



WASHINGTON UPDATE

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER



Vol. 20 No. 2

Published by the Association of the United States Army

February 2008

Casey expects the Army to need 4 years to come back in balance.

The chief of staff of the Army told 400 attendees at January's Institute of Land Warfare breakfast that it would take about four years to put the Army back in balance. Speaking Jan. 16 in suburban Washington, Gen. George Casey said, "I wrestle hard to describe the state of the Army [and settled on] out of balance." He said that was caused by the force "being so consumed by the current" pace and nature of operations in Afghanistan and Iraq and that has put it "at a point where we have difficulty sustaining the All Volunteer Force."

In answer to a question, he said the Army would need units to be home for at least 18 months to train for full spectrum operations. They are now back for about a year before re-deploying and primarily training in counterinsurgency warfare. Casey said that if conditions continue to remain stable in Iraq, or improve, 15-month tours could begin ending in the summer.

He said that he has changed his mind from his time as a division commander in the late 1990s that "If we could do conventional warfare, we could do anything. I don't believe that now" and sees the place for new doctrine covering offensive, defensive and stability operations. To put the force back in balance in an era of "persistent conflict," Casey has launched four initiatives.

"You have to keep the mid-level officers and NCOs" to sustain the force and also support Army families. "We have put our money where our mouth is with \$1.4 billion" committed to the covenant with families.

To prepare the force for future operations across the spectrum of conflict, "we're having a hard time" because soldiers do not have enough time at home to train for operations other than counterinsurgency. This will be alleviated over time as the size of the Army grows and the number of brigades committed to Iraq decline.

In speaking about resetting the force and its equipment, the Army is seeing "the effects of seven years of war is cumulative." Adding, "reset is about money." Casey said the Army is still committed to transformation and "to building that flexible force for the full spectrum of operations."

What concerns him most now and in the future is having terrorist organizations possessing weapons of mass destruction and having states or sections of states providing safe havens for terrorist training, staging and operations.

Petraeus: Surge helped quell violence, promote Iraqi cooperation.

As the troop surge in Iraq approached its one-year anniversary, the commander of Multinational Force Iraq said he's buoyed by successes made and momentum built, but recognizes the job is far from over.

Army Gen. David H. Petraeus told the Pentagon Channel the new strategy in Iraq—with more coalition and Iraqi troops helping quell violence in and around Baghdad and operations that promote closer cooperation with the Iraqi population—has helped stabilize once-violent areas.

President Bush announced the strategy during a Jan. 10, 2007, televised speech to the nation. The plan included more than 20,000 additional U.S. troops on the ground in Baghdad and Anbar province, increased responsibility for the Iraqi government and Iraqi security forces, and more diplomatic and economic initiatives.

Strolling a Baghdad street considered too dangerous to navigate just a year ago, Petraeus noted the contrast to last year, when shops and schools were closed, playgrounds were still, and many facilities were without electricity. "And today, we now find those features here, and we are able to stroll along and even to eat some Iraqi bread," he said. "The security has been a result, certainly, of more coalition and Iraqi forces," he said. "But it's also the employment of those forces."

Petraeus credited the U.S. troop surge, along with an additional 110,000 Iraqi soldiers and police, with providing critical manpower needed to rout insurgents. But another vital part of the formula was the new strategy in which the troops began living among the people they were securing.

This presence helped gain the trust and confidence of the Iraqi people, and ultimately, their support as well, he said. They began "turning in the bad guys in their midst, ... pointing out the weapons caches or identifying improvised explosive devices, and ultimately volunteering to help with security as neighborhood watches, concerned local citizens and so forth," he said.

Petraeus called the outcome a classic example of perspiration meeting opportunity. "And a lot of our leaders would like to think that is what happened over the course of this past year, that they were ready for certain situations and when they saw opportunities, they were willing to take risks," he said.

Surge in Iraq was not guaranteed success. “The success of the surge was not pre-ordained,” and in some ways unexpected, especially the “Awakening” of the Sunnis to side with coalition forces against al Qaeda, one of the architects of the plan told several hundred attendees at panel discussion in a year after look back at the Bush administration’s Plan B to secure and stabilize Iraq.

