



# WASHINGTON UPDATE

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**Albright calls Army ‘a mighty engine,’ integral to a new strategic triad.** In accepting the Association of the United States Army’s highest award, the George Catlett Marshall Medal, former Secretary of State Madeline Albright said, “My conclusion is that the Army remains a mighty engine, blessed by strong leaders and high morale—but that even the mightiest engine needs a little maintenance from time to time.”

Speaking Oct. 8 at the conclusion of AUSA’s Annual Meeting in Washington, she said, “This need is a factor our new commander in chief must take into account when he considers how to redeploy responsibly from Iraq, how to develop a more effective game plan in Afghanistan, and how to deny safe havens for al Qaeda across the border in Pakistan.”

Adding, “More broadly, our next president must find the right mix of forces to project power in a world of diverse and fluid dangers.”

After saying the nation still needed the strongest Navy and Air Force in the world, Albright added, “We should also recognize that, in many arenas of contention, the new strategic triad is land-based—consisting of soldiers, Marines, and Special Forces; I strongly recommend that we plan and invest accordingly.”

Not all situations and challenges around the globe can be resolved solely by military power, she said. “Because if America continues asking our military to do what others can and should do, we will ultimately put at risk the ability of our armed forces to do what they do best. We need every component of American power to operate at full strength.”

While it was important to learn from the past, Albright said, “The truth is that every action entails risk, but so does every decision to refrain from acting. No one understands this better than the U. S. Army—where adaptability and overcoming hardships has been a way of life since Valley Forge. The world is constantly changing and the Army has changed with it.”

Recalling her childhood when she and her family fled Czechoslovakia for Great Britain to escape the Nazis in World War II and again fleeing this time to the United States as the Communists seized control of the country at the beginning of the Cold War, Albright said, “My father went to the University of Denver where he founded a graduate school of international affairs that now bears his name. I’m pleased that a distinguished alumnus of that program is here tonight—Gen. George Casey.”

**Chief says Army ‘well on the path’ to strategic balance.** Gen. George Casey, the Army Chief of Staff, told 3,000 attendees at the Eisenhower Luncheon Oct. 7 that a year after he had warned that the Army was out of balance because of the operational demands of the war on terror, the force was “well on the path” to bringing itself back into strategic balance. But, Casey warned, there were “a couple of tough years ahead,” and said one of his main challenges was to prepare for the future.

Meeting that challenge would require completing the expansion of the total Army to 1.1 million soldiers, continue the development of the Future Combat Systems and to produce leaders and doctrine able to deal with increasingly complex conflict against a determined enemy that threatens America’s way of life.

Noting that the theme of this year’s AUSA symposium was that the Army was “the strength of the nation,” Casey said, “At no time in our history has that strength been more important.” The seven years of the war on terror have been met by service and sacrifice “that come from our values and our warrior ethos. That gives me great confidence we will prevail in the global war on terror and handle whatever challenges we face in the future.”

The general recalled that he had set three imperatives to restore the Army’s balance: to sustain the force, prepare it for the current and future conflicts and reset the units on return from combat. “We’ve made very good progress,” he said.

To sustain the force, he noted the success in recruiting and retaining 300,000 active, National Guard and Army Reserve soldiers last year; a successful initiative to stop the exodus of captains; producing the Army Family covenants and doubling funding for family programs; creating 35 warrior transition units and other efforts to care for the wounded soldiers and “removing the stigma attached to PTSD and traumatic brain injury.”

To prepare the force, Casey said, they saw that extending the time between combat deployments was critical so they accelerated the effort to add active and Reserve soldiers, with the support of President Bush and Congress; ended the 15 month deployments and produced more than one million pieces of new equipment to provide the troops the best equipment and technology.

**Secretary pledges Army to be model in fighting sexual assault.** In his last keynote speech to the AUSA Annual Meeting Oct. 6, Army Secretary Pete Geren saluted the Army's logisticians, noted the anniversaries of the racial integration of the services, establishment of the all-volunteer force and the end of the Woman's Army Corps. But he denounced the Army's high rate of sexual assaults within its ranks and declared "we will create an environment of zero tolerance for sexual assault."

