



# WASHINGTON UPDATE

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**Petraeus to re-look rules of engagement in Afghanistan.** Gen. David Petraeus told the Senate Armed Services Committee if he is confirmed as commander of American and coalition forces in Afghanistan he would re-look the rules of engagement covering those forces but at the same time work to limit casualties of innocent civilians.

Testifying June 29, he said, "I want to assure the mothers and fathers of those fighting in Afghanistan that I see it as a moral imperative to bring all assets to bear to protect our men and women in uniform."

Petraeus, formally U.S. Central Command commander, added that he had talked with Afghan leaders about the current rules of engagement, particularly concerning air strikes, and they agreed with his view.

In his opening statement, he said, "I will continue the emphasis" on reducing civilian casualties while continuing missions designed to capture or kill insurgents. He cited the recent success in capturing or killing 130 Taliban leaders in recent months.

He also mentioned a number of lower level Taliban fighters have laid down their arms and are being re-integrated into Afghan society under a new policy recently unveiled by the government of President Hamid Karzai.

"Protecting the population inevitably requires killing, capturing or turning the insurgents. Our forces have been doing that," he added. "What impresses the Taliban is not the rules of engagement," he said in answer to a question. "but by being relentless, by getting into the jugular and not letting go."

While acknowledging progress has been slow in training Afghan forces to take the lead in planning, executing and following up on military operations, Petraeus said there has been progress. He cited the number of casualties the Afghans have suffered as an example of their commitment to the fight against the Taliban. "There's no love lost for the Taliban," he said.

"My sense is the tough fighting will continue" and "progress is possible" in establishing security that will eventually allow the Afghans to re-develop their agricultural economy and launch their mineral economy with help from "adventure capitalists."

**Odierno: 'Pivotal time' in Iraq as drawdown continues.** The outgoing commander of U.S. forces in Iraq told the Senate Armed Services Committee: "Today, we're in a pivotal time" there as the United States' efforts move from combat operations to training and equipping Iraqi security forces and eventual withdrawal of all combat forces in about 18 months.

Testifying at a June 24 hearing to consider his nomination to command Joint Forces Command, Gen. Raymond Odierno used a football analogy and said, "We are on the 10-yard line," and driving for a touchdown.

Lt. Gen. Lloyd Austin, who has been nominated for promotion and to succeed Odierno, added, "I'll take the ball, senator." Adding, "We will get the ball into the end zone."

Odierno said the drawdown to 50,000 American forces in Iraq by Sept. 1 was "on track" and progress was continuing in training Iraqi brigade and division staffs in how to plan, carry out and review operations and build campaigns.

He said there are 83,000 American service members in Iraq now. Slightly more than two years ago, there were more than 163,000 American service members in Iraq.

Austin said, "I understand a stable environment in the Middle East and Southwest Asia" is in the vital national security interests of the United States.

Later in answer to a question, Odierno said, "I believe we have an opportunity that we will never have again in the Middle East," the establishment and functioning of a political democracy in the heart of the region. "I believe what that means is more stability in the Middle East." He added that the Iraqis "are starting to see their future" as their police and army take increasing control over the nation's security. "They want to take over their country."

Having served in Iraq in 2007, Austin added, "Al Qaeda in Iraq and other extremist groups have been severely degraded."

Both told the committee that now also was the time to establish a long-term relationship with Iraq that goes beyond security but includes economic, diplomatic and political development.

**Web-based care could help reduce stigma in seeking mental health help.** The vice chief of staff of the Army said that Web-based health care services would go a long way to reducing the stigma of seeking help and provide soldiers with multiple sessions with mental health professions.

Testifying June 22 before the Senate Armed Services Committee on a hearing to find ways to reduce the number of suicides in the armed forces, Gen. Peter Chiarelli said, "I really think this is something that will fix this now."

In his prepared testimony, he said, "Our long-term goal is to create a network of counselors and certified mental health care providers that encompasses the entire U.S. Then, when a Brigade redeploys, for example, a gymnasium full of stations/computers could be put in place allowing every Leader and Soldier to participate in a behavioral health evaluation on-line upon redeploying."

Sen. Carl Levin, D-Mich., committee chairman, said, "The increase in suicides by military personnel in the last few years is alarming.

"In 2007, 115 Army soldiers committed suicide. In 2008, the number increased to 140 and to 162 in 2009. Similarly, 33 marines committed suicide in 2007; 42 in 2008 and 52 in 2009."

"We have seen a fairly significant reduction in suicides among active duty soldiers this year as compared to last year. However, we have seen an unexpected increase in suicides among our reserve component soldiers not on active duty, in particular the Army National Guard," Chiarelli said.

Adding, "We are down two with our reserve component soldiers not on active duty. We are up 21 in our National Guard soldiers who are not on active duty. And that concerns me greatly. I think there are three things. I think it's multiple deployments for them. I don't think we're getting enough time with them at the de-mob station to give them the kind of checkouts they need, behavioral health checkouts that they need."

