

TRANSCRIPT

Defense Writers Group

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

Rep. Ike Skelton, Democrat of Missouri
Chairman, House Armed Services Committee
April 29, 2008

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: I wanted to start this morning talking about readiness, a subject which is near and dear to your heart. You recently said that you thought, and this is a quote, "Iraq is preventing us from effectively preparing for the next conflict." And you said, "Readiness for most non-deployed units has fallen to unprecedented levels. Nearly all training is focused on counter-insurgency operations." Bad deal all around.

I wonder if you'd take a few minutes here at the top and develop that a little bit, talk about what specifically bothers you, especially I guess as it refers to conventional war. I take it that's the problem you see is there's no preparation for anything other than counter-insurgency.

A: I'm not sure where I start. My first year in law school, I roomed with a second year law student who was caught in the Husan Perimeter in the Korean War. I learned first-hand about the lack of preparedness at that time, June 1950.

In thinking about this, I reflect back to testimony given by Shy Meyer, the Army Chief of Staff, when he referred to the "hollow Army". I was [inaudible] in Congress at that time, and visited various Army posts, and it was apparent that we were not fully ready for the unexpected.

I asked the Library of Congress some time ago, last year, to give me a list of the conflicts that America's been in over the last 30 years since I at that time was in my 32nd year in Congress. They gave me a list of 12 military conflicts in which we've been engaged, four of which have been major: Panama, Desert Storm, and the two in which we're engaged in now, Iraq and Afghanistan.

In questioning the military, though they've been slow to come around, more recent

testimony is that should a major unexpected contingency occur today, it could not be answered in a timely fashion. And this worries me to death.

Readiness means the ability to engage successfully an unexpected military event. It involves personnel, I should say sufficient personnel. It involves proper training. It involves proper equipment. And we are in dire need of upgrading our readiness. Our committee is making a valiant attempt to do that. It is an ongoing struggle with the continuous drain of forces and effort in the Middle East, both Iraq and Afghanistan.

There are, if I may go on, in my opinion there are two Damocles swords that hang over our country regarding national security. That's one. Readiness and our lack of readiness. I know you're familiar with the testimony we've had and the briefings we've had, some classified, some non-classified, but it's a sincere worry to me, the lack of readiness. Should the unexpected come to pass and we need several brigades in the Army and the Marines, we've got to answer the call promptly and this worries me.

The second Damocles sword, of course, is Afghanistan. We'll get into that if you want me to a bit later.

The Iraq conflict is undoubtedly the major cause of the lack of readiness elsewhere.

I just got an e-mail from a retired lieutenant colonel who grew up with me in Missouri. His warrant officer son is in the Middle East for the fourth time. Now you're asking an awful lot of these young people. It's a drain on their families. It's causing some not to reenlist. It's causing the captain corps of the Army to leave in unprecedented numbers. I worry about the future.

The officer corps, and I've worked on this and been an advocate for strong professional military education, PME as it's called, for a number of years. I assume you've been around a couple of days. We had a panel on Professional Military Education in 1987-1988 which did some yeoman's work on causing them to upgrade what they do, what they teach, and the rigor that the various intermediate and senior war colleges have. That's why it's important to keep the young captains and keep them engaged and give them as much education as well as service in the field.

If you think I stress this too much, I don't. I think there were 34 Army corps, in World War II, right at that. Thirty-one of the corps commanders taught in the various war colleges, to give you an idea of the professional military education. This is part of readiness. It's a strong part of readiness. That's what worries me about these young captains, potential colonels and future leaders in the Army and Marine Corps leaving. It's going to be a drain on the readiness of tomorrow.

Q: Some of us, including me, are old enough to remember the first hollow force, and it was never the force that was actually deployed, it was the force that was at home--the Army, Air Force, Naval units at home that were being stripped to supply the ones that

were forward deployed. Is this a hollow force too, in your mind?

A: The caliber of the young men and young women today is high. That's good. The strain on them is also high, and keeping them is a problem.

