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Army looks to speed spinouts from FCS. The Army is looking for ways to speed hardware—particularly manned ground vehicles and software in the Future Combat Systems program to the force—senior officials told Congress and attendees at the Association of the United States Army’s Winter Symposium and Exposition.

Army Secretary Pete Geren said, “It is in our interests to move it as quickly as possible, but there are some technology and manufacturing challenges.” Geren made these comments following a trip taken by Rep. John Murtha, D-Pa., chairman of the House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, to the Army’s Experimentation Force at Fort Bliss, Texas.

Murtha has been telling the Army to eliminate some components of FCS to free more money for the program and to field more quickly technologies that are ready, such as Class I Unmanned Aerial Vehicle and Small Unmanned Ground vehicle that have recently been sent to the force.

“Everyday someone comes to me and says, ‘I want this... I want this faster,’” Maj. Gen. Charles Cartwright, program manager, told reporters at a media roundtable at the AUSA symposium. He was referring to meetings with Gen. George W. Casey Jr., Army chief of staff.

The question he often asks himself is: “How do I speed the development cycle?” While at the same time, he said, the challenge is: “I’ve got to make sure it works” with existing equipment such as Abrams tanks and Bradley Fighting Vehicles and future systems.

The first five prototype Non-Line-of-Sight Cannons are to be delivered June 14, the Army’s birthday. Testing and production models are expected to be delivered in 2010.

The Mounted Combat System is scheduled for testing this spring at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md.

At a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing in late February, a number of senators questioned the cost of the Army’s Future Combat Systems. Defense Secretary Robert Gates at a hearing earlier this year testified the program may not be affordable. “I think you’ve got a problem if the secretary honestly feels he can’t fund” FCS, Sen. Jack Reed, D-R.I., said.

New Army Operations Manual - FM 3.0 - debuts. What likely was “the most reviewed and vetted manual since Airland Battle,” FM 3.0 Operations officially debuted Feb. 28, and the Army described its “impact on the force and the application of the doctrine is likely to be revolutionary.”

Gen. William “Scott” Wallace, speaking at the Association of the United States Army’s Symposium and Exposition in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., said one premise of the manual, 2 ½ years in the works, is that “National security is inextricably linked to global security” and “local security requires land power.”

The manual “is about the commander,” Lt. Gen. William Caldwell, commanding general of the Combined Arms Center and Fort Leavenworth, Kan., said. The last time the Army updated its operations manual was during the summer of 2001 before the “notion of persistent conflict” began to take hold in the wake of the terrorist attacks on the United States on Sept. 11. The manual also takes into account lessons from the continuing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. To succeed in that changing environment requires “a whole government approach,” employing diplomatic, information, military and economic tools.

Caldwell said drafts of the manual were taken to the media, academia, think tanks, junior officers, noncommissioned officers and retirees for comment. In addition, drafts were sent to the other services and the Defense Department and meetings were held with other governmental agencies and non-governmental agencies to solicit their comments about the manual’s content and approach. As an example of other department’s input, Lt. Col. Steve Leonard, one of the manual’s authors, said, “The State Department laid out the tasks, articulated who ought to be there and at what stage.”

The manual also recognized “operations in the next several decades will be amongst people,” Wallace said Feb. 28. Adding, “The threat will be unpredictable, sometimes asymmetric” that will require the simultaneous use of offensive, defensive and stability operations. The manual states: “Army doctrine now equally weights tasks dealing with the population—stability or civil support—with those related to offensive and defensive operations. Winning battles and engagements is important but alone is not sufficient. Shaping the civil situation is just as important to success.”

Continuing combat, negative view of military and obesity are factors affecting recruiting.

The continuing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, a negative view of military life—particularly among parents—and rising obesity rates are the major factors affecting military recruiting, the Defense Department’s top personnel official said.