Speaking Jan. 8 at the Heritage Foundation in Washington, Mark Kimmitt, deputy assistant secretary of defense for Middle Eastern affairs and a recently retired Army brigadier general, said among the challenges for 2008 will be linking up the successes at the local level to efforts by the Iraqi central government to give Sunnis, Shi’ites and Kurds “a better life” and resolve continuing political problems over what to do with former Ba’athist party members playing a more active political role in the new government, holding provincial elections and implementing a plan to share oil revenues.

He, like the others on the panel, said that for success to follow in Iraq would require a long-term military commitment by the United States and other coalition forces. Even then, he put the odds of achieving a stable Iraq at 3 in 10 or at best 50-50.

Last year at this time, Stephen Biddle, senior fellow for the Council on Foreign Relations, put the chances of success in Iraq, even with a new counterinsurgency model at 1 in 10. As a member of the panel, he said it was still useful to look at what is happening in Iraq as a continuing civil conflict. He said that traditionally two preconditions had to be in place to stop the fighting. The first is a negotiated ceasefire and “classically you need some outside party to enforce” it.

“We could be in reach of a negotiated ceasefire” by expanding the al Anbar model from locality to locality and province to province. “It has substantial potential to reduce violence in the country.”

On the need for an outside party to keep the ceasefire, Biddle said, “These negotiated agreements are not necessarily stable and sustaining ... and self-enforcing” and “the only plausible outside party is us.”

In part because of that role, he warned against a quick draw-down of American and coalition forces in Iraq. The number of troops needed for peacekeeping “is not that much different from counterinsurgency. We need to be very careful about taking a peace dividend” and then expect a secure and stable Iraq to emerge.

Reasons for the progress so far, the lead author of the Army and Marine Corps new counterinsurgency manual said, include embedding the Provincial Reconstruction Teams in the combat brigades, “making them more effective while not having significantly more people” in them.

Latest Helicopters are Easier to Fly. The Army’s latest utility and cargo helicopters are easier to fly than the models they are replacing, which allows pilots to concentrate on other mission aspects and take better advantage of aircraft capabilities.

The UH-60M, that will reach the field in 2009, will have a fly-by-wire system that will give it “level one handling,” Col. Theresa L. Barton, capabilities manager for lift at the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, told attendees during a session at the Association of the United States Army’s Aviation Symposium and Exposition. This system will reduce the pilot’s workload and help increase their situational awareness, she said. Because aircraft operation will be easier, there is also potential to add more capabilities to the aircraft.

The “F” model of the CH-47 Chinook, which has already been delivered to its first operational unit, features an automatic flight control system (AFCS) that is digital and provides “80 percent of the fly-by-wire capability at 20 percent the cost,” Col. Newman D. Shufflebarger, cargo helicopters project manager for the Army’s Aviation Program Executive Office, said. “You can come in from approach about 30 feet [off the ground], take your hand off the controls, and [the aircraft] will just sit there,” Shufflebarger said.

Both the UH-60M and CH-47F feature the Common Avionics Architecture System (CAAS). CAAS incorporates integrated communications and navigation systems management, along with the latest in digital battlefield situational awareness and connectivity. CAAS is also used in the MH-47G and has been selected for the UH-60M, ARH-70A, MH-60T, VH-60N, CH-53E and CH-53K.

The commonality of CAAS hardware components is designed to provide lower total life cycle cost and reduce expenditures for technology and supportability. The CH-47F also has a monolithic airframe that reduces corrosion and vibration, and ultimately will reduce maintenance man hours, Barton said.

For the latest developments on Capitol Hill, check out the AUSA website: www.ausa.org. For AUSA’s electronic legislative newsletter, e-mail Bill Loper at: bloper@ausa.org.

WASHINGTON UPDATE is published monthly by the Association of the United States Army to highlight current events of significance to the Army and Defense Department from the Washington perspective. Reproduction and distribution of this newsletter is encouraged.

For all address changes, e-mail Marny Willey at: mwilley@ausa.org or fax changes to 703-841-3505.