Chiarelli, in answer to a question, said, "I am able to wrap leaders around returning active component soldiers for the entire time that they're back. We take a reserve component soldier today and within five to seven days, he's back in his community on his own."

He told the committee that 1,200 soldiers have been through resiliency training at the University of Pennsylvania, and the Army's goal is to have those trainers in each battalion. At the same time, about 780,000 soldiers have taken an online assessment of their resiliency.

"This [training and assessment] is something that finally starts to get us to the left and not waiting until we see soldiers with problems but try to attack resiliency as far to the left as we possibly can."

## **75 percent of DoD civilians back in GS system.**

The director of the transition office for the National Security Personnel System told the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs' Federal Workforce Subcommittee that the Department of Defense has already moved 75 percent of workers under that system back to the 15-step General Schedule, but questions remain about pay equity and a future pay-for-performance system.

Testifying June 9, John James said he expected the department to meet the deadline of transitioning all 226,000 workers under NSPS by the Jan. 1, 2012 congressionally-set deadline. He said improvements in information technology have allowed the transition to proceed more rapidly than anticipated by Congress when it ended the pay-for-performance system.

Sen. George Voinovich, R-Ohio, the ranking member, advised James to "take your time and do it right."

In the transition, workers were not to lose pay.

James told the panel more than 70 percent of the transitioning workers received a one-year increase of more than \$1,300. "In gradual increments, the pay schedule is catching up to the employee's salary."

Asked to look back for strengths in the system, James said, "I think one of the advantages of NSPS is that it provided a clear line of sight from the employees and the employees' objectives to their prior use of the organization. I believe that the employees understood how they fit into the mission of the organization, which was critical to setting objectives and to establishing their performance objectives."

Likewise Charles Grimes, director of Employee Services at the Office of Personnel Management, said, "I think one of the lessons that we can carry away from NSPS is that they had a terrific performance management system. It was quite transparent. It had an efficient automated appraisal system that drove alignment between the goals of the employees and the goals of the organizations."

Later in answer to a question, Grimes said, "The General Schedule is not immune from recognizing performance [but also recognizes experience in setting salaries]. We can give quality step increases. The problem there is that those are fairly large 3 percent increases. In the economic environment that we're in, they kind of dwarf even the General Schedule increases in January. So there's an awful lot of emphasis on experience."

Adding, "They've got kind of a double whammy [in the transition], if you will. They are not getting those large performance-based increases that they might have been used to. And now, January comes around, and they get half the increase everybody else does."

**Repeal of ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Deal’ tied to review’s completion, certification.** Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates told troops worldwide May 28 that any repeal of the so-called “don’t ask, don’t tell” law will be delayed until the ongoing Defense Department high-level review is completed, and only after he, the president and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff all can certify that the department is ready to make the change without hurting unit cohesion, military readiness, military effectiveness, and recruiting and retention.

Gates recorded a special message that was broadcast on the American Forces Radio and Television Service and the Pentagon Channel to speak directly to service members and their families about the moves toward repeal of the law that bars gay men and lesbians from serving openly in the military.

“There’s been a lot of political posturing and maneuvering on this issue this week, and the secretary wanted to communicate directly to the troops about what this all means to them,” Pentagon Press Secretary Geoff Morrell said.

“He wanted to make it clear that the department’s review of how to smartly implement a change in the law is more important than ever, and their participation in it is absolutely critical to its success.”

The House of Representatives passed an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Bill, May 27 that would allow gay men and lesbians to serve openly.

The Senate Armed Services Committee also passed a similar amendment.

The Senate will take up the bill sometime after returning from the Memorial Day recess.

If it passes in the upper house or is not acted upon, differences will have to be reconciled in a conference committee looking at the defense authorization bill for final passage.

President Barack Obama said he is pleased with the congressional actions. He has long favored repealing the law, in which has been in effect since 1994.

“Key to successful repeal will be the ongoing Defense Department review, and as such, I am grateful that the amendments ... will ensure that the Department of Defense can complete that comprehensive review that will allow our military and their families the opportunity to inform and shape the implementation process,” he said in a written statement released by the White House.

*(Editor’s note: This article is based upon an Armed Forces Press Service story.)*

**Secretary stresses professional military education.** The secretary of the Army said after being engaged in two land wars for almost a decade the service’s ability to produce “that versatile soldier is starting to fray,” and it was taking steps to address this challenge.

Speaking June 10 at the Association of the United States Army’s Institute of Land Warfare Breakfast in suburban Washington, John McHugh said he was recently struck by the comparison of what the Army spent on the Future Combat Systems (about \$17 billion) versus its investment in the Military Academy’s 2010 graduating class of about 1,000 cadets—“about 1 percent” of that.

“I don’t say we don’t need to modernize,” but the “Army’s success on future battlefields will be assured by the creativity and agility” of its leaders.

McHugh, acknowledging a letter from Gen. Martin Dempsey, commander of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, to Gen. George W. Casey Jr., chief of staff, that expressed his concerns about the generating force, said it was time “for a holistic approach” in reviewing the generating force, including the personnel system.

