

Today's Army: The Strength of Our Nation

By **GEN Raymond T. Odierno**
Army Chief of Staff

The Army continues to serve the nation with pride and distinction. The past year witnessed the successful conclusion to operations in Iraq, culminating in the seamless redeployment of some \$54 billion in equipment and the professional transition of forces out of a stable, independent country. We simultaneously built on significant progress in Afghanistan, partnering with the Afghan National Security Forces and setting conditions for long-term stability. With about 60,000 soldiers still deployed there, we remain committed to providing them the very best training,

equipment and support possible through the conclusion of our operations. In these two operations and others around the world, our soldiers adapted, learned and distinguished themselves over nearly 12 years of continuous combat.



Special Forces Green Beret soldiers from each of the Army's seven Special Forces Groups.



U.S. Army CPT Tori Schmidt, a physician assistant with the 297th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, Alaska Army National Guard, examines a patient during Khaan Quest 2012, an annual medical humanitarian outreach exercise in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

Their selfless service and courage are manifest in more than 14,500 awards for valor including six Medals of Honor, 25 Distinguished Service Crosses, more than 650 Silver Stars and more than 4,000 Bronze Stars with "V" devices. Army families persevered through repeated deployments and long separations to emerge stronger than ever before. Our



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civilian workforce has provided us with unparalleled expertise and support during these operations. These collective sacrifices to the nation are matched only by our dedication to caring for these soldiers and their families, whether they serve in uniform, transition into the civilian workforce or join the retired ranks. With more than 185,000 soldiers deployed in more than 160 countries, the Army remains committed to winning the current fight, setting conditions for a stable future and adapting to remain the nation's force of choice.

Understanding the Strategic Environment

We operate in an increasingly complex strategic environment. An awareness of current conditions coupled with the potential impact of global trends must shape how we employ the force in the current fight and how we adapt it going forward. In the past, interactions between states were dominated by central governments with a substantial ability to enforce their borders and represent their populations. That framework, while still present, no longer accurately describes all of our interactions, particularly those involving the employment of military force.

Accessibility to advanced technology and the proliferation of social media have empowered a broad range of actors to influence affairs previously limited to state governments. An array of once latent actors has emerged to take full advantage of this change. Some of the forces that we deal with today, like transnational criminal groups and social movements, have always existed but have become vastly more influential as the norms of the international system have changed. New actors have emerged, from the global audience that instantaneously observes and interprets our actions to communities of like-minded individuals who assemble in cyberspace, unimpeded by distance and outside state control, in support of a cause or an idea.

As our experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq clearly demonstrated, it is difficult to imagine any future situation in which a relationship exists solely between two states, whether an alliance or a conflict. Other regional actors can and will seek to advance their own interests in every situation and have more tools at their disposal to do so. Sometimes they will work in concert with our own objectives, but at other times we may be in opposition. Regardless of the path they choose, our actions must be informed by an awareness of these dynamics.

Sweeping changes such as these have significant effects at the tactical and operational level. We already experienced the complexities associated with the shift from linear to nonlinear battlefields. Concepts such as deep, main and rear areas quickly lost relevance, replaced by the simultaneous conduct of offense, defense and stability operations against adversaries who intentionally mixed with the population to defeat precision weapons systems. Army forces

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of the future will have to contend with this and much more.

As much of the world continues to urbanize, future battlefields will be cluttered and chaotic. Soldiers must prepare not only for potential peer competitors but also irregular forces that exploit complex physical and human terrain and have access to advanced weaponry and communications. A wide range of actors operate within this environment, frequently in pursuit of objectives that do not align with our own. From nongovernmental organizations to regional and local opportunists to criminal groups, we must understand and adapt to a future in which the ability to distinguish between friend and foe will be increasingly difficult, relying more on experience and judgment than technical solutions.

Concurrently, social media, global communications and the Internet have empowered individuals and groups at the local level with the ability to act with strategic effect. Not only do our own actions receive immediate international coverage, but these same tools allow our adversaries to shape the narrative to their own advantage, often with little regard for the truth. Our soldiers must be able to operate comfortably within this exceptionally complex arena, turning opportunity to advantage within an array of thinking adversaries, allies, intermediaries and others all attempting to do the same.

