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Shelton emphasizes recruiting and retention

The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff put the accent on recruiting and retaining quality people to meet future challenges to the nation's security that could come from terrorists or rogue states.

Gen. Henry H. Shelton said, "We must protect the quality of our people." Speaking before 200 attendees at the September Institute of Land Warfare breakfast, he added, "You can't recreate that (quality) on short notice."

He asked for help from the defense industry in working with Congress and the administration to maintain current readiness, modernize equipment and protect the quality of life of servicemen and servicewomen. "We've got to become a better force" as the drawdown continues.

To help keep readiness, modernization and quality of life balanced, Shelton said the Defense Department needs to shed excess infrastructure and improve its business practices.

Shelton, who led U.S. forces into Haiti in 1994, said, "It was important to look ahead," particularly in joint warfighting. He cited the "Joint Vision 2010," a Defense Department monograph on warfighting concepts, as providing a template for the future.

Citing Germany's early victories over technologically superior allied forces, the chairman stressed the need for quality people, who know how to better use that technology. He said, "The key area we want to avoid (in looking to the future) is thinking that technology alone is the answer.... The quality of our people, the caliber of our leaders, our operational concepts and our doctrine that we use... are going to be the truly decisive factors."

Adding, the United States "does not intend to make the same mistake" as the allies did in the early stages of World War II of relying on technology to provide victory.

Although he did not see the United States confronting another superpower soon, he said, "Some threats will look familiar — from nation states. But some will be different as non-state actors become more active on the world scene." He described that environment of ethnic, economic and religious rivalries as both volatile and complex.

"They will have access to state-of-the-art technology and equipment."

Adding, potential enemies are "going to attack us where we are vulnerable.... We must be able to respond to the full range of asymmetric threat that should increasingly occupy our time, our interest and our energy."

To do that, Shelton said that joint warfighting will take advantage of the complementary capabilities of each service that are first tested in warfighting experiments and inside the service battle labs.

President pledges immediate relief to preserve readiness. President Clinton invited the senior Defense Department leadership to revise upward its budget proposal for the years 2000 and beyond. In writing Defense Secretary William Cohen Sept. 22, Clinton said, "Although we have done much to support readiness, more needs to be done."

The letter comes in the wake of a meeting with the joint chiefs in mid-September, in which the senior uniformed leadership told the president and his national security advisers of their concerns about readiness.

For Fiscal Year 1999, there could be an additional \$1 billion to \$4 billion requested as an emergency supplemental appropriation or added to the existing budget. The money would go to cover continued operating expenses in Bosnia and fix Year 2000 computer problems.

Shelton sees large role for the Army. “America’s Army will play a very largerole” in the future. Gen. Henry H. Shelton, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, specifically cited the Apache Longbow attack helicopter, Comanche armed reconnaissance helicopter and the Crusader field artillery system as necessary components for the joint force in the 21st century. He also saw advances in digitization, logistics tracking and situational advances in giving commanders unprecedented command and control on the battlefield.

Theater missile defense first. Continuing problems with theater missile defense prompted a question concerning the joint chiefs support of theater missile defense coming first.

Gen. Henry H. Shelton said the joint chiefs support a continuation of the current approach to national missile defense spending, which is to solve theater missile defense issues first.

“What we’re trying to is have a bullet that will intercept a bullet. ... The technology is just not there yet.”

North Korea tests long-distance missile. North Korea fired a long-distance missile into waters near Japan as August was ending. This followed closely on the heels of the Stalinist regime being caught building a secret underground nuclear facility.

The missile shot crossed sovereign Japanese territory and drew immediate protests from that government, the United States and the U.N. Security Council.

The Taepo Dong-1 missile traveled about 1,000 miles. Earlier, North Korean missiles had a range of slightly more than 600 miles.

Vice chairman says readiness is stretched. Gen. Joseph Ralston, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said, “We’ve told Congress and the administration we’ve tried to keep the balance between near-term readiness, modernization and quality of life.”

He was speaking the day after the joint chiefs, the chairman and the regional warfighting commanders and himself met with the president and his national security team to discuss readiness and defense spending needs.