“This is hardly a new challenge” and “it is not going to be easy” to align the generating force with the Army Force Generation Model and the brigade-centric operational force.

At the same time, the Army is confronting the challenges of trying to extend dwell time between deployments and work on issues—suicide, alcohol and drug abuse and domestic violence—brought on by the continued high operating tempo in fighting two land wars.

“We have to be energized” in reviewing the needs of the generating force.

Looking back to 2000, he said defense planners were not focusing on what became today’s threat. Instead, they were looking at missile defense rather than an adaptive enemy that was not defending a homeland, operates in a highly decentralized environment and is driven by an ideology that was thousands of years old.

“The thinking soldier finds the breach.” Adding, “making an agile, flexible leader—that’s what a good Army does.”

McHugh cited an example of a British officer in the French and Indian War doing just that at the Battle of Bushy Run on his way to recapturing Fort Pitt.

“Army leaders and Army thinkers are equally as important as a new weapons system.”

**McHugh: ‘No excuse’ for problems at Arlington.** Saying “there’s simply no excuse,” Army Secretary John McHugh offered his and the service’s apologies “to the families of the honored fallen resting in that hallowed ground who may now question the care afforded to their loved ones” at Arlington National Cemetery.

Speaking June 10, he said that more than 200 grave sites in three sections of the cemetery may be incorrectly identified, have gravesites not recorded on cemetery maps and at least four instances where burial urns were dumped in an area where excess grave dirt is stored.

The findings were included in an Army inspector general’s report that was delivered to McHugh in the late afternoon June 8. The investigation began in 2009.

“The IG found Arlington’s mission hampered by dysfunctional management, a lack of established policy and procedures, and an overall unhealthy organizational climate. The report also determined the improper interment and trans-interment of remains, to include the loss of accountability of remains, remains in graves listed as empty, unmarked gravesites, improperly marked graves and improper handling of cremated remains. That all ends today.”

McHugh announced the appointment of “Kathryn Condon, one of the Army’s most experienced, most respected members of the Senior Executive Service, to immediately assume the position of executive director” of the Army National Cemeteries Program.

In addition, the secretary said, “I have placed the current superintendent of Arlington National Cemetery [John C. Metzler] under Ms. Condon’s direct supervision for the remainder of his tenure in the Army. “ I’ve also placed in the superintendent’s official personnel file a written reprimand for his actions, and I’ve directed a review of his annual performance evaluation award.”

Metzler is retiring in July.

The cemetery’s assistant superintendent, Thurman Higginbotham, is on administrative leave and McHugh ordered the Army’s assistant secretary for manpower and reserve affairs to conduct a further investigation to determine any other disciplinary action that may be needed.

Lt. Gen. Steven Whitcomb, the inspector general, said, “There were two mismarked graves in Section 60, which primarily holds Iraq and Afghanistan soldiers or service members. Those were corrected. Those were more—I won’t say—nothing is administrative, but they were headstone issues. The other grave sites are older. I’m not prepared to say they go back to the Civil War.”

**Boeing donates \$4 million to National Army Museum.** The Boeing Company presented the National Museum of the United States Army \$4 million to design and build the “Soldiers’ Story Gallery” that “sets the tone for the whole museum.”

In a ceremony in Arlington just before the Army’s 235th birthday, Brig. Gen. Creighton Abrams, USA, Ret., executive director of the Army Historical Foundation, said, “We are celebrating the largest gift we have received to date,” also displaying artist’s concepts of what the first of three galleries could look like on the museum site.

The stories appear on larger-than-life freestanding pylons organized in marching formation on the promenade adjacent to the lobby entrance, and then continue inside.

Each pylon will include a large relief portrait of a soldier, specific information, to include name, rank, branch and date of service and that soldier’s story. At the far end of the gallery, there will be a large, stone-like monolith inscribed with the “Soldier’s Creed.”

Abrams said the stories will be drawn from the 30 million men and women who have served in the Army since its founding June 14, 1775.

Roger Krone, president of the Boeing Network and Space Systems, said, “Every soldier has a story, and that collective set of stories makes up the history of the United States Army and the history of the United States.”

Recalling his father’s service as a bombardier on B-29s in the Army Air Corps during World War II, he said his stories gave him an interest in engineering, which became his career, and in history and the Army. “The stories will be chosen to reflect the Army’s values” from the Revolutionary War through today.

“At the heart of the museum is the American soldier. We were excited about [this part of the museum project] when we heard about the idea of a soldiers’ gallery. Some of the stories you will recognize; others you will not recognize. But it resonated with a lot with us” at Boeing.

“The Army is people,” Brig. Gen. Leo Brooks, USA, Ret., who also works for Boeing Network and Space Systems, said, and cited his father’s more than three decades of Army service. His father’s example “showed me and my brother that the Army offered opportunity” and was an institution “unlike any other” that “encouraged people to be the best they can be.”

He said he views the gallery as a place where museum visitors “can learn from [soldiers’] endeavors and recognize the sacrifice of those men and women and their families for the country.”