Geren also renewed the Army's commitment to its families and praised the Army's non-commissioned officers, noting that 2009 will be the year of the NCO.

In a speech that generally high-lighted Army achievements, the secretary strongly condemned the service's poor record on sexual assaults, which he said was twice that of the other services. He noted the service and sacrifices of female soldiers, with about 90,000 having served in Kuwait, Afghanistan or Iraq with 49 killed, 165 wounded and numerous combat decorations, including two Silver Stars.

But, he added, "We are short of becoming the band of brothers and sisters" they should be.

Since the 9-11 terrorist attacks, Geren said, 1,800 soldiers have been punished for sexual assault on a fellow soldier, which he characterized as "an Army at war with its self... blue on blue," the term used for combat fratricide.

"Sexual assault is a crime everywhere... but blue on blue is much more," he said. "It's an assault on the core values of every American soldier."

Geren cited the example of PFC Margaret Brown, a medic who shielded wounded soldiers from enemy fire with her own body and received the Silver Star for repeatedly disregarding her own safety to protect others.

"It is in this context we will attack this enemy within our own ranks and affirm the duty of every soldier to protect fellow soldiers," he said.

"In the Army, there is no bystander... Every soldier is his brother's and sister's keeper."

Having previously noted the Army's achievement in eliminating discrimination based on race, the secretary said, "this year we're recommitted to do the same with gender," so the Army will become the model for in the nation for combating sexual assault.

On a more positive note, Geren cited the achievements of the Army's logisticians, who he said were so good "they are victims of their own success" because they receive so little attention." But whatever the soldiers in the combat zone need, they get because of them, he said.

**JCS Chairman warns against losing skills for conventional fight, praises Army's accomplishments.** Adm. Michael Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told the Sustaining Member luncheon Oct. 8 that the U.S. Army "is the best counter-insurgency force in the world," but warned that the nation must not lose its ability to fight a conventional conflict. And he emphasized that the nation must do a better job of caring for its warriors, particularly those who have suffered physical or mental wounds, and their families.

Mullen, who came to his current position from the Navy's top office, said he and his wife, Deborah, "feel a bit closer to the Army than the Navy now" as he has tried to learn what the Army has gone through in seven years of war.

The admiral noted that as chief of naval operations he increased the number of Navy personnel, such as Seabees, EOD and logistics specialist sent to augment the ground forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, because "this is a national war, not an Army and Marine Corps war and we all need to help." But he acknowledged that it has been the two land forces "that have borne the burden of the fighting and the dying and the wounds."

From his visits to the combat zones, Mullen said, "I truly believe that the Army is the center of gravity for our military, and that includes the Guard and Reserves. We have to make sure we support and take care of them and their families. They truly are a national treasure."

After seven years of war, Mullen said the Army is "the best and most combat-harden Army this nation has ever known and the world has ever known. We must make sure it stays that way."

In describing the things he has learned about the Army since becoming the nation's top military officer, he said it has mastered counter-insurgency "and did it all in a remarkably short period of time." He recalled on recent visits to Iraq walking streets in Baghdad and Mosul that would have been too dangerous to tread before.

For the latest developments on Capitol Hill, check out the AUSA website: [www.ausea.org](http://www.ausea.org). For AUSA's electronic legislative newsletter, e-mail Bill Loper at: [bloper@ausea.org](mailto:bloper@ausea.org).

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## **RC members win Best Warrior Competition.**

Two members of the Army's reserve component forces were named top noncommissioned officer and top soldier in this year's Best Warrior Competition.

After five days of events at Fort Lee, Va., Staff Sgt. Michael Noyce Merino, representing the U.S. Army National Guard, was named best NCO, and Spc. David R. O Bray, U.S. Army Reserve Command, was named best soldier, and the two were presented their awards during the sergeant major of the Army's luncheon on the opening day of the Association of the United States Army's Annual Meeting and Exposition in Washington.