I would not equate the two. Those today are better trained, better motivated, better equipped, at least when deploying. Now the equipment is very sparse back here in this country so only 61 percent, for instance, of the National Guard equipment is back here for training purposes. No. It's a different Army. But it's under such strain that I worry a great deal.

I think the big difference is the caliber of young people that are joining the military today. Of course I know in the Army that standards have lowered; I know numbers with unsavory backgrounds have been admitted. Despite that, I still think the caliber is high.

Q: I was wondering if you could talk a little bit, kind of dovetail off that. We talk to battalion commanders, brigade commanders, the kind of people who say absolutely we can't pull out of Iraq right now because the situation is just going to squander any success that's been made. What do you say to that brigade commander who says it's a delicate balance, and despite some areas where there's improved security, some cases dramatically, it will screw it up if we pull out now. What do you say to them?

A: Two things. First is, you're forgetting Afghanistan. We can't come out there unsuccessful. That's the genesis of the attack on the United States. That should be number one priority and it worries me that that is not the number one priority of the administration.

Admiral Mullen's, Mike Mullen's comment in Iraq, we do what we must and in Afghanistan we do what we can. That's a reflection, of course, of the administration. First things first.

If we are to be attacked again it's going to be from the Afghanistan/Pakistan border area where the Taliban, where the al-Qaida are located. We all know that they did it before and we should give that priority so they can't do it again.

I'm not answering your question directly. The only real answer is to get the Afghan Security Forces to step up to the plate and do a better job and get the--

Q: Iraq?

A: Yes, excuse me. What did I say?

Q: Afghan.

A: Wrong country. The Iraqi forces to step up to the plate and get better trained and take

over. Number two, get their political act in order. That's a deep concern. I think they've been very slow in doing so. They've made some progress politically but not nearly enough.

After all, that has to work or the whole effort is for naught.

Q: But if that's not an option in this juncture in Iraq--

A: It's going to have to be an option. We're wearing our troops out. At some point the military is not going to be able to fully fulfill its missions, plural, particularly if we have some unforeseen circumstance arise. Let's hope and pray it doesn't.

In looking at the various conflicts that we had in the last 30 years, most of which have not been what you and I would call major, but when somebody's shooting at you it's major. But the average period of time between them has been five years or less. And we've had five years since our last conflict beginnings.

Am I worried? You bet I'm worried. Terribly worried about our readiness should the unexpected happen. We may be very fortunate and nothing comes to pass, whether it be in the Far East or Latin America. We just don't know.

None of these 12 conflicts that--if you're interested, I'll get you a copy. It's really a well done short paper. None of them were predicted. They all came rather fast.

Q: Staying with readiness, but shifting from the ground forces to the Air Force, there seems to be a, for lack of a better word, a bit of a pissing match going on between OSD and the Air Force about what the Air Force should look like. It seems that the Air Force, for its part, has tried to take its fight, has lost the battle in OSD, to Capitol Hill. As far as I can tell, the fight is a bit about the Air Force wants to fight near peer competitors, it wants to invest in F-22s and fighters, and Gates really believes that there's a war at hand, stop paying attention to any future wars, we need ISR, we need airlift. He's yelled at various generals about this.

Where do you come down on this? Particularly programmatically it's going to, committees are going to have a big say in this because the Air Force wants F-22s and Gates wants them to buy more Predators and there's only limited resources. Do you have any views on where the priority should be at the Air Force in all this?

A: It's a typical tug of war between today and tomorrow. The Air Force is obviously wanting F-22s. Of course we haven't had them in actual conflict in recent years. It's going to have to be some sort of a balance.

I know the present concern between the Air Force and the Secretary seems to be that of the use of UAVs, Predators being one of the types. I think it's very important that we succeed today as well as build for tomorrow. We really can't put off success today,

particularly in Afghanistan. But the Air Force, looking down the road, is obviously thinking of the unexpected around the corner. Our country, going back, you name it. When I was a boy when World War II started, we have not habitually been prepared. World War II, Korea. I think the Air Force is probably looking downstream in that regard.

