

# **The U.S. Army: Meeting the Nation's Strategic Priorities of the Future**

**By General Raymond Odierno**

**Chief of Staff of the Army**

## **Introduction**

Over the course of the last year, I have visited with Soldiers deployed to Afghanistan, Djibouti, and the Sinai; our units stationed in Korea, Hawaii, and Europe and our installations across the continental United States. At every location, our Soldiers, Civilians, and Family members have inspired me with their passion, courage, and commitment to their fellow Soldiers, our Army and the Nation.

The sun never sets on Soldiers performing their duties. A typical day for the Soldiers of the Active Army, Army National Guard and US Army Reserve include patrolling with the Afghan National Army, training new recruits in Basic Training at Fort Benning, standing watch on the DMZ in Korea, manning missile batteries in Guam, conducting logistics training in Sierra Leone, improving future disaster preparedness in Indonesia, and fighting fires in northern California. It has been my privilege to lead the Soldiers and Army team members that make us Army Strong every day.

The U.S. Army has more than 70,000 Soldiers deployed, including almost 50,000 in Afghanistan, and an additional 87,000 forward stationed in nearly 150 countries. Although we are gradually reducing our forces deployed overseas, now is not the time to take our eye off the ball. International threats and challenges are in the headlines every day; uncertainty and unpredictability in the security environment will remain for the foreseeable future.

Many of our Soldiers, Civilians, and Families are understandably concerned about the future and continuing fiscal austerity. Our domestic budget challenges cannot be ignored and the Army must do its part to restore fiscal discipline and contribute to our Nation's economic strength. This fiscal uncertainty does not preclude us from leading change across the Army now. Given the complex and uncertain security environment, we cannot afford to stand still. Our political leaders and the American people expect us to be ready today and in the future. Therefore, we will move forward with institutional reforms we know are necessary to ensure the Soldiers of today are prepared to fight and win tomorrow.

In order to be ready for tomorrow, we must become a leaner, smaller Army that remains the most highly-trained and professional All-Volunteer land force in the world; uniquely organized with the capability and capacity to provide expeditionary, decisive landpower to the Joint Force, ready to perform the range of military operations in support of Combatant Commanders to defend the Nation and its interests at home and abroad both today and against emerging threats.

To accomplish this strategic imperative, we will focus on five strategic priorities for the future:

- **Adaptive Army Leaders for a Complex World**
- **A Globally Responsive and Regionally Engaged Army**
- **A Scalable and Ready Modern Army**
- **Soldiers Committed to Our Army Profession**
- **The Premier All-Volunteer Army**

## **Adaptive Army Leaders for a Complex World**

In June, we released the *2013 Army Leader Development Strategy* to provide a comprehensive roadmap that will prepare Army leaders for the challenges our Nation will face. It is

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critical that we develop the critical analysis skills of our officers and NCOs so that they better understand the complexities of the strategic environment. In the early years of their career, they must gain expert knowledge in their basic branch and MOS respectively. As they progress forward, we must ensure they have a variety of assignments and experiences to build strategic-minded officers and NCOs.

To accomplish this goal, we are expanding access and opportunities for broadening assignments, such as serving on the Army and Joint Staffs, tours in combatant commands, advanced civil schooling and assignments across the various agencies of our government. We are reinvigorating the Army education system to provide the right education and training to the right individuals at the right time, which includes curriculum changes across our schoolhouses and new standards for faculty and instructor selection and promotion.

We will develop a more agile talent management system that takes into account the individual needs, skills, and ambitions of our people and synchronizes them better with Army requirements. We will also institute new evaluation and assessment tools so we can identify our best talent and encourage leaders to seek self-improvement.

Taken as a whole, our leadership development efforts are about cultivating strategic leaders across our Army. This will ensure they are better prepared to lead Army, Joint, and multi-national teams for the demands of future contingency operations.

## **A Globally Responsive and Regionally Engaged Force**

Over the past twelve years of war, the Army has concentrated on the capabilities needed to prevail in Iraq and Afghanistan. We will continue today and into the future to ensure that every Soldier who deploys to meet operational commitments is well led, trained and equipped to accomplish the mission. As we continue the drawdown of forces in Afghanistan, we will shift our focus toward the broader requirements identified within the 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance. This means building an Army that is smaller, modern and that can execute many missions, at many speeds, in any environment. We will be a Globally Responsive and Regionally Engaged force.

We must build and then sustain our ability to fight and win whenever and wherever our national interests are threatened. To do so, we will reinvigorate an expeditionary mindset across the entire force and improve our capabilities, including the ability to project power and force entry into denied areas and under austere conditions.

At the same time, the Army brings unique characteristics and capabilities that allow Combatant Commanders to shape and set their theaters and influence the security environment. We will further develop the Regionally Aligned Forces (RAF) concept to guide the development of habitually aligning corps, divisions, combat brigades and multi-functional brigades to Combatant Commands. Over time, we will develop our depth of regional expertise across the force through military-to-military engagements, coalition training, rotational forces and exercises that allow us to build relationships with foreign armed forces and shape outcomes consistent with U.S. national interests.

We will build and sustain a numerically smaller, but increasingly capable Total Army that can provide the Joint and multi-national Force with expeditionary and sustained landpower that includes

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our unique competencies in theater logistics, command and control, mobility at all echelons and operational leadership. We will continue to adapt the Army's forces generation process so that the Army is increasingly able to tailor, scale and deploy force packages to combatant commanders across the range of military operations. All of this must be accomplished while we assure the readiness of forward deployed and rotational forces. This means maintaining an effective force posture and network of installations with capabilities to protect interests of the US and our allies.

