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McHugh sworn in as secretary of the Army.

John McHugh was sworn in as the 21st secretary of the Army Sept. 21 following his nomination by President Barack Obama and confirmation by the U.S. Senate.

As secretary of the Army, McHugh has statutory responsibility for all matters relating to the U.S. Army: manpower, personnel, reserve affairs, installations, environmental issues, weapons systems and equipment acquisition, communications, and financial management.

McHugh is now responsible for the Department of the Army's annual budget and supplemental of over \$200 billion. He leads a work force of more than 1.1 million active duty, Army National Guard, and Army Reserve soldiers, 221,000 Department of the Army civilian employees, and 213,000 contracted service personnel. Also, he provides stewardship over 14 million acres of land.

Also sworn in at the Pentagon ceremony was Dr. Joseph Westphal who assumed duties as the 30th undersecretary of the Army. Westphal has served in distinguished positions within academia, private, and public service, including a brief tour in 2001 as acting secretary of the Army. He served as the assistant secretary of the Army for Civil Works from 1998 to 2001.

McHugh has served over 16 years as a member of Congress representing northern and central New York. During his service, he forged strong ties to Fort Drum and earned a reputation as a staunch advocate for soldiers and their families, working tirelessly to ensure they had proper facilities, training, and the quality of life necessary to carry out wartime missions while caring for those at home. John McHugh was sworn in as the 21st secretary of the Army Sept. 21 following his nomination by the President.

Over the last eight years, McHugh made 10 official visits to Iraq and four visits to Afghanistan and other deployed locations to visit U.S. forces.

During his nomination hearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee July 30, McHugh said that he was excited, humbled, and honored at this new opportunity to serve, but also that he understood the challenges facing the Army.

DoD, Army induct Medal of Honor awardee into Hall of Heroes.

Department of Defense and Army officials inducted fallen hero Sgt. 1st Class Jared Monti into the Pentagon's Hall of Heroes in a ceremony Sept. 18.

President Barack Obama presented the Medal of Honor to Monti's parents, Paul Monti and Janet Monti, in a White House ceremony the day before, and the Pentagon ceremony further honored their son, enshrining him with the nation's other top heroes.

"Today every soldier, sailor, every marine, every airman, every civilian in the Department of Defense, more than 3 million of us, salute your son," Deputy Secretary of Defense William J. Lynn III told Monti's parents.

Monti became the first soldier to earn the Medal of Honor for Operation Enduring Freedom in an intense firefight in Afghanistan, June 21, 2006, when he ran into enemy fire three times to try and rescue one of his soldiers, Pfc. Brian J. Bradbury, who lay injured on an open plateau. A rocket-propelled grenade stopped his third attempt, mortally wounding Monti just meters from Bradbury.

"The final chapter of his life, on that mountain ridge in Afghanistan, summed up his entire being," outgoing Secretary of the Army Pete Geren said. "For most of us, for nearly all of us, I would say, the situation he faced on that ridge that early evening in Afghanistan, would have left us paralyzed at least by indecision, if not by fear."

"For Jared, it wasn't complicated. Pfc. Bradbury needed help, and he was going to help him, an act so extraordinary for the rest of us, we recognize it with the Medal of Honor, but for those who knew Jared, it was just 'Jared being Jared.'"

"Every soldier ... knows and understands the Army values of loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity and personal courage," Vice Chief of the Army Gen. Peter W. Chiarelli said during the ceremony. "Sergeant First Class Monti not only knew these values, he lived them every single day. And, on that last day, he demonstrated to the young soldiers in his patrol exactly what those values mean in a difficult and dangerous environment."

Mullen: Move quickly on stress and brain injuries. The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff challenged researchers into Post Traumatic Stress and Traumatic Brain Injury to “tell me what you’re learning. We’ve got to move on this as quickly as possible.”

Speaking Sept. 16 in suburban Washington, Adm. Michael Mullen was referring to a study of 1,200 veterans being conducted in Boston. “This is different from a car crash” and the effects go beyond the injured service member or veterans.