There has to be a balance. Quite honestly, you're going to have to win today's conflict or you will have worse in the future.

Q: Can I press you a little about F-22. Obviously that decision has to be made next year about whether to continue the line. There may be a Democratic President who's probably going to come to you and ask your advice on this matter. Do you have a view, if the emphasis does indeed have to be on today, the Air Force may have to sacrifice that program? I guess they still get 183, but that's not what they want.

A: At some point you're going to have to have an end to any line. The F-22 or anything else.

It depends on the money that we have to put in today's readiness, which is my number one priority. We'll have to look at it through those glasses.

Q: Readiness, your number one priority. As you mark up the Defense Authorization Bill, what other priorities are you looking at to [inaudible] defense? What are you looking at?

A: Any number of things. I live on a vast body of water called the Missouri River. Nevertheless, I see the great need for increasing the number of ships in the Navy.

I harken back to when I was, earlier in Congress, and Ronald Reagan was pushing for the 600 ship Navy. We never got there. We were way up in numbers. Now the Navy wants to get back up to 313. I'm worried about getting there. It's not just a matter of hulls, it's a matter of what type of hull will you have. The cargo hulls which are necessary on the one hand, our destroyer/cruiser/aircraft carrier hulls on the other. At the rate we're going, 313 is a pretty illusory number. We're going to have to speed it up one way or the other. That is of deep concern.

If there's some way also to approach my number two, my other deep concern, Afghanistan, I will. I'm not quite sure how to do it. I'd like to have some language on that.

A major area that cuts across committee lines, an area that must be addressed and we made history the other day when we had both Secretary Gates and Secretary Rice testify before our Armed Services Committee on the coordination and cooperation between the various agencies. Clausewitz says that war is only a means to a political end. That's why you need all of the agencies working together, whether it be humanitarian, whether it be establishing local governments, other type of reconstruction. The military can't do it all.

However the military--the Army has been doing more in Iraq and Afghanistan than has historically been the case for the military. We need the other agencies to coordinate and cooperate better. I hope we can make a major attempt to have language beginning--

As I said, you need several jurisdictions to approach this problem, but I think our committee understands it and will make hopefully a major provision that gets us on the first step toward strong cooperation between the various agencies. In particular the State Department and the Defense Department, but not limited thereto.

Q: On the Afghanistan [inaudible], what does that look like?

A: Sorry, the what?

Q: The Afghanistan language you wanted to put in. Does that [inaudible] as well?

A: I'm not quite sure what it would look like. It would be a strong, in my judgment right now might be a sense that the Congress has two priorities.

Q: Mr. Chairman, you talk about the dire situation we're facing in Iraq and perhaps in fact we need to keep an early pull-out on the table to keep our Army from being ground up. 547,000 troops by 2010 is the current Army target. To your mind is that sufficient? Or is another option enlarging the size of our active duty Army?

A: If you could get more and you could find more, you could always use a larger Army.

Q: Are you advocating that?

A: I'm advocating what we can get.

1945, based on testimony by then Lieutenant General Ted Stroop, head of personnel, and I was advocating since his testimony, increasing the Army as of then, by 40,000 troops. Finally, finally we were able to get there.

We've been short of Army troops in particular for some time, but if you look at your recruiting challenges, so many don't pass a test and the fact that they're giving various waivers, conduct-related waivers, you might have trouble reaching the higher goal that you mentioned. I think it's an additional 85,000 for the Army that we're looking for, and I forget the exact number for the Marines, 30-some odd thousand is my recollection. I'll be glad to get there with a quality force. Will we need more? I don't know what the future holds, but I'll be pleased to get to those figures with a quality force.

Q: I just had a follow-up to your response to Ashleigh's question, then another question.

Regarding the coordination between DoD and state and other agencies is that [inaudible] language as well that [inaudible]?