John Grady—Editor
2425 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, VA 22201
Phone: 703-841-4300, ext. 213
Fax: 703-841-3505

Aviation remains top priority as Army Transforms.

As the Army continues down the road of transformation and a more balanced force, aviation will remain at the top of the list of high-demand items, according to Lt. Gen. James D. Thurman, deputy Army chief of staff, G-3/5/7. Speaking Jan. 10 at the Association of the United States Army's Aviation Symposium and Exposition in Arlington, Va., Thurman said this modernization means aviation be called on to support the new brigade combat teams and other support brigades that will stand up – by fiscal year 2011. There will be 76 BCTs and 227 support brigades structured by then.

“The importance of aviation in this is maintaining that momentum” in restoring the balance of the force, Thurman said. Adding, “You can not apologize for not training your force. Preparation to meet the needs on this battlefield is essential.”

With five combat aviations brigades and more than 1,300 UAVs in the air over Iraq and Afghanistan, Thurman said everyone should take advantage of what's being learned as the Army continues down what the chief of staff calls “an era of persistent conflict.” “We need to take lessons from the warfight and continue to advance our warfighting skills and how we utilize this capability” to fight and defeat the enemy, he said. “Your training programs cannot lag behind.” The role of unmanned systems continues to increase, and Thurman said they “provide the greatest reduction of risk to our soldiers.”

Maj. Gen. Virgil L. Packett II, commanding general of the U.S. Army Aviation Warfighting Center, said aviation assets are the biggest intelligence collector, and he called UAVs his “top candidate for MVP.” Packett said as brigades transform, they shouldn't be enhanced as “heavy” or “light” because they will have a variety of assets, such as aviation, to give them more capabilities. “If you have to stop the fight and stop what you're doing and ask for something, it's not going to happen,” Packett said. “You have to have that responsiveness right in front.”

The cancellation of the Comanche program has meant funds have become available for modernizing the helicopter fleet as well as bolstering unmanned aerial vehicles, Thurman said. He told the defense, industry and Army leadership in attendance that aviation programs have stayed within bounds of their budgets and haven't taken funds away from other programs, but they will need increased funding in the future especially as the Army and other services rely more on unmanned systems.

New civilian personnel system meeting department's goals.

In its second year of implementation, the Defense Department's new civilian personnel system is meeting its goal of shifting the department to a performance-based pay system while giving employees the power to boost their own careers, two officials with the program said in an interview with Armed Forces Press Service Jan. 8.

The National Security Personnel System now covers about 130,000 of the department's civilian employees, and feedback has been positive about the system, which ties employees' pay raises and bonuses more directly to annual performance evaluations, Michael Dominguez, principal deputy undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness, said in an interview. “What I've been hearing is the system is doing what we've intended it to do, which is to galvanize conversations in the department and with our employees about our mission (and) what it is we need to achieve,” Dominguez said.

DoD recently issued the 2008 NSPS pay schedules, which were effective Jan. 6. This year, 60 percent of the base salary increase for federal employees will go to pay increases for employees who receive a final rating of 2 or higher on their evaluations, which includes virtually all federal employees. Forty percent of the base salary increase will go to “pay pools” to be allocated as performance-based salary increases to employees with a rating of level 3 or higher.

Mary E. Lacey, program executive officer for NSPS, said that in last year's NSPS payout, the January salary increase was not at all tied to performance. However, this year the department changed that to bring the annual pay increases more in line with the performance-based management system, she said. DoD had planned to make January pay increases exclusively performance-based by next year, but under an agreement with Congress, the split will remain 60 percent and 40 percent, as it is this year, Lacey said.

Lacey said she has seen data on about 60 percent of the payouts that will be made under NSPS this year, and the results are promising. About 5 percent of employees are being rated as level 5, or “role model,” about 60 percent of employees are rated at level 3, and practically no employees are rated as level 1, or “unacceptable,” she said.

“I think most employees will find, at the end of the day, ... that they did pretty darn well under NSPS, and some of those fears will die down,” Lacey said, referring to some employees' anxieties about the new system.

Aviation Brigade Reconfigured for the Fight.

