

Gen. Casey's remarks at the AUSA Winter Symposium

On Feb. 25 General George Casey addressed the Soldiers and contractors at the AUSA Winter Symposium at Fort Lauderdale, FL. It will most likely be his final address as Army Chief of Staff. Gen. Martin Dempsey has been nominated to replace Casey as chief of staff; his confirmation hearing is scheduled for March 3. Here are Gen. Casey's remarks.

I've been in the docket for the past three years and have never made it ... so I felt that I owed it to Sully to get down here one time. And, then I get down here and I'm kicking myself -- I come in to a beautiful, balmy 80-degree evening, as I'm walking over here there's a cruise liner lined-up with the Black-Eyed Peas blaring away -- and I'm saying to myself: "I host the conference in DC in October -- and I task Dempsey and Dunwoody to host the conference in Florida in the winter" [laughter]... and it took me three years in the job to figure that out.

But, anyway ... it's great to be down here. Thanks to AUSA, not just for this, but for what they have done not just over my tenure but over the past years for what they have done to help tell the Army's story. We don't get the support and resources we need based just on our own efforts -- and the work they do to carry the message and the Army's story to the American public and to the Congress is absolutely indispensable. And Sully -- you have been a great leader and a great spokesman in that regard. So, thank you all very much.

I was looking at the bio's coming down here and realized that Sully became the Chief in 1991 ... and in 1991, I was a LTC working for Carl Vuono in his assessments and initiatives group, and Marty Dempsey was just about a month away of taking command of 4-67 Armor. And, what I took from that is that there is some poor LTC out there [laughter] who doesn't know it but he's in line to be the Chief of Staff of the Army in about 20 years. Now, there's probably about 30-other ones who think they're going to be ... but, the guy it's really going to be has no clue [laughter].

The other thing I'd say quickly here is that I'm heading back to begin the retirement festivities for Ken Preston. Ken has been an absolutely magnificent Sergeant Major of the Army -- he's been out longest serving Sergeant Major of the Army -- 7-years plus. And, he'll retire Wednesday with a little over 36-years of service. He's made a huge impact on our NCO Corps which -- you all know --- is head and shoulders the best in the world. Maybe, our best ever. [Applause] We've got Ray Chandler coming in to

replace him, and we'll swear him in that same afternoon and we'll be off and running again. But -- great noncommissioned officers.

Now, as I thought about what I'd say to you here -- knowing the only things standing between me and the door is about 5 posture hearings -- I thought I'd try to be a little reflective and to put this point in time into perspective. It strikes me that we --the Army -- is at a key transition point. Not just because we're changing Chiefs, but because of where we are. We are coming out of a decade of war where we have fundamentally transformed the Army. And, we are entering a period of continued war and, frankly, great uncertainty both at the Strategic and the Fiscal level. And, we have fought very hard to restore balance to this force over the last 5-6 years, and I think the key transition is going to be -- we're about there, but how do we sustain that balance and continue to build a balanced army in a period of constrained resources. I think that's the transition that faces us, and that's the one I'd like to talk about.

Think about it -- we're emerging from a decade of war with a well-equipped, combat seasoned Total Force. But, that force is still stretched by our significant accomplishments of the last decade. And, we're facing a continued war in an era of persistent conflict -- where the resources available to us are only going to be reduced.

Now, let me go back and talk about where've been for the last five or six years and how that sets us up to step off into the second decade of the 21st Century.

You've been hearing me rail on for the past four years that the Army was out of balance -- so weighed down by our current demands that we can't do the things we know we need to do to sustained the All-Volunteer Force and restore the Strategic Flexibility to do the things we know we need to do. And, we have been working very hard across the Army to restore balance by the end of this year. And, I can tell you we will largely meet the objectives we set out for ourselves in 2007 by the end of this year. And, we will be in a much, much better place as an Army than we were four years ago.

Let me just tick-off a couple of things:

Growth. We finished the growth that President Bush instructed us to do in 2007 in 2009. And, as I look back and ask what are some of the things I'm most thankful I did -- the first thing is getting secretary Gates to support accelerating the growth of the Army. You may recall -- originally it was supposed to be done next year. Do you think we would have finished that if we hadn't of gotten it done sooner?

And, the second piece of the growth was the Temporary End Strength Increase. That has allowed us to continue to field appropriately manned units and still deal with the large numbers of non-deployable and

folks that are already deployed in other jobs. And, that 22K increase -- we actually reached that point a couple of months ago -- has enabled us to field 120K soldiers without stop loss. I looked at a chart coming down here and, as of the end of January, we have just about 500 Soldiers on stop-loss. That's down from thousands. And, all the personnel folks that are here -- and I can see Pat Hickerson down in the front row -- and she knows what a traumatic experience that was for the personnel community. But, we're there -- and we're much better postured to continue to field trained-ready forces because of that.