Speaking March 6 at the Heritage Foundation in Washington, David Chu, under secretary for personnel and readiness, said the services “will not take the lowest 10 percent” of applicants who have taken the Armed Forces Qualification Test. Adding, “We lose one-third to physical standards; the reason is obesity and another 20 percent to [recent] drug and alcohol” abuse.

“We’ve raised the bar” from draft era standards, he said. The question is: “Are we able to meet the standards we set?” Chu said that was a question all components of the Army were facing.

The largest challenge, however, “is national support” for seeing the military as a career option for young people. “How do we make pursuit of a college degree consistent with military service and not competitive?” Chu added that few Americans know that 400,000 service members took advantage of the department’s tuition assistance program to pursue a college education.

Heidi Golding, principal analyst with the Congressional Budget Office, said the percentage of high school graduates in the Army has fallen from above 90 percent to about 80 percent. This is roughly comparable to the general population of the same age.

To help fill the ranks and grow the Army and Marine Corps, “we have changed some standards, such as age, and are re-looking high school diplomas [as a predictor of successfully completing a first enlistment] and [offering] special physical tests versus height/weight standard,” Chu said.

Chu did not see a return to the draft even with the military services challenged to meet growing recruiting missions.

Other speakers at the event said that the experience level in the armed forces would decline if the draft was re-started. Draftees would serve two years before moving into the reserve components or the individual ready reserve. Golding said the two-years a draftee would serve “would not yield enough deployable time” in many cases “because the training pipeline [in a number of career fields] is too long.”

Golding said that through 2025, the size of the targeted recruiting population is expected to grow by 10 percent. “At the same time, there are things the military can do,” such as offering more bonuses, putting more recruiters on the street and a shift of focus from the recent high school graduate to the college-bound and those completing associate degree programs thus broadening the pool of quality recruits.

Quality of Army recruits remains high. The commanding general of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command said that the quality of recruits and Army overall remains high and “a helluva lot better than good enough.”

Speaking Feb. 28 at the Association of the United States Army’s Symposium and Exposition in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., Gen. William “Scott” Wallace said 80 percent of the 107,000 soldiers recruited last fiscal year required no waivers. Six percent had a history of drug and alcohol abuse in the past, but no current record and had passed substance abuse testing. He added that 45 percent of the waivers given for arrests and convictions were for misdemeanors and reminded the audience that there are differences among the states as to what constitutes a felony. “Not all felonies are created equal.” Wallace said that less than 600 of the recruits were convicted of felonies. “Their records were reviewed by 10 people from the recruiter to a general officer” before they were allowed to enlist.

At a Defense Senate Appropriations Subcommittee hearing Feb. 28, Army Secretary Pete Geren said, “We’ve found that those soldiers we bring in under waivers—and it’s a very painstaking and labor-intensive process—but every soldier that we bring in under a waiver is required to go through a 10-step approval process. And somebody with any sort of serious information in his or her past has to be reviewed by a general officer.” Adding, “We’ve found that those waiver soldiers—and we did a study of all 17,000 waiver soldiers that came in from ‘01 to ‘06, and they—we’ve done a good job of picking those soldiers out of the many applicants that seek to join the Army. “They’ve proven to promote faster than those who came in through the normal process. They’ve had more awards for valor than their—those who came in outside of the waiver process.”

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.

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‘We are not going back, we are going forward.’

“We are not going back to the Army of the ‘70s and ‘80s. We are going forward,” the Army’s deputy G-4 told attendees at the Association of the United States Army’s Winter Symposium and Exposition. Maj. Gen. Vincent Boles added, “Supporting our deployed forces is our ‘Number 1’ priority, and that has been our priority for six years.”

Titled “Supporting America’s Best: It’s All about the Soldier,” the professional development forum, presented by AUSA’s Institute of Land Warfare, was held in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., at the Broward County Convention Center.

Boles stressed that the Army is in a period of “sustained conflict” and it is a “fact of life that there is a high operating tempo in a strategic environment.” Adding, “We are not going back to the Army you grew up in. We are stretched, but not broken.”