## **A Scalable and Ready Modern Force**

To build a Globally Responsive and Regionally Engaged force, we must ensure that we have the right mix of forces and capabilities between the Active Army, Army National Guard, and the US Army Reserve. The reduction in authorized endstrength will be heavily focused on the active force, but will touch every component. This is necessary so that we can build readiness and continue modernization for the future. The Army will be in transition over the next five years. However, we will do everything necessary to mitigate the risk and rebuild for the future so that we can have operationally ready units to accomplish Joint expeditionary mission requirements, as well as provide operational and strategic reserves.

Our focus for training and equipment will be on our ability to rapidly deploy, fight, sustain ourselves, and win against complex state and non-state threats in austere environments and rugged terrain. To accomplish this, we must rebuild the Army's capabilities in combined arms maneuver and wide area security operations utilizing our Combat Training Centers to challenge and certify our formations in a comprehensive and realistic decisive action training environment.

Additionally, it is critical that we conduct tough, realistic multi-echelon home station training utilizing our live, virtual, and constructive capabilities to efficiently and effectively assure individual, leader and unit competencies. We must also leverage multi-echelon Joint and multi-national command post exercises, staff rides, simulations, and MCTP-supported training events to produce regionally capable JFLCCs and JTFs.

Our modernization programs will be Soldier-centered in order to improve equipment and system lethality, survivability, mobility, and network functionality to assure that the American Soldier remains the most discriminately lethal force on the battlefield. Additionally, future threats will not be limited to a traditional battlefield, so the Army must prepare units for new and emerging missions in areas such as space, cyberspace, missile defense, and countering weapons of mass destruction. Army operations will be an integral part of the Joint Force to include unique enabling capabilities such as aviation, intelligence, engineers, logistics, medical and special operations that will remain critical to the combatant commanders.

We will only be able to afford to procure the most critical weapon systems and programs. We will sustain procurement of proven technologies that provide our Soldiers with capabilities that assure tactical overmatch in every battlefield environment. Our science and technology investment will focus on the potential of emerging game-changing landpower technologies that will counter emerging threats and thereby ensure that Army formations retain a decisive materiel edge across the range of military operations.

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## **Soldiers Committed to Our Army Profession**

The foundation of the Army's strength and the basis of our past and present success is due to the professionalism of our force. We must preserve the earned trust of the American people who place their confidence in our Army as a profession. The foundation of our Army's strength is the demand that all of us live daily the values of our profession and exhibit the character, competence and commitment that are hallmarks of an Army professional. Serious problems, such as sexual assault and sexual harassment, hazing, and toxic leadership are insider-threats to our Army that we must eradicate. We do this by enforcing a professional environment across our Army that respects the individual dignity of every Soldier and Civilian, allowing them to realize their full potential.

We also continue to earn the trust of the American people by renewing our commitment to our Army Profession through honorable service, maintaining esprit de corps, and having a professional stewardship that marks our Army's heritage as defender of our Nation in peace and war since 1775. The 187 Campaign Streamers that adorn the Army flag today are proud testimony to our Army's service. Together, we serve as One Army: Soldiers, Civilians and Families of the Active Army, the Army National Guard, and the U.S. Army Reserve. We share our professional ethic; we are One Force, committed to the defense of our Nation and our way of life.

Twelve years of war has taught us the importance of resiliency in our Soldiers, Civilians and Families. Individual resilience can be built, maintained, and strengthened when viewed as an enduring concept and acquired through regular training. The Ready and Resilient Campaign helps us improve the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual resilience in our Soldiers, Civilians, and Families by integrating and synchronizing multiple efforts and programs for our Army Family. The goal of the campaign remains on the holistic and collaborative approach to helping our Soldiers, Civilians, and Families increase their ability to deal with the rigors and challenges of a demanding profession.

## **Maintaining the Premier All-Volunteer Army**

This year we celebrated the fortieth anniversary of the creation of the All-Volunteer Army. Our overwhelming success as an Army has led many to believe that our Nation's best young men and women will always volunteer to serve. However, our ability to recruit the best is directly linked to how we honor the service and sacrifice of our Soldiers, Veterans, Retirees, Wounded Warriors and their Families.

We are extremely grateful for the high quality care and compensation our Nation has shown to our servicemen and women over the last decade. However, military manpower costs remain at historic highs. As we go forward, we must develop compensation packages that reduce future costs but at the same time recognize and reward our Soldiers and their Families for their commitment and sacrifice. However, changes to the rate of increases for pay and entitlements, and modest increases to health care contributions are necessary to allow us to maintain a ready force. It is our solemn duty to our Soldiers and the Nation to ensure that they are ready to fight when called to do so. We must make choices that preserve the high quality, All-Volunteer force as the most critical component of a ready Army.

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## **Conclusion**

Every day, I am humbled to represent the 1.1 million Soldiers, 255,000 Department of the Army Civilians, and 1.4 million Family members of the U.S. Army. Every segment of our community has volunteered to serve the Nation and each of them has been essential to our success. I am proud to stand beside those who raise their right hand to defend the Constitution of the United States. Throughout our history and over the course of the last twelve years of war, I have seen first-hand how U.S. Army Soldiers have served with the competence, character, and commitment that our great Nation deserves. They represent who we are and what we have been for 238 years and they inspire me every single day with their dedication. Finally, we could not do what we do without the steadfast support of our Families and the American people. No Soldier stands alone. Army Families and the communities that support them have shown us the meaning of resiliency, sacrifice and untiring devotion.

As we go through these trying times I promise you one thing: today we are the best Army in the world. Two years from now we will be the best Army in the world. Five years from now we will be the best Army in the world, and ten years from now we will be the best Army in the world. Your sacrifice and dedication will not be forgotten.

The Strength of our Nation is our Army  
The Strength of our Army is our Soldiers  
The Strength of our Soldiers is our Families  
And that's what makes us Army Strong