Dwell. Because of that growth, and because of the fact that we got it done three years ahead of time, and because of the drawdown in Iraq, we're actually -- starting the first of October of this year -- Soldiers deploying after that can expect to deploy and have two years at home after that. That is a huge step. It's someplace we had to go -- all of our studies tell us that it takes 24-36 months to recover from a one year combat deployment. It just does -- we're human. And, we had to get there. And, once we're there, we need to hold ourselves too that -- and I've already written Secretary Gates a note saying that the Global Force Management Allocation Plan for FY12 -- for this next fiscal year -- actually allows us to meet expected demand and an acceptable tempo for our Soldiers -- for the first time in over 5 years. And I asked for his support to hold us to that -- because this plan is built on known demands ... and as you know we always get the unexpected. But, we're in a much, much better place on dwell.

Organizational Change. Between the modularization of the Army and the rebalancing of skills away from Cold War skills over the last seven years, we have fielded a fundamentally different Army. It's an Army that is much more suited to the challenges of the 21st Century. I'm extremely pleased with that -- and, as you know, you never stop changing -- there's no end to good ideas -- especially when you're at war. And, the intellectual effort that we made -- that underpinned that effort -- was all good work, but it was all done in 2002 and 2003. So, for the last 6 months TRADOC has been leading us through a complete reevaluation of our Force Structure. We have the right size, the right design, the right mix of Forces. We are wrapping that up, so we will be well postured to know how we should address our Force to maintain the balance that we have built.

ARFORGEN -- Army Force Generation -- something we have been working on hard since 2005. It got a bad reputation coming out of the gates. Good concept, but when you are deploying one year out one year back, about 150,000 -- 160,000 Soldiers, there's just no way we could execute it with the size Force we had. At a 1:2 that we'll start here at the first of October, we can execute it at a sustainable pace and sustainable tempo. That's a huge step forward, because ARFORGEN is a fundamentally different way of building readiness for the Active, the Guard and the Reserve. It's a much more efficient and effective way to build readiness, and I think it's going to serve us well as we go into the future.

The other thing I would tell you that ARFORGEN does, it allows us to finally to establish a link

between resources, end strength, tempo and output. For this much money and this size army, at this bog:dwel -- this is the output that you get. That's critically important to us because we cannot allow ourselves to go back and accept an Army that is not designed to yield at least one year out, two years back for the Force. We cannot allow ourselves to go back less than that. Our goal has to remain getting to one year out two years back for the Active Force.

Lastly, strategic flexibility. If you add all those things up: increasing the size of the Army, increasing the dwell, organizational change, getting us on a rotational model, it is all about restoring strategic flexibility. As we have more Soldiers home for longer periods of time, they will begin to be able to train for things other than Iraq and Afghanistan. We had our first Full Spectrum rotation against a hybrid threat down at the Joint Readiness Training Center a few months ago. We'll have our first one at the National Training Center in August, and we'll only continue to increase those numbers. So, we are about 18 months away from being able to deploy trained and ready Forces out of the next available Force Pool. That's something we haven't been able to do for the last five or six years. It's a much, much better position for the country to be in strategically.

So, we're not in a bad place to begin looking at this transition and to sustaining that balance in a period of declining resources. One of the things I am going to continue to say as I go out the door is: the war is not over. We know the budget has to come down, we know we need to be more efficient in how we execute, but we have to be very, very careful that we don't inadvertently hollow out the Force as we're trying to reduce the resources. I think that would be a huge, huge mistake for all of us.

As we look ahead now into the next decade, what are our challenges? As I have looked at this and thought about this, I believe our challenges will be:

(1) to maintain the combat edge of this force. Do not underestimate the benefits and the impact of having a combat-seasoned Force. Down at the Joint Readiness Training Center, I watched some of the operations down there. No doubt we were a little rusty on some of the Battalion and Brigade staff synchronization skills, but when those platoons and companies closed with the enemy, they were absolutely lethal. There's a lot of goodness in that. But how do we sustain that? How do we continue to challenge and make it interesting for these great young warriors? While we're doing that, we have to

(2) reconstitute the Force. So while we're fighting, we're reconstituting. And we're recovering from a decade of war and transformation. Those will sometimes be conflicting priorities.

(3) The third thing, and this may also be a conflicting priority, is that we have to deal with the impacts of the last decade of war.

So let me talk about those three things for a moment. Maintaining a combat edge: as I look forward I believe an important element we need to build into our Forces is versatility. Because the one thing we know about the future is we never get it exactly right. With modularity, we've taken a huge step toward being able to put together versatile force packages to be able to deal with different challenges. We need to carry that over into our equipment, into our training, into our leader development.

