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Repeal of 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' may impact Army readiness. The chief of staff of the Army told the Senate Armed Services Committee, "We just don't know the impacts on readiness and military effectiveness" if the law covering homosexuals and lesbians in the military was immediately repealed.

Testifying Feb. 23, Gen. George W. Casey Jr. said, his concerns were "the impact of a repeal of the law on a force that is fully engaged in two wars and has been at war for 8 1/2 years."

Army Secretary John McHugh and Casey said that a moratorium on discharging soldiers under the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy could complicate the review process.

"This process is going to be difficult and complicated enough," Casey said. "Anything that complicates it more, I think I would be opposed."

Sen. Carl Levin, D-Mich., committee chairman, has said that he might sponsor legislation calling for a moratorium on these discharges until the Pentagon completes its review of the policy and the impact of a congressional repeal of the law covering it.

Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., ranking member, said that the moratorium "flies in the face of what the secretary of defense committed to that is, before a decision is made to change a policy, that in my view is working, that we would impose a moratorium."

Speaking with reporters in the Pentagon the day before, Gen. Ray Odierno, the top commander in Iraq, said he supported the Pentagon policy study. "My opinion is, everyone should be allowed to serve, as long as we're still able to fight our wars and we're able to have forces that are capable of doing whatever we're asked to do."

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Adm. Mike Mullen expressed their personal support for a repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" at a Senate hearing earlier this month.

Gates also appointed an Army general and the Pentagon's top lawyer to lead a review team to survey the force on the matter.

President Barack Obama called for the repeal of the law in the State of the Union address in January.

Funding Army soldier and family support programs is top priority. Funding programs to support soldiers and their families is the Army's top priority in the new fiscal year, the service's secretary and chief of staff told a Senate panel Feb. 23.

Army Secretary John M. McHugh, a former congressman who served on the House Armed Services Committee, said, "I found an Army clearly fatigued by nearly nine years of combat. But through it all, they are more resilient.

To sustain and improve that resilience, McHugh and Army Chief of Staff Gen. George W. Casey Jr. spoke for the need to improve soldiers' "dwell time" at home between deployments, as well as Army family support and mental health programs.

"We remain out of balance," McHugh said. "Our all-volunteer force is a national treasure. If we wish to sustain it, soldiers and their families must be our top priority. For those of us in the Army family, it is the top priority.

The Defense Department's Fiscal Year 2011 budget request includes \$1.7 billion to fund what McHugh called "vital" family programs such as those to provide respite care and spousal employment, and to open some 50 child-care centers and seven youth centers.

"We sign up the soldier, we re-sign up the family," McHugh said. Casey agreed that keeping families happy is critical. "Keeping our families understanding that we really are committed to them over the long haul is essential to holding this force together," he said.

The most important element for putting the Army "back in balance," Casey said, is to increase the time soldiers are home between deployments.

"What we continue to see across the force is the cumulative effects of these deployments," he said. Army studies show two to three years of dwell time is needed to recover from one year of deployment, he added.

The Army has increased dwell time from 12 to 18 months and plans that by the end of next year all soldiers on active duty would have two years at home following one year of deployment, Casey said.

The Army Force Generation Model would have soldiers deployed for a year and home for four years.

Afghanistan: Needed increased supplies present a logistical challenge. The Army's chief logistician said, "In talking Afghanistan we are talking a country about the size of Texas, but more important is you can see that there is no seaport and to get to Afghanistan through a seaport of any size we go through the port of Karachi" in Pakistan.

Speaking Feb. 18 at the Association of the United States Army Institute of Land Warfare breakfast in suburban Washington, Lt. Gen. Mitchell Stevenson, G-4, said that is only part of the challenge. "The country of Pakistan does not want any uniformed Americans running around the country," so local contractors have to be hired to move goods overland.

Adding, "It is also a challenge because of the terrain" with essentially only two routes available from the south that lead through extremely high mountain passes. The routes "are very easily interdicted."

At the same time, the United States is working with countries to the north of Afghanistan to move more equipment by rail to its borders. Stevenson said as matters stand now no lethal equipment, including the all-terrain version of the Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles, can be shipped over this route.

Until recently, there were very few Army trucks in Afghanistan, so again local contractors were used. Stevenson said there were cases of pilferage and theft and the Army has stepped up its security screening procedures. As the buildup continues, "we have to get a lot more [Army] truck companies" into Afghanistan to meet the increased demand for supplies.

There are also few places where fixed wing aircraft such as C-17s and C-130s can land.

Stevenson said the Army will meet its requirements to equip the first arriving 7,000 to 8,000 additional soldiers arriving in Afghanistan in late March. "Their equipment is almost all there now," with the rest arriving by the middle of March. "We don't want soldiers sitting around waiting for their equipment."

Adding, "We're trying to stay a step ahead."