Aging equipment strains defense budget and affects readiness. The Defense Department’s top acquisition official warned that since the United States stopped modernizing its equipment over the last decade that “we now are spending billions, for example, to maintain an aging fleet” of aircraft and vehicles.

Speaking at an AUSA symposium Sept 2, Jacques Gansler, under secretary of defense for acquisition and technology, added, “Worse still the age and deteriorating state of these systems are having an effect on readiness. They demand more and more dollars to keep them going.”

He termed that situation “a death spiral.” Gansler said, “The requirement to maintain our aging equipment is costing us much more each year; in repair costs, down time and maintenance tempo. But we must keep this equipment in repair to maintain readiness. It drains our resources we should be applying to modernization of the traditional systems and development and deployment of the new systems.”

Complicating the picture is the flat defense budget, high operating tempo of the armed forces and costs of fixing unanticipated crises such as the Year 2000 computer problems.

Gansler said to find more money for modernization:

- more base closures,
- termination of a number of traditional weapons systems to fund newer systems,
- drastic improvement in cycle times for development and spares delivery,
- competitive sourcing and a rapid cut in the civilian and military workforce,
- making logistics more responsive and less costly and a full and rapid transformation of “our military tactics, doctrine and structure to actually realize the strategy of the chairman’s ‘Joint Vision 2010’.”

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Senate panel questions Gulf War Syndrome theory. The Senate Veterans Affairs Committee reported recently that questions whether exposure to nerve gas sickened U.S. soldiers in the Gulf War. The panel, which has long been critical of the Defense Department's handling of Gulf War veterans' complaints, said:

"There is insufficient evidence at this time to prove or disprove that there was actual low-level exposure of any troops to chemical weapon nerve agents or that any of the health effects some veterans are experiencing were caused by such exposure."

Shinseki tapped for vice chief; Meigs for Europe. Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen announced Sept. 16 that the President has nominated Gen. Eric K. Shinseki, U.S. Army, for reappointment to the grade of general with assignment as the vice chief of staff, U.S. Army. Shinseki is serving as the commanding general, U.S. Army Europe and Seventh Army, Germany.

Shinseki was born on Nov. 28, 1942, in Lihue, Kauai, Hawaii.

Also, Cohen announced the president has nominated Lt. Gen. Montgomery C. Meigs, U.S. Army, for appointment to the grade of general with assignment as commanding general, U.S. Army Europe and Seventh Army, Germany. Meigs is serving as the commanding general, U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, Fort Leavenworth, Kan.

Meigs was born on Jan. 11, 1945, in Annapolis, Md.

Panamanian election clouds canal future. Panamanian voters rejected in late August a proposal that would allow President Ernesto Perez Balladares to serve five more years in office. If the plan had been approved, Perez Balladares would oversee the transfer of the canal from United States control to Panama's.

At issue in the future are decisions about widening the canal and using \$3.5 billion worth of real estate the United States is ceding.

Negotiations between the United States and Panama over the possible stationing of 2,000 troops in the country have been stalled for months.

A look inside the defense appropriations bill. Each year, the House of Representatives and the Senate develop their own guidelines and numbers of dollars for thousands of federal programs.

And while the defense appropriations bill calls for about \$250 billion in overall spending, the devil's in the details as to what we will spend on which program. Right now, conferees are going through hundreds of defense programs to determine whether the House or the Senate version will prevail.

One of those is a research and development line item for the Army. The House wants to spend \$17.4 million on a concepts experimentation program that will have a direct bearing on an Advanced Warfighting Experiment in Fiscal Year 2000 that will involve light Army forces and the Air Force. The Senate, however, calls for spending \$10.5 million on the program that will provide simulation support for that exercise and exercises involving the digitized division and corps.

In its comments to the conferees, the Defense Department reported, "This reduction would also place the exercises and fielding of the First Digital Division in FY 2000 at risk."

The devil is truly in the details even for one of the Army's highest spending priorities and a program the Defense Department strongly supports.

Defense Department explains need for anthrax vaccination program. The Defense Department's top health official said in mid-August "Anthrax is a serious battlefield threat. We have particular concern because it is easily weaponized into an aerosol form that leads to the disease inhalation anthrax."