The Enduring Utility of Landpower

Understanding the constantly evolving strategic environment highlights the critical importance of land forces, just as it causes us to constantly adapt to keep pace with the changes. Fundamentally, the Army provides the nation with an incredibly capable, credible instrument of national power as a critical member of the joint force. Our ability to deploy heavy, medium and light forces alone or in combination provides the nation a wide range of options whenever the use of force is considered. With continued reliance on the reserve component as part of the Total Force, the Army possesses unparalleled strategic depth for employment. Alongside their enablers, Army forces are tailorable and scalable to meet mission requirements. Regardless of the complexity of the terrain or the duration of an operation, Army units have the demonstrated ability to perform tasks across the entire spectrum of conflict. From disaster relief to counterterrorism operations, partnering with host nation forces to seizing an objective, the Army delivers capable, tailorable active and reserve units for almost any contingency.

Against the complex backdrop of future operations, ground forces offer a unique set of capabilities increasingly crucial to achieving lasting strategic effects. No sensor can match a soldier's ability to distinguish friend from enemy or discern hostile intent. The discriminating application of force, particularly in an increasingly interconnected world,



Ssg Freddie Goggins Jr. of Battery C, 1st Battalion, 37th Field Artillery Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, pulls the lanyard and fires an M777 Howitzer at Forward Operating Base Al Masaak, Afghanistan.

is increasingly a moral requirement that can often be achieved only by working within and among populations. At other times, conflict can be prevented through our engagement. Partnering with allies builds their capabilities and our own while increasing interoperability and trust. All the while, we demonstrate the strength of the world's greatest land force, signaling commitment to friends and deterring potential enemies.

The evolving complexities of the environment also require us to adapt. It is not enough to rest on the laurels of the past 11 years. We must incorporate important lessons learned and project them into the complex future environments that we will encounter, while accounting for the fiscal realities that our country faces. As GEN Omar Bradley, our first Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said in 1951: "American Armed strength is only as strong as the combat capabilities of its weakest service. Overemphasis on one or the other will obscure our compelling need—not for airpower, not for seapower—but for American military power commensurate with our tasks in the world."

Improving Capabilities

Mindful of fiscal constraints and in adherence with the 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance, the Army is adapting for the future using three calibrated rheostats—force structure and end strength, readiness, and modernization—to ensure we maintain strategic landpower capabilities. Given that we are still engaged in conflict and aware of the uncertainty and complexity of the strategic environment, we must constantly assess and refine in these three critical areas.

Over the next 10 years, the Department of Defense will reduce its budget by \$487 billion. For the Army, much of



A paratrooper assigned to the 82nd Airborne Division's 1st Brigade Combat Team hugs his daughter upon returning to Pope Field on Fort Bragg, N.C., in August.

this reduction will come from downsizing the force from 570,000 soldiers to 490,000 in the active component, an effort that began this past year and will continue in a deliberate fashion through the end of fiscal year 2017. Closely managing this reduction over a six-year period allows us to take care of soldiers, civilians and their families, meet current operational requirements, and respond to unforeseen contingencies. To date, this reduction has had minimal impact on our reserve component structures, allowing the Army to maintain the significant gains made in the operational reserve.

Though similar in size to the Army of just a decade ago, our Army will be fundamentally different in terms of both quality and capability. Besides 11

Army Rangers with the 75th Ranger Regiment wait while an MH-47 Chinook helicopter lands during a public demonstration earlier this year. The Rangers are a U.S. Army Special Operations (Airborne) unit, a flexible force that can carry out squad-size up to regimental-size operations.



years of hard-earned combat experience in our ranks, we have made incredible gains in several areas.