Although this is the seventh year for the competition, the format underwent a change in 2007 to add events and scenarios that placed greater emphasis on what soldiers might encounter in the era of persistent conflict. More than just a competition, it's also a training environment for the soldier and NCO competitors so they can better themselves and also bring their experiences back to their home units.

Sgt. Maj. of the Army Kenneth O. Preston said Oct. 6 the competition continues to improve as instructors and evaluators constantly receive feedback from the field and use that information to "create realistic, real-world scenarios that replicate what we would want all of our soldiers to be able to do."

A new event for this year involved competitors calling in a medevac helicopter and then guiding it to a landing area using arm signals. Another new aspect involved extracting a mannequin from a Humvee and returning fire from point-to-point all while dragging the mannequin, representing a wounded soldier, to reach a safe point to give medical assistance. Competitors also inspected other soldiers in various uniforms to see if they could identify discrepancies.

Other events included a board with Preston and six other senior NCOs, a written essay, warrior tasks and battle drills, physical fitness tests, day and night land navigation, and day and night range qualification.

Noyce Merino, a veteran of deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, said the realism enhanced the training, and he was "challenged" every day during the competition.

"The medical training lane especially showed elements of realism I saw on deployment," he said.

O Bray, a light-wheel-vehicle mechanic, admitted that the weapons assembly event was difficult for him in "remembering the pieces of the puzzle," but he later shined in the combatives tournament on the final day of competition. He went undefeated against the soldier competitors in the double-elimination format until he squared off against the top NCO from the combatives, Staff Sgt. Julian R. Wiggins, U.S. Army Medical Department.

## **Army aggressively working to aid warriors avoid long-term effects of PTSD.**

The Army has launched an aggressive initiative to not only provide better care for soldiers who suffer from combat-induced mental problems but to help their warriors avoid the long-term debilitating effects of post traumatic stress disorder.

In the seventh year of the war on terror, 20 percent of soldiers returning from combat tours in Iraq and Afghanistan are being diagnosed with PTSD, Brig. Gen. Rhonda Cornum told an Institute of Land Warfare Contemporary Military forum Oct. 8. "That doesn't have to happen. There are things we can do to prevent it. That's why we have this program," Cornum said.

The program Cornum referred to is the Comprehensive Mental Health Strategy, an emerging effort to reduce the risk of PTSD by strengthening soldiers mentally as well as physically for the stress of combat.

"Being 'Army Strong' is more than just being physically fit," she said. Cornum, the assistant surgeon general for force protection, said "great strides are being made" in treating illness and injury. "But it's much better to prevent illness or injury," she added.

Noting how physical training is being changed to help prevent injuries such as stress fractures, Cornum said the Army does fairly well in preparing soldiers with a wide range of physical abilities to do their job without injury. But in handling the mental, spiritual and emotional challenges, "we have not done such a good job."

Among other problems, she said, "we don't really have a good way of finding people who are not doing so good." So the goal is to develop a comprehensive strategy, and it starts with assessment, she said.

To get past the reluctance of soldiers to admit they are having mental or emotional problems, the plan is to assess everyone. And they will produce training programs to help people avoid those problems and therapy programs for those who really do need help, Cornum explained.

The data shows that "the most vulnerable people we have are our junior enlisted. We have to start with them," she said. "This will be a cultural change for the Army, but there are life skills you can learn to help."

Col. Craig Currey, director of the Basic Combat Training Center of Excellence at Fort Jackson, S.C., noted that the goal has been to train soldiers so they show up at their first units ready to deploy into combat. The training cadre is good at doing the traditional things, such as ensuring soldiers can shoot and are physically fit. But the "mental intangibles," such as spiritual and emotional readiness for combat, are hard for the drill sergeants to determine, he said.