The Army’s goal is to restore strategic balance and to build the service’s essential capacity for the future.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Army suffered from low public esteem, had old and outmoded equipment, was subject to severe fiscal constraints and relied on unappreciated draftees. Today, according to Boles, the Army is held in high public esteem, is dealing with equipment that is “stressed and stretched,” is experiencing fiscal stability through supplementals and is fielding a force that is manned with “proud volunteer warriors.”

The Army has four strategic imperatives, Boles said. “We must prepare our soldiers for success in the current conflict, reset the force for future contingencies, transform the Army to meet the demands of the 21st century and sustain our soldiers, families and Army civilians,” he said.

Joining Boles on the “Supporting Soldiers on the Battlefield” panel Feb 28, Lt. Gen. Robert T. Dail, director of the Defense Logistics Agency, said that to support the soldier in the field logistically, his command “manages suppliers.” Adding, “We must link suppliers with demand. Move the capability to the point of use.” He emphasized that the agency’s industrial operations moves supplies and equipment to the installations then directly to the operational forces. “Our industrial base production,” Boles said, “is now twice pre-war levels and is the greatest since the Vietnam War.”

The commander of the U.S. Army Combined Arms Support Command, Maj. Gen. Mitchell H. Stevenson, said, “In Fiscal Year 2009, the Army is consolidating its logistics leader education to better serve the soldier on the battlefield.” The Army Logistics University, Fort Lee, Va., creates a “lifelong learning center for logistics officer, warrant officer, noncommissioned officer and civilian education,” he said.

S&T is united to doctrine, training, materiel, soldiers.

Science and technology (S&T) advancements will go a long way but don’t create capabilities by themselves—capabilities will be created from a union between S&T, doctrine, training, materiel and soldiers, said Maj. Gen. Barbara G. Fast, deputy director and chief of staff for the Army Training and Doctrine Command’s capabilities integration center.

Speaking at S&T forum before the Association of the United States Army’s Winter Symposium and Exposition, Fast said, “All of that combined creates capability.”

Work with the requirements and acquisition communities helps to create “revolutionary capabilities,” added Thomas H. Killion, deputy assistant secretary of the Army for research and technology. To enhance the current force, Army leadership has to take technology programs for the future and look for opportunities to accelerate and bring them into the current fight. Killion said that defense and industry has to think about the way equipment is designed to enhance a soldier’s capability but can’t overburden that soldier with too much equipment.

Killion said accomplishments just this past year include:

- Mid-range munition. Developed for the Future Combat Systems, it is compatible with the Abrams and gives guide-to-hit capability and extended range of gun systems beyond line of sight.
- Future force warrior. Gives soldiers enhanced networking and body armor.
- Battlemind training. Has better prepared soldiers for rigors of combat and ensures they have what they need when facing those rigors.

Fast noted technologies that the Army is facing today and looking at for tomorrow:

- Power and energy. Alternative fuel and energy supplies will help the Army reduce its logistics trail. The goal is to have self-sustaining units and soldiers.
- Human dimension. S&T will help soldiers react to stress and combat situations, and also it will help combatant commanders make sense of information so they can make better decisions.
- Battle command network. From the home station to deployment, soldiers will have essential information all along the way from the commander down to the last soldier into the field.
- Counter-improvised explosive devices and mines. Not just powder and explosives of today but what adversaries are looking at for tomorrow.
- Training. Impart skills faster and at a lower cost with an eye on better retention rates.

‘Battlemind’ training helps maintain mental health.

“Battlemind” pre-deployment training has helped maintain the mental health of deployed soldiers, stigma has decreased for those who seek treatment, but troops still need more “dwell time” at home, according to findings of an Army study released in early March.