“We’ve put tremendous stress on families,” he said with multiple deployments with little time between them.

Illustrating that point, Lt. Gen. Jack Stultz, commander of the Army Reserve, said children in military families are growing up not knowing one or both of their parents. He recounted an incident involving several small children in military families. One child was telling the others about the fun things he was going to do when his father returned. Another child asked, “They come home?”

Mullen said he “was frustrated with the pace we are moving on this in the government,” specifically citing coordination of care and services between the Department of Defense and Veterans Affairs.

He admitted although he regularly testifies before the House and Senate Armed Services Committees and the House and Senate Defense Appropriations Subcommittees, “I don’t spend much time with the VA committees.”

Leslie Kammerdiener, who is caring for her son at a VA Polytrauma Center in Florida, said, “It’s a very sad thing that the Army or the VA system . . . has let us down. I am asking you to step up to the plate and take care of somebody who went over there and did what you asked him to do.” Her son, Cpl. Kevin Kammerdiener, 21, was severely injured in a suicide bombing attack in Iraq slightly more than a year ago. She said he was badly burned, has serious brain injury and can barely speak.

Because many of these new veterans are young, Mullen said this means a commitment of possibly up to 60 or 70 years of care. “They are 20-something with a 20-something spouse with children.”

Mullen called on communities to also coordinate their efforts in working with these veterans and their families and “spread those best practices rapidly throughout the land.” Asking rhetorically, “How do we match a vetted need?”

Mullen recalled the high incidence of homelessness among Vietnam veterans and said he was worried about another generation of homeless veterans who have returned from Afghanistan and Iraq.

Demand for soldiers continues to increase. “The demand [for soldiers] continues to increase,” the commanding general of the Army’s Human Relations Command said, citing the need for senior advisers from lieutenant colonel to senior noncommissioned officers to serve as advisers to the Iraqi army.

Maj. Gen. Sean Byrne said, “These teams are rich in mid-level to senior officers and noncommissioned officers” and that fact has a major impact on other larger Army units.

At the same time, there is a continuing shortage of about 4,000 captains and majors that is attributable to the downsizing of the active Army in the early 1990s to 485,000.

“We cut the accessions off. All those lieutenants we did not bring in would be majors now.” The Army was extremely concerned about retaining captains two years ago as it moved to the modular formation requiring more leaders as a company was added to each battalion in the brigade combat team. Army leaders were also concerned about the impact of repeated deployments upon these company commanders and their decision to stay.

Byrne said the Army began offering them choices of graduate school, a bonus or choice of assignment to retain them for two more years. “We stemmed what we thought would be a high rate of attrition. [But] we don’t have the bonus money now.”

The shortage of majors is expected to continue, but he said the Army is expecting to meet its goal of commissioning 5,500 lieutenants a year, if retention remains steady.

He added that Defense Secretary Robert Gates’ recent announcement that the Army will grow by another 22,000 soldiers over three years was to ensure that deploying units went to Afghanistan and Iraq with the proper number of trained soldiers.

The plan is to add 5,000 soldiers in this fiscal year and 9,000 in each of the next two fiscal years.

The increase in active duty end strength offsets the end of stop-loss and the rise in the percentage of soldiers who are non-deployable, he said. “I have to fill [deploying units] at 109 percent to get them to 100 percent when they go out the door.” In the past, Human Resources Command filled the unit at 104 percent.

“We’re going to fill the highest priority units—the deploying units, the next to deploy units,” Byrne said. The Training and Doctrine Command is asking for an additional 1,100 soldiers for the Army schoolhouse as part of Base Realignment and Closure.

Platoon sergeants reflect on AIT changes. Sgt. 1st Class Nate Early said the changes in Advanced Individual Training from when he entered the Army nine years ago are striking. Representing the Defense Language Institute at the Presidio of Monterey in the first AIT Platoon Sergeant of the Year competition, he said, “It was still peacetime,” but the institute was on the edge of change.

