracting that John and Peter raised. The question you haven't answered yet is is the balance right out there on the battlefield? When you talk to guys at the tip of the spear and the contractors, they get concerned about unity of command issues and monopoly of force issues. There's a Title 10 guy back here supplying troops to the front.

Do you think that the balance is right that contractors are doing in Iraq stuff that your uniform guys should not be doing? Or do you think the pendulum has swung too far and maybe some of those missions that the contractors are doing should be done by guys and gals in uniform and maybe that would reduce some of this economic competition you talk about from the contracting core?

A: Well I really think the question of whether or not the balance is correct on the battlefield is best left to folks like Dave Patraeus and Ray Odierno and many others as well. I'm not going to try to venture into that--

Q: Just from the Title 10 aspect of it.

A: Well I don't know that there is a Title 10 aspect. I understand your question, but I don't know that there is a Title 10--

Q: Don't you wish you could have guys do KP? Wouldn't that make your job a lot easier?

A: Have you ever done KP?

Q: Yeah! But not in the military.

A: So have I, it's not pleasant.

Q: So you don't have an opinion on whether or not contractors are doing too much?

A: No, I really don't. I'm going to stick to my area of expertise.

Q: I wanted to ask you, you're trying to build the force now, a force that's under a great deal of stress, but this has been going on for a number of years and the Army hasn't really been able to get ahead of this curve. So, in fact, the stresses seem to be increasing rather than decreasing.

How long can the Army continue at this pace without a verdict? And related to that is I know that the draft is an unpopular idea, but have you all looked at the possibility of the draft in terms of studying what it might bring, what the pros and cons are?

A: Let me answer that question first, there has been absolutely no effort invested at looking into restoring a draft. None.

My personal opinion is that would be a huge, huge mistake. It is impossible to compare the quality of the soldier, man or woman today, who is the volunteer, the less than one percent of our society that is serving in uniform today. It's impossible to compare that with the Army that I entered in 1972, which was still largely a draft force and persisted in terms of the numbers of soldiers, draftees, who were still serving for a couple of years beyond that.

How long can the Army sustain the pace? I go back to my answer to the question of growing the force. The solution is to grow the force as quickly as we possibly can, not just for the strategic hedge that I believe we need as a nation, but also to be able to relieve some of the pressure to the question I answered earlier, relieve some of the pressure on the force. To build in added dwell, to give those young captains and majors to take bit of a breather and a knee, to think a little bit deeply about what their experiences have been so that they can add to the body of knowledge across our Army in the future.

Q: General, I just wanted to go back to a couple of numbers questions, just to double check a couple of things.

It was my understanding that the Army's goal next year for recruiting was going to stay at 80,000. Is that correct? Or is it going to increase?

A: I mentioned that we were going to hold the mission for U.S. Army Recruiting Command at 80,000. The other pieces of the equation are active first, GRAP and ARAP that we're going to launch, and then of course retention.

Q: Did you say a few minutes ago that retention was also going to stay where it was this year, at about 65,000?

A: Sixty-five thousand.

Q: So then are you not, this gets to the heart of my question, you're not increasing your retention or your recruiting numbers at all but you're trying to grow the Army faster but you're going to put that increase in those two programs counted aside from your recruitment and retention goals?

A: There's clearly an increase to the end strength that will improve from those three components, four components, actually.

Q: Can you tell us what those--because you mentioned 2,000 from active first. Where's the rest? Can you give us an idea of where those numbers are?

A: The estimates for active first, very conservative estimates, are anywhere between 1,500 and 3,000, and I've even heard estimates beyond that, but I think two to three thousand is a reasonable estimate.

Q: And that's your goal for the next fiscal year?

A: Yes.

Q: So that would grow the Army by 2,000?

A: Two or three thousand.

Q: Is there, on top of that, the GRAP?

A: Yes, it is.

Q: And how much is that?

A: The Active Component Recruiter Assistance Program. That would add to the active Army end strength. GRAP would add to the Guard's end strength.