On the modernization side we have worked very hard to build an affordable modernization strategy. We have to have that. We cannot afford everything. We cannot resource every good idea. I tell the military leaders as I go out and about (there's enough military people here that it might work): have you ever had two Battalions in the same motor pool? Concertina wire down the middle with a guy and a pick-ax handle pacing back and forth making sure nobody rips anybody off. Meanwhile, they are stealing him blind from behind him. Then one day, the General comes in and says, "Good news 1-10, the new motor pool is ready, move out." Then 1-10 is gone by sunset. What does 1-12 do? Spreads out, right? The XO brings his "I love me" stuff and hangs it in the motor pool. Tam skirt has his own desk. Two bays for each company; Battalion has a service bay: wheel line, track line, trailer line, support platoon has its own area. Life is really good for 1-12. Then, about six months later the same General comes back. He says, "Bad news 1-12, we have to put another battalion in this motor pool." What does 1-12 say? "No way. There is no way you could ever put two Battalions in this motor pool." Well there's folks out there that thinks there's no way we could ever exist without everything that we think we need. And we can. I believe Bob Lennox has done a wonderful job of helping us make resource-informed decisions that will give us best value in how we allocate procurement dollars and give us more capability into the force.

I heard Bill talk about the network -- that is the centerpiece of what we are doing. When you think about versatility, no matter where you are on the spectrum of conflict, you need to know where you are; you need to know where your buddy is; you need to know where the enemy is; and when you shoot at them, you need to hit them. That is all empowered by the network. We are going to start seeing the JTRS radio start coming out next year, and we're going to see the reality of what we know we need to achieve. We're a little spoiled by the fiber optic networks we're operating off of Iraq and Afghanistan. That was one of the great lessons from 382 down at the Readiness Training Center. "General, you can't jump fiber optics." Took them a few days to get even the rudimentary elements of a network up and going. We have to be able to build this network and take it with us wherever we go.

The other element of maintaining that combat edge is full spectrum training. Quite candidly, we published that doctrine in 2008, but we've rarely had the opportunity to practice it in any place other than Iraq and Afghanistan. We're just starting to do that. The more we practice it, the more we're going to inform ourselves on how we need to adapt and adjust, and it's only going to be good.

Lastly under the combat edge, we have to make sure that the reserve components are resourced and utilized in a way that allows them to maintain the combat edge that they have built over the last decade. Half of our Guard and Reserves are Combat Veterans. We have reduced the training time from Brigade sized units from 180 days to 66. That's a huge accomplishment. That will be one of the main things that we've got to work our way through as we go forward here. So maintaining a combat edge.

Reconstitution: there are two parts to that. One is the continuous reset of units and soldiers deploying from theater. We have to continue to get their equipment and put it back into serviceable condition so that they are prepared for whatever comes next. That's going to be an ongoing process. But the larger issue is what I call restoring strategic flexibility. We have to build readiness in the next-to-deploy Forces so that we have the capability to hedge against unexpected contingencies without going into the available pool, without affecting operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. As the equipment comes out of Iraq and ultimately comes out of Afghanistan, it has to go through the depots and then get back into the units. This will take us a couple or three years after the conclusion of operations, but it is absolutely essential, and it is something that we ought to all keep our eye on because once the money for that starts going away, it's the beginning of "hollowing." I am looking at that as the canary in the mineshaft.

Lastly we have to deal with the challenges of a decade at war. Think about it: we've lost over 4,000 Soldiers. They've left over 20,000 family members. We've had over 25,000 Soldiers wounded -- over 8,000 of them badly enough to require long term care. We've had over 100,000 Soldiers since the beginning of the war diagnosed with traumatic brain injury -- fortunately over 90% of those are mild to moderate. We've had over 40,000 Soldiers since the beginning of the war diagnosed with post-traumatic stress. We've processed over 30,000 Soldiers through our Warrior Transition Units. We cannot take our eye off of the ball in terms of commitment to continue to support those who have been affected by this war.

So those three things are going to have to take place at the same time. While we're working and training hard to maintain that combat edge, we're reconstituting ourselves and building up the resilience of the Force for the long haul.

Now, with that as prologue, let me put up one slide. I don't know if they've shown this yet, but this is the fiscal reality that we're dealing with. (Demonstrating) Here is 2001 -- basically you see a decade and then a second decade. The blue is the base program, and the green is the OCO -- the contingency operation budget. You can see how it has changed by 78 billion dollars here (demonstrating) all the way up to a high of 250. As you look at this, of the 1.7 billion dollars that we've received in the last decade, we've got the large mass of it -- a trillion dollars -- in the last four years. The right side

represents the program that we just put out there, the 12-16 program. You can see that about half of the money we get in the next decade, we get in the next four years. As you look at this, you look at the base going out -- that represents zero real growth. My view is that's the best that we're going to do. Now I do believe as long as we have continue to deploy, were going to get OCO money to support them, but in the base, I think zero real growth is the best that we're going to do.