The plan is for soldiers to leave their equipment behind for follow-on units to use.

The logistician faces an environment in Afghanistan "that is much more challenging than Iraq."

At the same time there are 19 outposts in Afghanistan that can only be resupplied with food, water, ammunition, weapons and parts for weapons by air.

Army releases request for proposals on new ground combat vehicle. Following the release of its request for proposal for the new ground combat vehicle, the vice chief of staff said the Army expects to award the technical development contract in December and looking for three good proposals from industry to evaluate.

Speaking Feb. 25 by video-teleconference to attendees at the Association of the United States Army's Winter Symposium and Exhibition, Gen. Peter Chiarelli said he expects the competition to last for two years. "If we don't have three good proposals, we'll go with two." Adding, "What we're really hoping for is three solid proposals."

He said the plan is to select two contractors to go to prototyping in January 2013 with the first production vehicles expected in 2018. "This is the vehicle that takes into account the lessons of eight years of war. It is not FCS warmed over." Defense Secretary Robert Gates canceled the ground combat vehicle portion of the Future Combat System in April 2009. "We think this will be an amazing vehicle," Chiarelli said.

Reserve chief nominated for reappointment.

Lt. Gen. Jack C. Stultz has been nominated for reappointment to the grade of lieutenant general in his current position. Upon Senate confirmation, he will continue to serve as chief, Army Reserve and commanding general, U.S. Army Reserve Command. As the senior leader of the Army Reserve, Stultz is responsible for the crafting and execution of all plans, policies and programs affecting Army Reserve soldiers as well as for providing trained and ready units and individuals to mobilize and deploy in support of the national military strategy.

During his current tenure, he has led the transformation of the Army Reserve from a strategic reserve organization into a fully operational force. Stultz will continue to operationalize the Army Reserve, while shaping and sustaining the force, to ensure that it is recognized and resourced as America's premier reservoir of shared military-civilian skills and capabilities that supports and defends the nation. He will also further develop an enterprise approach aligning functions, processes, and working relationships to effectively and efficiently generate trained, equipped and ready forces for combatant commanders.

In addition, Stultz plans to continue to address BRAC related issues to ensure that the Army Reserve achieves its congressional mandates.

"I am honored to have the privilege to continue to serve alongside of the 206,000-plus warrior-citizens who live and work in thousands of communities across our country," Stultz said. "It is my goal to make certain that they are trained, battle ready, and Army Strong."

The Army's Chief Scientist: 'We have to be about the Current Fight' and Positioned to Look to the Future. Speaking Feb. 24 at a special science and technology day preceding the Association of the United States Army's Winter Symposium and Exposition in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., Thomas Killion said that means "we have to be able to sustain great programs" like the Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles now and protecting the force by investing in programs like regenerative medicine.

Zeroing in on regenerative medicine, he added, "This is absolutely fantastic technology" and is "the kind of technology that will make a difference for our soldiers" and the civilian population.

Future investments also need to be made by industry and government to have young people pursue careers in science, engineering and mathematics to keep the United States and its industry competitive.

Killion said this year the Army is requesting about \$1.9 billion in basic technology—about \$402 million for force protection. "What it comes down to is being smart about what we invest in science and technology."

Adding, "You have to sift through the options" and "the noise so we know where the opportunities are."

At a professional development forum, he said, "The technology [like robots and sensors] isn't on the shelf by happenstance."

The special value of the Rapid Equipping Force is to bring important equipment "in numbers that do matter to our soldiers."

Speed of delivery and quality of products going to the force were at the heart of an industry panel look at transitioning advanced technologies to soldiers in the field.

Michael Cannon, senior vice president for ground combat systems at General Dynamics, said, "We're proud of our ability of being systems integrators. ... It's extremely important that we do it right and do it rapidly."

He cited his company's tank Urban Survival kit for Abrams tanks, the SLAT armor for Strykers' defense against rocket propelled grenades as examples of moving quickly to field an identifiable need.

Cannon said warfighter forums—where soldiers from private up—share their views on how equipment performed in the field. "We want to develop answers to soldiers' questions, so we ask."

Oates: IED is a 'Condition of our Workplace' with consequences. "The IED is a condition of our workplace" that "has operational and strategic consequences," the senior officer charged with defeating these explosives told attendees at the science and technology day before the Association of the United States Army's Winter Symposium and Exposition.

The IED also remains the single largest killer of United States, coalition and Afghan forces.

Lt. Gen. Michael Oates, director, said Feb. 24, "We need to take risks to help" service members serving in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Command Sgt. Maj. Todd Burnett said, "The size [of the explosives] is increasing" as coalition operations expand. He added while many soldiers were familiar with IEDs from their tours in Iraq, "we've only got a small percentage of the Army that has ever been" to Afghanistan.

"The enemy kills a lot more civilians than they do of us. [It is] part of their plan. We need to give the Taliban credit for this."