Q: Right, but how much then to the active component?

A: For the Army, the active recruiter assistance program, possibly another thousand.

Q: So does this then, sort of multi-part, but I just want to get the numbers right, does this then suggest an acknowledgement that the Army doesn't believe there's any room to increase its base recruiting and retention goals? That there just isn't any capacity out there to overall increase those recruitment efforts?

A: What those numbers represent is a realistic view of how challenging it is at this point in time to weigh, to leverage all of our growth on the back of recruiting alone. And I'm speaking active component, U.S. Army Recruiting Command alone. Absent some change in either the economic climate, support for the war, it's realistic.

Q: Would the difference come from retention?

A: It will. Largely from retention. But it will also--

Q: [Inaudible]?

A: We have pretty much maxed out on the ability to grow retention. Sixty-five thousand is pretty aggressive. It was in 2007 and it's equally aggressive in 2008.

Q: How many extra people per year [inaudible]? I'm just trying to get a sense. There seems to be a gap.

A: No, no there isn't. Three to four thousand. And that's total growth.

Q: General, you talked about these ambitious expansion plans. Do you expect in the percentage of waivers now granted for education, criminal background, et cetera to go up in the coming years? And secondly, do you anticipate any changes in minimum requirements regarding education or [inaudible], or anything like that? So in other words, do you expect waivers to go up and do you anticipate any changes in the requirements for enlistment?

A: The latter part of your question first, if I may. No, I do not expect a change in standards, if you will. Education standards, aptitude standards, moral waiver standards, I anticipate no change in those whatsoever. We are doing some research which will not have near term impacts.

To attempt to answer the question, Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery plus what equals a good soldier? I'm convinced that Armed Services Vocational Aptitude

Battery and a high school diploma are only a part of the equation. We're seeing that played out day in and day out in Iraq and Afghanistan right now, but we don't have the body of knowledge yet, research if you will, to be able to definitively say Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery plus what? Heart, desire, whatever the other parts of the equation are, equals a good soldier.

Universities have shown us the way. Increasingly, they are relying upon, and I'm talking very sophisticated universities, they are relying not exclusively, on the results of an SAT to determine who to admit into their institutions.

To the first part of your question: no, I don't expect the waivers to increase. Although, if you take a look at the society from which we are recruiting, today only three out of every ten young Americans between the ages of 17 and 24 are able to enlist without a waiver, and the trend is moving in the wrong direction. Three out of every ten.

Q: What's pushing it in the wrong direction?

A: Excellent question. A number of things. Increasing high school dropout rates; a tendency, especially with respect to infractions that occur in or near school, a la the results with Columbine. And states, it varies widely, are increasingly reluctant to avoid calling in authorities for even the most minor infraction and there is your record, if you will.

Now, is that justifiable? I assume it is, yes, but that's what's causing the trend to move in the opposite direction, those type of things.

The largest single factor is obesity.

Q: You want to finish your question then we have about twelve minutes and six questions, you have to leave right at nine? Another five minutes?

A: Yes, I do.

Q: Just really quickly, I was just wondering, you mentioned, General, there was a study that was going to look into other factors in addition to the vocational test. How do you measure some of these other things? The [inaudible], the [inaudible] and these other things that would sort of [inaudible] or maybe a lower score?

A: There are a couple of things in existence already that attempt to get after that, and we're simply expanding the universe of measures that we're looking at. One of those is, it's called the Arms Test. The recruit motivation study, the Army Recruit Motivation Study. And it allows an individual who may score in the lower half of the Armed Services

Vocational Aptitude Battery to take a motivational test that is a step test and an individual within a fixed amount of time is required to do--it's a little bit like an aerobic test, if you will. In a fixed amount of time to do a performance on that aerobic-like test to measure the desire, heart, if you will. And then we track those individuals and compare them to others who would meet all of the requirements for enlistment: high school degree grad, upper mental category, that's it.