He enlisted to become an Arabic linguist. While he was at the institute, two men piloted a bombed-laden small craft into the side of Destroyer Cole in the Yemeni port of Aden on Oct. 12, 2000. Seventeen sailors died in the attack, and 39 were wounded.

“We were a completely open post then. The emphasis was on learning, learning. Now we have the ranges, battle drill training, virtual convoy operations. Very different.”

Staff Sgt. Bernie Mullen, representing Fort Knox, Ky., said the changes “are paying off. What they learned in basic, we build on in AIT. It’s still fresh in their mind and we send them to the unit better prepared and the unit training them to what they’re going to be doing.”

Being a platoon sergeant in AIT “is very challenging,” Sgt. 1st Class Charles Nelson, representing Fort Sill, Okla., said. “The op tempo is high. You have to learn each soldier’s personality, learn each soldier’s strengths and weaknesses and adjust fire.”

Staff Sgt. Luis Duran, representing Fort Eustis, Va., and the competition’s winner, said AIT “students have a lot more privileges now” than when he entered one station unit training 14 years ago. “If we take them away, they feel it.”

Their soldiers also know they volunteered to serve in the Army during a time of war. “They want to know what’s coming. They don’t know what to expect. They know they are going to combat,” and many of them ask what it is like, Sgt. 1st Class Jorge Solas, representing Fort Bragg, N.C., said.

The changes from 20 years ago when Sgt. 1st Class Frankie Crawford, representing Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md., went through AIT or even eight years when he was an instructor are dramatic. “It’s more prepping them for operational readiness.”

Sgt. 1st Class Lynn Gray, representing Fort Lee, Va., and has deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq, said the students ask, “How is it? What is there to do? Is it scary? Do we interact with the locals?” Her students in the engineering MOSs at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., ask “is the equipment really safe? Will the upgrades come? I tell them the soldiers will get the best,” Sgt. 1st Class Bianka Gavin said.

Top recruiters surprised at selection. The Army’s top three recruiters agreed that they were surprised—“awestruck, my jaw dropped” or “didn’t expect it, planned to enjoy San Antonio”—by their selection as recruiters of the year and proud of it, but the paths they took to that honor was unique and personal.

Sgt. 1st Class Anika Anderson-Hack, top recruiter for the active force, has been in the Army for 16 years and is a physical therapist. As to how she became a recruiter in the medical field, she laughed and said, “Actually, I was the ‘Number 1’ draft pick.”

Working in metropolitan St. Louis, Anderson-Hack said recruiting has its good and bad moments. “We have people who want to give back and others who want to make money.”

The weak economy with high rates of unemployment has also made a difference in a recruiter’s success. “A lot of people are affected by the economy. And then there are those you say to: ‘You’re serving soldiers, what better to serve your country.’” Adding, “The number of recruits like that is inspiring.”

Anderson-Hack said her children are grown, with a daughter attending Bradley University in Peoria, Ill, on an ROTC scholarship. When her children were younger, they became used to the moves that are part of Army life. “We made it adventurous.”

This is the first assignment she has had when the family is not living on-post. Her husband is also away completing degree work in Oklahoma.

“I am the only female recruiter here. I have six big brothers looking out for me.”

Staff Sgt. Gonzalo Fernandez came into the Guam Army National Guard eight years ago at the suggestion of a niece.

He was leaving a rigger’s job at Guam’s largest port to be a logistician. “My only regret is I didn’t do it sooner when I got out of high school,” he said. Adding, “My recruiter was so awesome in helping me and others make the transition from civilian to soldier. I said to myself I want to be like here.” As he was moving to seek a recruiter’s slot, Fernandez was asked to be one.

“Guam is very patriotic, vastly smaller [population about 200,000 with 20,000 being in the armed forces] than any other place in CONUS. Just about everyone has someone in the military. My brother is in. My uncle and aunties, nieces and nephews all have or are serving. All forces are good forces. I have family serving in all branches.”

Vice chief: Future ground vehicle to be survivable, mobile and fielded in 7 years.