Right now the detection rate of the explosives remains stuck at about 50 percent. "We've been stuck on that number for way too long," Oates said. While there have been improvements in detection technology, "80 percent are detected by soldiers."

In answer to a question, he said, "Every hour we have invested in training ... has returned us very high dividends." It is training that now includes battalion and brigade staffs. "There's a difference between hunting and walking around in the woods looking for a deer."

Burnett said the training of the battle staffs is very important because "it teaches them how to fish. Do you want a crappie or a big old catfish?"

Gen. Peter Chiarelli, Army vice chief of staff, described the network involved in building and placing improvised explosives. It includes a spotter, triggerman, observer, emplacer, assembler, component makers, videographer and recruits.

Dave Saffold, who heads the office's Center of Excellence, said they can quickly replicate situations in Afghanistan down to what kind of device was used, where it was placed and the time that it was discovered or exploded.

The information is also current, as little as a day old when they begin adding it to the training regimen. "Within a week ... we will replicate."

Tough environment and governance are challenges in Afghanistan. “Afghanistan is a tough, tough environment,” the commanding general of Army Materiel Command told attendees at the Association of the United States Army’s Winter Symposium and Exposition in Fort Lauderdale.

Speaking Feb. 25, Gen. Ann Dunwoody said, the “biggest challenge [in Afghanistan] is governance.”

In referring to current operations around Marjah in Helmand Province by announcing that coalition forces would be coming in, it “let the Afghan people have a choice” of leaving, staying with the Taliban or siding with the Afghan government. “The bottom line is to build trust.” Adding, “You see signs ... signs of hope” in the new counterinsurgency strategy.

Turning to the Iraq drawdown, she said, “This is PhD-level stuff” of removing the equivalents of 50 U.S. brigade combat teams. “We will do this methodically and professionally.” Dunwoody said about one-third of the equipment that is coming out of Iraq has gone to Afghanistan.

In a meeting with reporters, she said, “Having been there with the Iron Mountains” of equipment left over following Desert Storm, “we had to have accountability of everything” in Iraq and “identify that stuff and where it is going.”

The millions of pieces of equipment in containers are being tracked with radio frequency identification equipment similar to that used by FedEx and UPS. For high value items, such as the all-terrain versions of the Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles being used in Afghanistan, satellites do the tracking.

The Army estimates that 3.2 million pieces of equipment is unit-owned and will be returned to the unit.

Lt. Gen. Mitchell Stevenson, the Army G-4, told the 5,000 attendees, “In every measurable way ... we are ahead of the plan [but] one could argue we’ve done the easy part” of meeting the Dec. 31, 2011 deadline for U.S. forces leaving Iraq.

“We built great flexibility to get people in and out of Iraq.” Maj. Gen. Raymond Mason, deputy chief of staff G-4, U.S. Army Forces Command, said. The Army is using the ports of Kuwait and one port each in Iraq and Jordan. It is also using Baku, Azerbaijan to ship equipment to Afghanistan.

The 206,000 pieces non-standard equipment, gear bought for specific purposes and not through the normal acquisition process, poses a special problem for the army.

Durbin: Army Must Get Back in Balance.

The foremost goal of the Army is to get itself back in balance, the special assistant to the chief of staff for enterprise management told attendees at the Association of the United States Army’s Winter Symposium and Exposition.

Speaking with attendees by video-teleconference Feb. 26, Lt. Gen. Robert Durbin said the Army Force Generation Model is key to balance and also looking to the future in aligning its business practices.

They provide “a unique opportunity” in “generating trained and ready forces at sustainable levels.”

Durbin said the designation of Joseph Westphal, under secretary of the Army, as the service’s chief management officer was an important step in aligning management systems that are integrated and innovative.

Gen. Peter Chiarelli, vice chief of staff of the Army, said, “We need to change the culture of the Army to be more collaborative.”

Looking at network-based solutions, he said, “We must be able to talk to one another” with the necessary security protections in place. “We need standard-based solutions across the Army.”

“We can’t continue to buy [information technology] like a tank,” Lt. Gen. Jeffrey Sorenson, the Army’s chief information officer, said “because IT changes” rapidly.

The Army needs to get away from “bolt-on” systems and “work around integration solutions,” he said. While realizing “the Army will never have everything the same,” there is a “need to standardize the packages” and be able to modernize them. The way ahead is “leveraging commercial sector” he said.

Lt. Gen. Michael Vane, deputy commanding general, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, said the Army’s modernization strategy looks at changing the Army about every five years by using a rolling two-year cycle. “We continue to be challenged in bringing together systems developed in stove-piped lanes.”

“Schedules matter; speed matters,” Lt. Gen. William Phillips, director of the Army Acquisition Corps, said.

Chiarelli added “We need to be listening to the right people ... the soldiers at the edge.”