A: No. I hope not. I can't really put in what we might do. But we own a piece of it, as you know. Actually, probably a major piece of it if you look at it objectively. We can get started with some sort of language other than [inaudible] language in directing coordination between the agencies. But since we have limited jurisdiction in the Armed Services Committee we're going to need something in the future, joint hearings, I recommend a select committee from various committees, I don't favor that right now. I think we can probably skin that cat through the various committees without actually having a select committee as such. But it's a major problem.

You talk to soldiers or leaders, well, that's the State Department's job and they haven't done their job. And Treasury Department ought to be doing that. The Agriculture Department ought to be helping us more, particularly in Afghanistan.

By the way, we have a good number of Missouri farmers, National Guardsmen, helping in the agriculture area right now in Afghanistan. All of this needs to be better coordinated. It's going to take a lot of give and take, but we're going to get it done.

Q: Also on the authorization bill, last year you were successful in keeping any sort of divisive or controversial Iraq language off the bill. Are you going to seek to do that again this year? Have you had any questions--

A: I would hope so. The Iraqi Middle Eastern language has been fought out, as you know, in the appropriation process and we are there to raise and maintain rather than, although there may be some language regarding it, but raise and maintain rather than fight the war itself.

Q: If we're going to get through all our questions here we need to kind of move along and shorten them up.

A: Am I--

Q: Not you, but the questions.

Q: How do you think the war supplemental should address the war issue, the readiness issue? And what do you think of this idea of restricting aid, reconstruction aid, until the Iraqis spend more of their oil surpluses?

A: Two questions. You're only entitled to one. [Laughter].

Q: She said "and".

A: It's difficult to answer. Reconstruction is something that needs to be done. They're going to have to do it. They're going to have to assume more responsibility. I'm not sure how we make them do that. It's a concern to me. I'm not sure that's fully answering your

question

Q: Would you support restricting US aid until they spend more?

A: I think that letting them know that we're going to start redeploying troops out would be even a stronger message than restricting aid. Although a combination thereof might not be a bad idea.

I think if we redeployed two brigades tomorrow, and with the message that we're not here forever, you're going to have to do it politically and security wise, they'd have to do it.

Let me tell you, they can pay for an awful lot more than they are. Recent news reports report that they're having windfall profits from their oil sales. I would think they could put that money into reconstructing their own country. There's going to have to be some sort of honest to goodness pressure like redeploying our troops and/or restricting, cutting back on our aid or a combination thereof, to cause them to do it.

We can't be there forever. A conflict breaks out somewhere, South Korea, somewhere-- heaven forbid. We're going to need troops to do something. Where are you going to get them from? We need to be ready, and you just can't continue down the same road without them acting a lot better money-wise and politically and in the area of their own national security.

Q: Would the supplemental address any of this?

A: I would hope so. I would hope it would make some provision if not a sense of Congress on all three of the items.

Q: [Inaudible] adding aircraft monies to the supplemental, the '08 supplemental. The C-17s, C-130s, and then long lead money for the F-22s. I'm wondering what your thoughts are on the addition.

A: I don't know about it.

Q: Also on the supplemental, any thoughts on the idea of combining some bridge money for '09 into the '08 supplemental? Also any insight you have into whether it may come up on the House Floor?

A: I haven't seen the supplemental. That's not a very good answer. Rephrase your question.

Q: How about the idea of adding domestic spending onto it? Do you think that's necessary to--

A: Whatever it takes to pass the supplemental. Whatever it takes.

You would hope it would be a pure military oriented supplemental. We have dire needs, not just in the readiness area, but materiel readiness. We did a great MRAP session in previous supplementals. But frankly, if you need votes for it and domestic spending is the only way to do it, I would not stand in the way.

Q: If I can ask a parochial question. Several of your colleagues have talked about freezing money for the Air Force tanker because they want to buy a foreign competitor or a foreign [inaudible]. You've had a bunch of weeks to mull this issue. I wonder what your thoughts are, what should be done in terms of the tanker?

A: I think this question's kind of [inaudible]. [Laughter].