Further using the lessons learned from 11 years of sustained combat, we conducted extensive analysis of brigade combat team (BCT) design. Modularity has served our Army well, and we will not walk away from it, but we now have the opportunity to refine our active component and National Guard BCT structure to ensure it remains dominant in tomorrow's dynamic operational environments. Through a combination of warfighter assessments, sufficiency analysis and combat modeling, we determined that significant flexibility and capability are gained by adding a third maneuver battalion, increasing engineers and restructuring other enablers such as fires and logistics within the BCT. While this reorganization results in fewer BCTs, it represents an investment in the overall number of combat battalions and increases capability while reducing overhead associated with brigade-level headquarters.

We also significantly increased intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities, enabling us to better understand the environment and make timely, informed decisions. We made tremendous advances in manned and unmanned teaming and increased our rotary-wing aviation, vital to the missions that the Army will perform in the future. Importantly, we continue to increase our ability to conduct cyber operations, a dynamic domain that the Army must dominate. The formation of U.S. Army Cyber Command represented our initial commitment to this effort, and we continue to invest in this vital area, ensuring our ability to operate effectively at the tactical, operational and strategic levels. This will be followed by creation of the Army Cyber Center at the United States Military Academy as another step forward in the development of the cyber warriors of the future.

We also continue to invest in Army special operations forces (SOF), units that make up nearly 60 percent of Special Operations Command in the Joint Force. Operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have clearly shown that our special

operations forces and conventional forces work better together than apart. We will preserve the strength of this partnership, cementing the relationships between conventional and SOF units across the operational and institutional Army. To that end, we have conducted several rotations at the Maneuver Combat Training Centers, incorporating elements of both to use their unique strengths and capabilities in pursuit of common objectives. As we build on these experiences and further develop the interdependence of our forces, we are studying the interrelationships between populations and their environment that bring conventional and SOF units together to deliver strategic landpower.

Fundamentally, the Army's ability to adapt hinges on the qualities of its leaders. We are evolving our education programs with a focus on strategic thinking skills and operating in a joint, interagency, intergovernmental and multinational environment. Our tactical leaders build situational awareness and gain valuable cultural insights through the Foundry program. The Institute for Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development has implemented a Web-based Structured Self-Development program, providing soldiers and NCOs a tool to bridge operational and institutional learning and conduct guided personal development. The Command and General Staff Officer Course will be a selective one-year program designed to ensure officers have the appropriate skills and education to support commanders in the evolving strategic environment. We also developed the Strategic Planner Program, providing select officers the opportunity to obtain a doctorate in strategic planning. These and other programs will build a pool of strategic leaders at all levels who understand and are comfortable operating in a complex international landscape.

Retaining Readiness

In accordance with the strategic guidance, the Army will be more regionally responsive in support of geographic combatant commanders (GCC). Regionally aligned forces (RAF) will provide GCCs with units specifically trained for employment in their theaters. Brigade combat teams, both active and reserve, as well as divisions and corps headquarters and enabler units, will compose the majority of the RAF.

Training remains focused on core warfighting tasks but will also include security force assistance or cultural training tailored to a specific nation, language or region to support the GCC in shaping his environment. In many cases, units may deploy to their aligned region to conduct multilateral exercises, partner training, staff training, support or enabling operations. Regardless of their exact employment, soldiers will better understand the region of alignment and train to fulfill tasks there. This is complemented

Army Reserve engineer SPC Jenna R. Ingalls operates an excavator during Golden Coyote Exercise in June. Members of the 340th Engineer Company, 458th Engineer Battalion, 411th Engineer Brigade, 412th Theater Engineer Command, helped Native Americans in South Dakota reduce fire risks.

by the National Guard's State Partnership program, maintaining more than 60 valuable partnerships with countries around the world.

Implementing the regional alignment of forces will be accompanied by a progressive readiness model. Adapting the Army Force Generation model to future operations, units will progress through a period of training, conduct their operational employment, and then undergo equipment and personnel reset. This model reduces the peaks and valleys between deployments, retaining higher personnel readiness during reset.

All the while, soldiers remain the centerpiece of our force. For the Army, that means a focused emphasis on strengthening resilience. Recent experience has shown that true readiness demands a comprehensive approach, addressing physical, emotional, family, spiritual and social fitness collectively to achieve true resiliency. The Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness program builds this resilience and maximizes individual potential by equipping and training our soldiers, family members and Army civilians to face the physical and psychological challenges of today's complex operating environment.