**Petraeus describes progress in Iraq.** Gen. David Petraeus, just three weeks after leaving Iraq and stepping down as commander of Multinational Force—Iraq, told attendees at the Association of the United States Annual Meeting that Iraq has made substantial progress toward peace in the last two years, and although that progress is fragile and reversible, it is becoming stronger every day.

The nadir of violence in Iraq was in the winter of 2006 and 2007, Petraeus said at the Oct. 7 event, and the various elements of strategy that made up the “surge” have dramatically reduced the violence. Petraeus described the surge as having four prongs: the increase in U.S. forces, the increase in Iraqi forces (namely the “Sons of Iraq” Sunni militia groups), employment of counterinsurgency concepts, and the strong signal given by the U.S. that it was committed to Iraq.

Petraeus shared what he felt were many of the “big ideas” of successful counterinsurgency strategy. The most important, he said, was to secure the population. When he took command in February 2007, 55 Iraqis were being killed every day in sectarian violence alone. “The situation was horrific in many neighborhoods,” he said.

Other important principles included integrating with the population as much as possible—not being isolated in distant bases—holding cleared areas, separating reconcilables from irreconcilables, taking a comprehensive approach and generating a unity of effort between the military and political elements of strategy. Petraeus said he almost never had an important meeting that wasn’t also attended by U.S. Ambassador Ryan Crocker.

Petraeus said his media strategy was to “be first with the truth, not to put lipstick on pigs, not to spin. I had people come to me in the spring of 2007, [saying] that we had a messaging problem, that our strategic communications weren’t working. And I said, ‘With all due respect sir, we have a results problem. And until we turn around the situation on the ground, this isn’t about strategic communications, this is about reality. We are going to report reality correctly’—and reality at that time was 180 attacks a day. Thankfully, it began to come down.”

He showed a series of slides that graphically indicated how, under his command, violence in various forms dramatically declined.

The number of sectarian killings, more than 2000 a month in the winter of 2006/2007, is now down to nearly zero, and the number of violent deaths generally and improvised explosive attacks are down significantly. “For the last four months or more, we’ve seen the lowest levels of violence in Iraq since March of 2004,” he said.

**Chief, secretary see pressure coming on Army budget.** Gen. George Casey, the Army Chief of Staff, and Army Secretary Pete Geren acknowledged Oct. 6 that the Army will face pressure in coming years to have the funds needed to sustain and modernize an expanded force but expressed confidence that the Congress will continue the strong support it has provided during the war on terror.

In a news conference at the Association of the United States Army Annual Meeting, Casey said he has ordered his staff to conduct a second “scrub” of all the Army’s proposed procurement programs and to study what size force it might need for the future. But he said the Army was on schedule to complete its addition of 74,000 active and Reserve Component soldiers by 2010, two years earlier than originally planned.

In thinking about future conflicts, the general said, the nation will need land forces that have six basic characteristics: they must be versatile, expeditionary, agile, lethal, sustainable and they must be inter-operable, not just with other U.S. military units but also with foreign forces and American civilian agencies.

“As we look to the future, we have to build forces that have those six characteristics, and it would be irresponsible of us not to ensure we have a modernization strategy to give soldiers an asymmetric advantage. But also one that’s affordable for the country,” he said.

One of the toughest decisions he and the secretary will have to make, Casey said Oct 6, is determining when they stop upgrading the legacy “Cold War” systems and focus on producing next generation technologies.

Questioned about their confidence that the ambitious Future Combat Systems will be available when expected, Casey noted the five FCS “spin off” technologies that are being tested at Fort Bliss or actually in use in Afghanistan. “So I’m pretty comfortable with those,” he said.

Geren also cited the application of the spin off technologies and predicted, “we will continue to progress.”

The two Army leaders also were asked about the risk that the \$700 billion economical “bail out” enacted last week would threaten future defense budgets.

Geren, a former congressman, noted that in the seven years of conflict since 9-11, “Congress has been extraordinarily united in supporting the Army.” Although there will be pressure on the defense budgets, he said, “I’m confident the Congress will stick with us.”