Well, our committee undoubtedly will address it. The [inaudible] had a hearing on it and in addition a briefing on it, is my recollection. I'm sure there will be amendments. My concern is that the protest by the losing, by Northrop, which is in the hands of the GAO until June, will not come until after our markup. That, needless to say, is a concern to me, that we will be jumping out ahead. Should our committee actually agree on doing something in the bill it will be premature as compared to the end game of the protest by GAO from Northrop. That's a concern that we might get the cart before the horse. However, I'm sure there will be amendments on this and I would prefer--Our markup, of course, will come well after that's played out. But that's not the case, so I would hope to minimize the discussion or the effort until at least the GAO has played out its protest.

Q: Odds are that's not going to happen.

A: No, it's not coming until June.

Q: I'm just curious about your particular views these days. What are you telling members about this issue? Do you agree with concerns that it's the Boeing--you keep saying Northrop, but it's Boeing that's protesting.

A: Correct.

Q: Do you agree with the protest more broadly? What are your views?

A: They certainly have a right to do so. I have said very little on this because I am the Chairman and I will have to keep two balls in the air at one time in this.

Well before the bill becomes law you will have the protest ended by the GAO. So I would prefer to see the hold card before serious decisions are made. It's unfortunately that the protest comes after our markup, as I mentioned before.

Q: Sir, every major defense program is over budget not by small amounts but by billions.

A: Say again.

Q: Almost every major defense program is over budget by billions of dollars. You're concerned about readiness, but each of the services is facing enormous bills in the next few years for programs that are already on track, which just means that the budget pressures are going to get more difficult.

How do you see this all working out? Do you think there will have to be a period of program terminations where the military will have to sacrifice major programs? Or do you see this sort of continuing, this incremental thing, baby steps?

A: I think a little bit of both. Readiness in my mind is a priority for the unexpected, and you hope it doesn't come to pass but as sure as God made little green apples, something's going to happen. It has happened in the past. So it's going to be a combination of maybe stretching some out, maybe taking a hard look and not continuing funding some of them. Everybody, each of the services have their pet projects and it's our job to raise and maintain, and it's our job to sometimes pick and choose.

Q: Do you have--

A: That's also very unpleasant to do so. Every one of them is right in wanting, in a need for their particular program. But we're going to have to prioritize, in my opinion, for readiness. We're going to have to. At the expense possibly in other areas. This is just me talking, and it's very difficult I know, but I feel very strongly about it.

Q: One of the pressures that adds to this is when Congress adds things to the budget the military has said we'd like but we can't afford. The C-17s were mentioned before. What are your views on those [inaudible] and how that is adding to the budget pressures?

A: Sometimes Congress has a long range, wiser process than the military. I was in the middle of one of them called Goldwater/Nichols. It was very very bitter. Those of you who were here between 1982 and 1986 remember full well how unpleasant it was.

I think the same is true for some weapon systems as well. Some classified, some not.

We have the opportunity to look at national defense from a broader point of view than just a single service, which of course will be advocating whatever system they might have.

That's the beauty of what Congress does. I give that as a great example. Military education that no one writes about, no one pays attention to.

Q: Hey!

A: Except one. None of this is headline stuff, but it's very very important for the future of the security of our country. Congress pushed that, for instance. Of course the same can be said for the weapon systems.

How about the A-10? The Air Force didn't want it. They've gotten more than their money's worth out of the A-10 in the Middle East.

That's our job.

Q: -- the outlook for defense spending. You said a couple of things that imply there's going to be a strong consensus for defense spending over the next administration. 313 ships, I'm concerned we're not going to get there. We can always use a larger Army. Readiness is a top priority. A larger Army's going to cost a heck of a lot of money.

Do you, looking at a consensus for defense spending now, today, do you see it as fairly strong and will sustain itself for the next four or five years? Or are you concerned that the congressional consensus to spend on defense will diminish over time, no matter who becomes the next President?

A: I think a lot depends upon the conflicts in the Middle East. I would hope that the budget, budgeting for national security would remain strong. I think if the need is there the people in America will be there, which is reflected in the Congress.