Q: General, you mentioned support for the war as one of the factors of recruiting as fewer teachers, coaches, parents, et cetera, are recommending military service because of the unpopularity of the war. How significant a factor is that and do you have any particular strategies to deal with that issue?

A: It's very significant. Frankly, since 2003 the DoD studies, samples, surveys of primarily the primary influences for young people, being parents, and their willingness to recommend military service has declined. The first trend that was seen in 2003 was that mothers of eligible young men or women declined rather precipitously. Since that time, fathers have just about mirrored the decline.

What's the strategy? The strategy is to communicate more with respect to our outreach and our advertising to the influencer rather than to the individual.

One of the things I didn't mention that I should, which gets to your question in terms of novel incentives, is the Army Advantage Fund that we will launch in November, next month. The Army Advantage Fund is one of the pilot programs that Congress has given us the authority to launch under their expanded piloting authorities from two years ago. The Army Advantage Fund takes the place of the Army College Fund. It doesn't do away with it, but it offers a young person the opportunity to purchase or make a substantial down payment on a home or a business in the range of \$40,000 to \$45,000 as the incentive.

To your question, sir, I don't know too many young 17 or 18 year olds who are concerned about purchasing a business, but that resonates with influencers.

Q: General, I apologize if you've already covered this, but what's the status of the 15 month tours? And is there, I don't know if there's any movement to move back to 12 month? And if not, does that worry you for retention down the line? As we continue, folks are going to have to keep looking at that, I've got 15 months overseas, maybe not this time?

A: We're obviously hopeful that we can return to less than 15 month tours as quickly as we possibly can, and I'm optimistic that on the back side of the surge--some have estimated it to be the summer where we will begin to see a draw down, and I'm sure you

all know that, that we'd be able to return to 12 month tours.

Q: Is optimistic anything more than that? I mean, are you confident that it looks like with the current trends that would be possible?

A: As is commonly stated, I mean, the enemy has a vote.

Q: Well just a follow up on that, looking at the map of the combat brigades, at what juncture would it be actually possible to do that with the rotation, I mean to go to the 12 months? When you say the back side of the surge, the same quantity of surge forces that went in are anticipated to be out by the summer.

A: I don't think it's a straight linear equation, but I think it's a factor, a function of our ability to grow the force, as we're trying to do, and as we will do, but it's also a factor of the total demand for brigade combat teams. I don't want to go into too many details on that one, but the ability to grow the force so that we have the ability to increase dwell, the time a soldier spends at home with family or pursuing that relationship that I spoke about earlier, and the ability to meet the demand.

Q: Can you just talk a little bit more about as you grow the force, about what the composition of the force would be? There's been discussion about how many new combat brigades would be developed, but what about other kinds of new capabilities like these trainers, and so forth, that may be increasingly in demand and how are you preparing to supply extra quantities of those people?

A: Well, those are force structure decisions that are still very much under consideration. You're speaking of increasing the number of transition teams, some of the debate about whether or not we should have forces that are more irregular as opposed to regular, that debate will continue.

My challenge right now is to simply be successful in reaching that increase to an Army end strength of 547,000.4. That's my challenge.

Q: Just to briefly follow up on that, I mean, as you train people, you recruit them for different specialties, you build your training base, I mean you need to have in mind what kind of soldiers you're trying to produce, right?

A: That's nothing new. The Army changes daily and we keep up with that, that's the norm.

Let me give you an example. The modular force that we're still building was a fairly radical departure from the division based army of the past. I don't see anything else that

would approach that in terms of complexity.

Q: Real quick, sir, can you talk about the program to retain captains? That program is closing, is what you said?

A: No, no it's not.

Q: How many people have you had sign up for it?

A: I knew you were going to ask me that question and I saw the figure just yesterday.