If you look at the history of our budgets and defense budgets -- its peaks and valleys. The reality is that we're probably going to see something on the right hand side that looks more like the left hand side. That's the reality that we're dealing with. But the other thing I'd point out to you -- it's still double what it was a decade ago. And I don't remember going around with a tin cup in 2001 looking for money. My recollection was that we had a pretty good Army in 2001.

So that's the challenge, and we've been working hard at it these three years because this is very predictable. Sometimes we manage to convince ourselves that this isn't going to happen, but if you go back and look at the history since World War I, it is very symmetrical. Do you remember the old curve in the training manual, the "band of excellence?" It is almost that symmetrical. There is no question that we are in the downside of a peak. Those troughs normally go for about a decade before they start coming up.

That's the fiscal reality that we have to have in our heads. I've been sending Generals to business school down at the University of North Carolina for three years -- because we saw this coming -- so that they could get into their head that managing resources and coming up with innovative ways to do things more efficiently is flag-officer business, and it's warrior business.

As a result of that investment in time and effort, we were able to meet the efficiencies and reductions called for by the Sec Def without having to reduce Force Structure until 2015 -- because I felt if we had to reduce our Force Structure before we had the chance to get the Soldiers a couple of years at home, that would have been a deal breaker. So, there's a lot we can do here to help ourselves, and it's important that we do.

Now, let me mention one other thing that I think is also going to help us here, particularly in our investment account. About nine months ago the Secretary asked Gil Decker and Lou Wagner to do a study of our acquisition process. Candidly coming out of the future combat programs, we recognized that we had some challenges. We asked them to take a soup-to-nuts look at our acquisition process -- from people to requirements to how we do our business, and to give us a blueprint to fix it. Because if that (motioning to slide) doesn't tell you that we have to be hugely efficient to get the most value out of our acquisition dollars I don't know what does. So they have done us a great service. They have

prepared a report that I think they are going to talk to you about. It's no surprise, some of you have seen this, but our requirements acquisition core competencies have atrophied over the last two decades. There's no fault here. The interesting thing, an anomaly, is we've got the best-equipped Army we've had in decades. But at the same time, we're not prepared for that (motioning to the slide). So they've given us some recommendations on how to make our requirements and processes more collaborative and more resource-informed. They've given us some thoughts on how to better manage risk, and they've given us some thoughts on how to better grow our acquisition resources.

-- You may not know this yet, but as I was leaving yesterday, the Secretary showed me the tasker coming to you: to take this and come back with an implementation plan in six months. So we're moving out. On behalf of me and the Secretary, we haven't had the chance to say this publically, but Lou and Gil thanks very much for the great work you did. (Applause)

Let me wrap up here and then take some questions. We're at a key transition point from getting us back in balance into transitioning to a mindset that says how do we sustain that balance in a period of declining resources. We've got a great Army, but it's still stretched and recovering from the last decade at war, and it continues to prosecute a war in two theaters. So my message as I go out in those five posture hearings is going to be: it took us a decade to get to where we are; we recognize that we must be more efficient and we are working hard at that; and we'll continue to work hard at that. But we are at war, and this war isn't over. So be careful. Be careful because the last thing we want to do is hollow-out this Army while we're fighting a war.

Some of you have heard me say this, but I called Shy Meyer when I got into this position. I said Shy, what happened? How did the Army get hollowed out? He said what happens is it is just incremental. There is not one big thing that happens; there is not one big budget cut that happens; its little things that happen over a period of time. He went to Congress in 1980 and said the "Army was hollow." -- Shy was a very thoughtful guy. He had the good sense to go to Camp David and tell the President he was going to do that the weekend before. That was eight years after the last combat Battalion left Vietnam.

So what we have to be careful of is that a series of incremental cuts doesn't put us in the position 8-10 years from now where we turn around and say, "What the heck happened?" You've all been to Washington, and you understand that can happen. So that's my message going out: be very careful as we look to do what we rightfully should do -- reduce resources allocated to defense. But, we've got to do it in a very thoughtful and careful way so we don't hollow out this force in the middle of war.

With that, I would just close by saying it has been the greatest honor and privilege of my career -- and frankly of my life -- to have led the men and women of the United States Army over the last decade of

war. I'm going to miss it. I'm going to miss you all, but thank you very much for your attention.

U.S. Army War College Archives - News Article - 01 March 2011