I remember the two areas, one after the Vietnam War and then after the so-called settlement of the Cold War. Remember the Peace Dividend which at that time had we maybe spent a little bit more in readiness we would not be where we are today. It's always hard to judge what you need in the future. But that's our number one job is the security of our nation. I would hope we would keep that strong.

Q: One follow-up. Clinton and Obama, their defense views, have you examined them in terms of what are the signals they're sending that would perpetuate some of the [inaudible], strong budget, readiness. Do you have a feel for that right now?

A: I bet you have a better feel for it than I do.

Not really. I know their rhetoric indicates strong national security, but I haven't seen any budgetary figures or any great detail. I don't think that's been a real topic of debate or discussion as I think it should have been, but it has not.

Read the newspapers, turn on the radio, turn on the television, and you don't see them debating the future needs of our military. Not once. At least I haven't heard it.

Q: Maybe in the general election. Thank you, sir.

Q: I'd like to ask you about the Thunderbirds production services contract that has been

now tainted [inaudible]. Last week your Missouri compatriote, Senator [inaudible], send a scathing letter to Secretary Wynne in which she questioned the judgment of General Moseley in that affair and placed in question, if I'm reading the letter correctly, his ability to continue leading the Air Force.

My question is, are you satisfied, based on your understanding of this affair, that enough has been done by Secretary Wynne and by OSD to hold people accountable to make sure such transgressions don't occur again?

Secondly, do you have confidence in General Moseley's ability to continue leading the Air Force?

A: The answer to your last question is yes.

The answer to the first question, it's under investigation. Anything I would say regarding that, despite the fact that my friend in the Senate [inaudible], I think it would be inappropriate to do so as long as it's under investigation.

Q: Is there any type of [inaudible] about language to the authorization bill--

A: No.

Q:--of the Congress to express your opinion and your dissatisfaction of what happened?

A: Not on that, no.

Q: When Ambassador Crocker and General Patraeus were in Washington they talked a lot about the terrorizing threat in Iraq as Shiite extremists and Iranian support for the special groups and so forth. It seems that there's sort of a shift in the characterization of the threat in Iraq from one of al-Qaida to Iranian--

A: In Iraq?

Q: In Iraq.

A: You never had an al-Qaida threat there until after the war started. The foreign fighters didn't come in until later to assist the Sunni insurgents.

Q: I'm wondering also--

A: So you'll have to rephrase your question because that was not an initial problem.

Q: My question is do you think that the threat of Iranian involvement in Iraq now is being exaggerated?

A: No. They seem to have their foot in all or nearly all of the Shiite groups, directly or indirectly. And I think that could pose a major problem for the future. They are neighbors to Iraq.

Keep in mind that they had an eight year war and there was a great deal of bloodshed between the two at one time. I also point out the fact that they are Persian and not Arab. So there are two schisms between the two. Nevertheless, they are Shiite and they have been helping, assistance to all or nearly all of the Shiite groups. Whichever comes out on top I think they will at least be at the table. How much they'll have to say at the end of the day, I think there's a good chance there might be some resentment toward them growing within the Shiite community because of those ancient [inaudible], the war and the fact that they're a different people.

Q: On Pakistan, [inaudible] al-Qaida is reconstituting on the border of Afghanistan, what should the next President do differently on Pakistan?

A: Urge Pakistan to be of more help in the border area, although I'm led to believe that they are doing better, deploying more troops. But you're going to have to have a squeeze play between the Pakistanis on one side of the border and NATO and American forces on the other to actually eliminate the Taliban and the al-Qaida in that area. Urging deeper cooperation is what is needed.

Q: Does Congress have any efforts to help that [problem]?

A: As regards to purse strings, I'd say yes. Just how, I'm not sure.

Q: What do you think?

A: About the only thing that would be in order would be some sort of restriction on funds going to Pakistan. I'm not sure how that would survive a veto threat.

Q: Congressman, to go back to your comments on readiness. There's a school of thought that Islamic extremists is the paramount threat for the near future. Do you share that view, or are you more concerned about other potential threats?