Well first of all, let me say that the captains' critical selective retention bonus is an overwhelming success. It's still early. We only opened it to three year groups, as you well know, but the intent, and that was for a specific period of time, for those year groups. The intent is later in fiscal '08 to open it to additional year groups. It is successful, but it is also part of a menu of options to help grow the officer corps, back to your question, that addresses incentives for newly commissioned officers, who for a choice of branch, specialty, or location of choice, will agree to additional active duty service obligations. So we're coming at this thing from both ends, as well as captains who are approaching the five to seven year mark. So no, it's not going to close.

Of the eligible population, and I'll get you the precise numbers and the more current numbers because we're receiving on the order about 400 applications a day.

Q: General, you spoke earlier about [inaudible] the Army efforts to find soldiers the way that universities are becoming more nuanced I how they find students. One of the things universities are doing is they're looking at mental and psychological background of students, to a degree. Given that the Army is now having problems with depression, PTSD, with suicide among those in Iraq, is there any effort underway to try to increase the kind of screening the Army does for soldier's psychological readiness before he or she ships out, as opposed to when they come back?

A: Well, you have several questions wrapped up in that seemingly simple question there, but let me go back. I want to make sure that I don't mislead you. We do not yet have a basis, a scientific basis for answering that question, as I said before. Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery plus what equals a good soldier? So we're not there yet. That research is being done largely by the Army Research Institute. So that's work in progress.

To your question, I think you are asking about individuals who are not yet in the Army, whether we're doing some psychological screening on that. Nothing beyond what we have done in the past. Now, we are checking, the Army is checking, as are all of the

services, databases of offenders, to make sure that we're not letting anyone in who is a pedophile or that type of thing. And we're doing our best to make sure that, and obviously hate groups, as well.

The third part of your question dealt with individuals who are in the force and they have already deployed and how we might be addressing their mental stability issues. And I would say quite well. Quite, quite well. Do we need more, and I'll say this from the standpoint of getting the word out there in the marketplace, do we need more psychologists and psychiatrists? Absolutely. We're looking at ways to direct, we're examining ways to direct commission individuals with specialty skills like that that we need. Mental health assessment teams, in fact I believe there's one in Iraq as I speak. I think it's there already. And this is our fifth mental health assessment team that we've sent forward, not to mention the screening that occurs when a unit, within a ninety day period, after a unit redeploys back to, I'll let you take the 1st and the 34th Minnesota, base headquartered in Minnesota or the 10th Mountain Division brigades. So yes, we're addressing those very, very aggressively.

The key though, one of the keys we're finding, is the, I mentioned this before to Ms. Tan's question, and that's dwell. Simply the time to be able to take a knee.

Q: General, can you take another crack at the cost question? I haven't heard you say anything this morning that refers to costs going down. On the contrary, everything you've mentioned involves some higher costs, and especially in terms of building these entitlements, and I'm thinking health and housing and all the stuff that goes with keeping the force the size you want. What are you telling the Army leadership about the growing costs of personnel? How much is it growing and what are you looking at I the next POM in terms of higher costs?

A: What we're telling the Army leadership and we're telling the Congress is that this all volunteer force is not an inexpensive venture. In order to attract the best and the brightest, in order to attract the best and the brightest we're going to have to be competitive. In order to retain families, we're going to have to address their well-being needs, as well as the needs of the service member.

As we build the next POM, I mentioned before that we are migrating an ever increasing amount of what we're discussing right now, those costs, retention costs, recruiting costs, incentives, et cetera, migrating those out of the supplemental and into the base. That is going to, as I addressed earlier, result in pressure inside the overall Army budget to continue modernization efforts as well. And that's where your question was.

Q: How much are you looking at?

A: Let me give you an estimate of that, please.

Q: Do you have even a percentage increase?

A: No, I don't want to venture without a--this is on the record as I was--

Q: It is on the record.

Q: However, we are out of time. General, Rochelle, thank you.

A: Well, let me thank all of you for the opportunity and thank you for what you do in helping to inform, not only inform the American people, but inform members of Congress as well. So thank you very much.

END TEXT