A team of Army behavioral health care providers shared findings of the Army’s fifth Mental Health Advisory Team, known as MHAT-5, with news media in early March at the Pentagon. Results of the study “reflect a snapshot of the morale and mental health of deployed soldiers last fall in Iraq and Afghanistan,” Maj. Gen. Gale S. Pollock, deputy surgeon general for force management, said.

“The MHAT-5 focused on the behavioral health of soldiers, the behavioral healthcare system in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the future of behavioral healthcare for soldiers engaged in combat,” Pollock said.

The advisory team surveyed a total of 2,994 soldiers, 2,295 in Iraq and 699 in Afghanistan, as well as 350 behavioral health, primary care and unit ministry team members in Iraq and 87 in Afghanistan. Leaders in both theaters of operation and at home began implementing MHAT recommendations in February, once the assessment was complete, Pollock said.

The team leader for the MHAT-5 and chief of the Department of Military Psychiatry at the Walther Reed Army Institute of Research, Lt. Col. Paul Bliese, said, “This was the first time we had a large amount of data that allowed us to look month by month at the reports of mental health problems as a function of the months deployed,” he said,

It was also the first time Afghanistan had been included in an MHAT study, although a similar, independent study of the behavioral health of soldiers deployed as part of Operation Enduring Freedom was conducted in 2005. The findings weren’t released at that time, but the results are included in the MHAT-5 report.

The data collected via soldier/provider surveys, interviews and focus groups led to several major findings, the study found. Although there were separate teams deployed to the two theaters, many of the results were similar, not only between theaters, but compared to previous years. Soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan reported similar rates of mental health problems, to include acute stress, depression or anxiety, and those rates remained relatively unchanged from other MHAT studies.

The report also showed that soldiers across theaters shared common barriers to mental health care. In Iraq, for example, a large number of soldiers were moved to smaller outposts to establish close contact with civilians and security forces.

These moves placed them farther from health-care providers normally found at large bases, according to Pollock, who said the Army is working to help make care more available. In Afghanistan, troops are scattered over a large area, making access to care difficult. “Commanders in Afghanistan have responded to the report’s recommendations by moving health-care providers closer to troops,” Pollock said.

Col. Elspeth C. Ritchie, psychiatry adviser to the Army surgeon general, said the ratio of soldiers to behavioral health providers has increased because the number of providers has remained steady, while troop numbers have surged. She pointed to a number of measures the Army is both researching and undertaking to combat care deficiencies. “One is augmenting uniformed providers with civilian providers. Another very important piece is to make sure our primary-care providers and medics are trained in recognition and treatment of the psychological difficulties of war,” she said.

Another similarity in the reports directly links behavioral health issues to multiple and longer deployments. The findings showed, “Reports of work-related problems due to stress, mental health problems and marital separations generally increased with each subsequent month of the deployment.” The team also determined that soldiers on a third or fourth deployment were much more likely than those on first or second deployments to experience mental health and work-related problems.

“What we have now is the ability to get a large enough sample size to look at those who are on their third and fourth deployments,” Bliese said. Within the sample group, there were about 129 soldiers on their third or fourth deployment. Roughly 27.2 percent of those soldiers screened positive for mental health problems, compared to 11.9 percent of those on their first deployment, and 18.5 percent on their second.

“We see a similar pattern for morale, and some of the same reporting for job-related problems,” Bliese said, “where again, this group that’s on their third or fourth deployment is at least reporting higher job-related problems compared to those on their second or first deployment.” Bliese said one of the conclusions the advisory team drew from these results was that soldiers are not getting the time between deployments to completely recover before they arrive back in theater.

“We refer to that as, ‘dwell time,’ and that was brought up in the MHAT-4 report as well,” he said. “It is consistent with other data that we’ve collected back here in garrison.” The MHAT-5 report showed soldiers in the focus groups felt that a minimum one-to-one dwell time/deployment time ratio was necessary. “If they were on a 15-month deployment, they certainly felt like they deserved a 15-month dwell time, which makes sense,” Bliese said.