The priorities for the Army's future manned ground combat vehicle will be survivability and mobility, the vice chief of staff told several hundred attendees at the Institute of Land Warfare breakfast in suburban Washington.

Speaking Sept. 10, Gen. Peter Chiarelli said that the vehicle, which the Army plans to field in seven years, will incorporate versatility in size, weight and power; provide force protection and "we're not saying it has to fit into a C-130."

"Ten years is too long" a time to field a new capability. Chiarelli said the process can be accelerated by reviewing the program at the three key decision points.

The vehicle will continue to emphasize interoperable networks. "Every single soldier must have the capability to call off fires and avoid fratricide and civilian casualties."

The first iteration of the vehicle will be as an infantry carrier as the Army divests itself of the M-113, he said. The modernization program also incorporates Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles as required by Defense Secretary Robert Gates, and will reset tanks, Strykers and Paladins while eventually phasing out the Bradley Fighting Vehicle.

The vehicle will succeed the canceled manned ground vehicle portion of the Future Combat Systems program.

Chiarelli said that the Army "has not done this thinking [about requirements for the vehicle] in isolation" taking input from industry, Congress, allies, sister services and academia and also is drawing on the lessons of eight years of war and today's operating environment.

"We need your good ideas," he said. He added the Army plans to hold "industry days" in October and November to receive those ideas.

The Army remains heavily engaged across the world, Chiarelli said. "We have more soldiers deployed today than at the height of the surge" in Iraq. At the same time, "we are in the middle of BRAC" [base realignment and closure], and "we are moving over 250,000 soldiers and their families by Sept. 15, 2011."

The change from a division-centric Army to a brigade-centric organization is the key to the Army's modernization program, Chiarelli said. The change in structure also reflects the altered nature of warfare. "Every soldier is looking at the enemy every day [on] the non-contiguous battlefield."

Cobham sponsored the breakfast.

AMC recognizes year's 'Top Ten' inventions.

Combat gauze, the Common Remotely Operated Weapons System, and a new machine-gun cradle were among technologies recognized by U.S. Army Materiel Command during the "Top Ten Great Inventions of 2008" event in suburban Washington.

The event, held yearly since 2002, celebrates the best technological advances in the Army. Criteria for being selected includes impact on Army capability, potential for benefit outside the Army and inventiveness. Additionally, all the technology nominated must have been fielded during 2008.

It's actually soldiers in theater who pick the winners.

"We have soldier panels, from the active divisions of the Army ... review all the nominations and vote on them," Donald W. Matts Jr., of Army Research Development and Engineering Command, who headed up the "Top Ten" program this year.

This year it was soldiers from the 1st Armored Division, the 82nd Airborne Division, and the 25th Infantry Division who participated in the voting, Matts said.

"Each of the winners gets a trophy and plaque for their team, and even the ones that haven't won in the top ten—they are winners too—they've all fielded products the Soldiers are using in the field today."

The Common Remotely Operated Weapons System, or CROWS, was one of the 10 chosen this year as the best. The system amounts to a gun, mounted on a remotely controlled swivel, with multiple cameras. What it does is keep Soldiers inside a vehicle, while the remotely controlled weapon does the dangerous work on the outside—exposed to insurgents and their improvised explosive devices.

"It's all about soldier protection," said Michael Scott of RDECOM. "It definitely saves Soldiers lives. The thought is to get the Soldier under armor and let him fire his weapon from the safety of being buttoned up in the vehicle."

The CROWS is now on more than 700 vehicles in both Iraq and Afghanistan, including the mine resistant ambush protected vehicle, the Humvee and the Abrams tank, Scott said. New systems are being fielded at a rate of about 20 a week.

With that exposure in the field, Scott said, evidence has come back that shows it does what it's meant to do—save lives.

"With IED blasts, this system has come back basically in a bucket," he said. "If a soldier was up there out of the hatch and his gun up on a pencil mount, he would be taking the shrapnel, not the system. So, the feedback is pretty good."