Modernization

The strategic environment requires equipment capabilities that are both affordable and versatile. First and foremost, the Army's modernization program is focused on ensuring our small units remain the best equipped in the world. The centerpiece of our modernization program is the Soldier and Squad Investment strategy.



Soldiers from Company A, 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, tactically dismount their Stryker vehicle during Foal Eagle 2012, a combined arms live-fire exercise at Rodriguez Range Complex, South Korea.



One of the hallmarks of the complex future battlefield is the requirement to quickly identify a threat in chaotic environments and defeat it with overwhelming force. An important lesson of the past 11 years is that the American soldier remains the most discriminately lethal force on the battlefield. The Soldier and Squad Investment plan provides our small units with a range of equipment including improved sights, night vision devices, counter-sniper systems and body armor, all designed to give the soldier on the ground overmatch in any situation.

The Army Network provides the overarching architecture connecting soldiers and their equipment with the data vital to creating overwhelming synergy. Improvements to the Army Network ensure soldiers have the right information from a range of sensors at the right time to make the best possible decisions. It provides the squad with connectivity to joint assets, allowing access to joint firepower systems in the most complex physical and human terrain.

Our replacement for the infantry fighting vehicle, the Ground Combat Vehicle (GCV), is being developed to network this more capable squad, provide detailed information from multiple sources and maneuver it faster to fight with more protection. Similarly, the Joint Light Tactical Vehicle (JLTV) is being developed to replace the aging Humvee and also provide significantly improved connectivity, mobility and security.

In the same manner, programmed aviation improvements will provide our SOF, conventional forces and partners with greater mobility and responsiveness. In total, our modernization efforts will prepare the entire force for the complex and uncertain battlefield by putting a squad with precise information and overmatch capability in the right place at the right time to accomplish their mission.

Stewards of the Profession

A common thread runs through all that we do, binding our actions together and defining who we are and what we represent to this great nation. That thread is the stewardship of the profession, of what it means to be a soldier. It is both a responsibility and a privilege: a responsibility to safeguard the heritage, the traditions, and the honor inherent in putting on the uniform of the U.S. Army and serving our nation, and a privilege to uphold the standards, discipline, and dignity of our service for future generations. Whether one is active, Guard, Reserve, an Army civilian or family member, these qualities are timeless, defining who

we are and how we serve regardless of how complex the environment may become. As we emerge from more than a decade of war and posture for an uncertain future, it is vitally important that we retain our focus in this area.

It is easy at times to lose sight of the past in the midst of great change. As an Army, however, we are fortunate to be able to draw on more than two centuries of tradition. It is incumbent on each of us serving today to acknowledge and learn from those who came before. Even as tactics adapt and technology advances, the ethical core of our profession remains a constant touchstone to guide our way. Those currently in our ranks were drawn to those values and traditions. Enforcing the standards and good discipline of the force honors our predecessors even as it makes us more effective soldiers and better citizens of the nation. All that we achieve in current operations is done on the shoulders of the vast community of veterans and families that came before us. They are genuine representatives of what it means to be 'Soldiers for Life.'

As we emerge from a decade of war, we have taken great strides to reinvigorate what it means to be a member of the Army profession. Many programs that were modified to meet the demands of frequent deployments have been reenergized. The professional military education system for both officers and noncommissioned officers has expanded, encouraging critical thinking, a renewed focus on core leadership and military skills, and opportunities for structured development tailored to individual soldier needs. Units are using proven programs ranging from command inspections to command supply discipline to training management.

Taken together, these and many other initiatives reinforce what it means to be a soldier, a member of a profession built on trust, guided by shared values and trained to the highest standards. It is this common core that defines who we are and what we represent to the American people. It will steady us during this period of great change. It is why I remain humbled and privileged by the opportunity to serve alongside each of you, uniformed and civilian, active and reserve, veterans and families. You truly are the strength of the nation. ★