A: All the above. In the Middle East, maybe Europe, the irregular type of forces will be a serious threat for decades. In the Far East any serious threats, in my opinion, would be force on force, a la state on state. I think there's a big difference.

Now the new Army Field Manual attempts to do both, to be prepared for a force on force on the one hand which means a state on state type of conflict; or irregular forces on the other, which of course would be most of the Middle East and possibly even in Europe. But the Army Field Manual wants to address both of them.

I think you have two problems with the Field Manual. Number one is time and the other

one is money. Do you have enough time to train our forces to do both? Number two, do you have enough money to train our forces to do both? The Army will have a serious challenge on its hands trying to complete those missions that come out of that new Field Manual.

Are you familiar with it at all? Do you know what I'm talking about?

Q: Yes.

Q: You were talking earlier about readiness issues. How concerned are you about the mental health of returning veterans who have done multiple tours?

A: Greatly.

Q: And do you think the Pentagon has [inaudible] or [inaudible] to deal with the flood people coming back [inaudible]?

A: I'm very concerned about it. I am told that for instance in the conflicts that we've had, particularly World War II, a unit would be on the front line for a period of time, then be able to go in the reserve for a while. The young men and young women today are 365 days a year, are on the front line. I think that has a serious or the possibility of a serious toll on someone. Yes, I'm quite concerned about it.

I think we can do a better job. I think we could address this before and we will have to continue to address it and in particular fund it.

The identification of young people having problems when they come back, there are very few people who will say hey, I have a mental problem. It just doesn't happen. But there are ways to discover if someone is under great stress and we try to help them, as well as their families. The families are the ultimate bill payers for someone under a great deal of stress. I think we can do a better job. And it's not just the Pentagon, it's us as well.

Q: It seems that your roles and missions [inaudible] terms of reference just approved by OSD and the Joint Staff recently, getting ready to be sent to the Hill. But there is some concern from the Pentagon, from what I understand, that basically this new look can inflame possibly old service rivalries and--

A: Really? [Laughter].

Q: And also maybe destroy some of the relationships that were kind of put together through Goldwater/Nichols.

A: 1947, as a result of the disagreements during the 2nd World War Harry Truman called in the Army Chief of Staff, the CNO, the Navy Secretary, the Secretary of War, and urged them to fix this. In 1948 there was a Key West Agreement that came about and

resulted in a newly formed Air Force which was created in 1947, as you know, by the National Security Act. And they did, to their credit. This was amended in '53 and '58.

Since that time threats have changed, weapon systems have changed, intelligence, surveillance has changed, so much has changed. What brought this to light was the Army and the Air Force were having a tug of war over who owned the Joint Cargo Aircraft. The Army and the Air Force having a tug of war over who owned the UAVs, and they wanted us to settle it in our bill. Well, we did. We created a roles and missions review. There was a timeline on it. They're taking it seriously.

Now will it damage their relationship? Probably. But they'll get over it. They did before. Goldwater/Nichols was a greater problem, but they got over it. It changed the culture. It has to be done. You end up with duplication, uncertainty, roles and missions has to be a priority and we're causing that by law. Since we're not the Commander in Chief to call them into our office, we do it in law. I think it's one of the best things we've done.

Q: One quick follow-up as far as when you said that services are taking this seriously. There isn't a concern that maybe they're just sort of trying to put something together to appease Congress and do some--

A: I'll let you know. I'll let them know. That's my baby. A little bit of history I guess could be helpful or dangerous. I happen to know that piece of Harry Truman's history. We'll see the work product. I bet it will be good. I've talked to several, including the Chairman and the Joint Chiefs, and they're taking it seriously.

Q: Is anything off limits?

A: What do you mean?

Q: Well, you've got two light infantry forces, one in the Marine Corps, one in the Army. Is that duplication and waste?

A: We'll see what they come up with. You don't have enough of either. We'll see what they come up with.

Q: I think we're out of time. Thanks very much.

END TEXT