The department stepped up its anthrax vaccine immunization program "for forces already deployed to or rotating through high threat areas in Southwest Asia and Korea" on Aug. 17.

Dr. Sue Bailey, assistant secretary of defense for health affairs, was speaking as tensions between the United Nations and Iraq over weapons inspections continued to escalate and the United States attacked suspected terrorist sites in Sudan and Afghanistan. She said inhalation anthrax was 99 percent lethal.

Stressing that the vaccine was safe and effective, she added, "It has a 28-year history and is FDA licensed since 1970."

Looking into the future of defense spending.

While the secretary of Defense and service secretaries are visiting a number of installations, such as Fort Drum, N.Y., and Fort Bragg, N.C., to gather firsthand information on readiness, more and more questions are being raised on the level of defense spending.

Defense spokesman Ken Bacon said recently, "Nobody anticipated, I think, that the end of the Cold War would bring as many deployments as our military has seen since the Berlin Wall fell in 1989. And we don't know right now in 1998 whether what we've seen over the last eight or nine years is going to be the pattern of the future or if it's an aberrational set of deployments. ... But obviously, the military is working very hard to deal with the strains caused by these deployments. And I think it's having some success. Ultimately, if deployments continue at this very high level, policy makers will have to sit down and decide whether the military should be bigger in certain areas.

Gen. Gordon R. Sullivan, USA, Ret., and president of the Association of the United States Army, has offered to testify at those hearings. In addition, AUSA, through its Torch-bearer campaign, has begun working to educate the public and Congress that current defense spending is too low. AUSA says the spending contained in the balanced budget agreement severely strains on members of the armed forces through repeated deployments, delays modernization of needed equipment and sharply curtails training that is crucial to readiness.

GAO questions viability of defense's future year defense spending plan. The General Accounting Office, the investigative arm of Congress, sees substantial risk in the Future Years Defense Program through 2003.

In a late August report, the GAO said that even though the department made adjustments to minimize the risk of funds moving from procurement to unplanned operating expenses. Those operating expenses range from medical costs to higher personnel costs associated with deployments and new programs such as national missile defense.

GAO also questioned whether savings from low inflation and fuel costs and a strong U. S. dollar against foreign currencies would continue over the five years. Additionally, savings of \$3.7 billion in plans to cut military and civilian personnel may be unattainable.

Health care underfunded by \$623 million. A shortfall of \$623 million in the Defense Department's health accounts deeply troubled members of a key House committee in a rare late September hearing. The hearing and the scope of the problem surfaced Sept. 24, the very day the full House approved the conference version of the defense authorization bill, which allows the spending of \$15.6 billion for health care.

And without congressional approval to reprogram money, often in other accounts such as operations and maintenance, finding new efficiencies and cutback on real property maintenance, patients will find it harder and harder to get access to care. The Army's portion of the shortfall is \$233 million for Fiscal Year 1999.

Rep. Steve Buyer, R-Ind., chairman of the personnel subcommittee of the House National Security Committee, repeatedly asked senior Defense Department officials and the services' surgeons general how this could have occurred. "What type of modeling (of costs) is being used out there. ... I'm confused."

Rep. Gene Taylor, D-Miss., the ranking minority member, was extremely pointed in both his opening remarks and questions to two sets of panelists. "It saddens me when we can't find the money to fulfill the promises made 20, 30, 40 years ago. ... We sure as hell ought to find the money."

Through hearings this winter on the medical portion of the budget, Congress pressed military health officials to make sure that health care was properly funded. The reason was simple: Under the balanced budget agreement whatever program had money added to it, cuts of equal size had to be made in another defense program.

Taylor said, "If you want to increase this, it comes out of someone else's hide." He and other committee members expressed their concerns about readiness now and what impact fixing the medical accounts would have on readiness tomorrow.

For Congress, there is another reason for concern.

Stretching well back into the mid 1980s under the CHAMPUS health care system, medical costs kept skyrocketing and service surgeons general then would troop to Capitol Hill and ask for more money.