Col. A. Thomas Ball brought a uniquely configured aviation brigade to the fight in Iraq over the past year, and it may be a harbinger of things to come in how Army aviation will be configured and operate in future combat.

Instead of the light cavalry model of the 25th Combat Aviation Brigade that he commanded in Hawaii, what he employed in theater was a medium cavalry model that distributed its Shadow unmanned aerial vehicle platoons throughout the battle space, and a special Hunter unmanned aerial vehicle platoon that had its Apaches fitted out with special sensors and missile defense systems.

Speaking Jan. 10 at the Association of the United States Army's Aviation Symposium in suburban Washington, he said a major difference was that special sensors allowed his aircrews to "look out 7,000 meters [and] see the people placing the IEDs" and then take them out with Hellfire missiles.

The usual range of sensors on Apaches is closer to 700 meters and requires the aircraft to stay low and move quickly to avoid missiles and ground fire.

At the same time, a special protective package was used to destroy missiles being fired at the aircraft. "This allowed us drive our aircraft up high" [2,000 feet above the ground] "and out of the range of machine gun fire."

The Apaches also could not be heard on the ground when flying that high, increasing the element of surprise, Ball said.

On the civilian contractors from L3 who operated and maintained the Hunter UAVs, he said, "They moved up exactly as we expected them to do" when deployed and moving around the theater. But, the use of contractors "has implication on the rules of engagement."

For example, a Hunter, firing a smart bomb, was credited in September with killing two insurgents in Nineveh Province.

Col. Daniel Shanahan, commander of the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade at Fort Hood, Texas, did not have the specially modified Apaches or a Hunter unit with him when he deployed. Indeed, he didn't even have most of his aircraft. "We fell in on two-thirds of our airplanes" when the brigade arrived in theater.

There were other differences between operations as a conventional aviation brigade and what they did in Iraq, particularly in air assault.

"Every night, I had a unit dedicated to SOF [special operations forces]—five Black Hawks, six Chinooks. "That's the point of the spear in taking down al Qaeda."

Aviation Modernization Programs are Essential.

"We need to continue to modernize," the project manager of the Army's Apache Attack Helicopter program explained to 370 attendees at the Association of the United States Army Aviation Symposium in suburban Washington.

Col. Mark Paquette, speaking Jan. 10, said the Block III Apache program is about 45 percent of the way along the way to fielding with first flight scheduled for July. "The program is progressing extremely well.

"I don't want to short change our sons and daughters," he told reporters at an earlier gathering, in providing a more lethal and survivable attack helicopter. The aircraft "performs the close air support mission" for the Army.

At the symposium's wrap-up session, Gen. Richard Cody, Army vice chief of staff, said, "We've got to keep moving" on all the aviation programs, such as Block III, that emerged with new money following the cancellation of the Comanche Armed Reconnaissance Helicopter program several years ago. He added that he wanted to speed deliveries and still hold down cost. For example, money for the first replacement Apache was approved in 2005, but the first aircraft was delivered several months ago.

Some of the enhancements for Block III in sensors, connectivity and survivability have been put on existing Block II Apaches operating in Iraq. This allows commanders "to determine time and place of engagement," Col. Mark Hayes, capabilities manager for reconnaissance/attack from the Army's Training and Doctrine Command, said.

When the new block is fielded, Al Winn, vice president for Apache Systems at Boeing, predicted the aircraft would be 25 times as effective as the existing Block II. The aircrews will have "full, real-time awareness" through a common operating picture as part of the 26 total enhancements scheduled for the aircraft.

Paquette said that challenges facing Apache now include supporting the current warfight in Afghanistan and Iraq and "we don't have enough Apaches now [634, including some A models]," which translates into "we don't have a lot of time" to train soldiers in the new systems that are being put on the aircraft. In the meeting with reporters the day before, Paquette said five battalions of Apaches are deployed out of 16 in the active force, five in the National Guard and Army Reserve, and "they have flown a half a million combat hours."

Even more heavily worked is the OH-58 Kiowa Warrior, Hayes told symposium attendees. "Forty percent of the fleet [4,500 aircraft] is deployed," and the aircraft is to be retired from the fleet after 2018.